

M U H A M M A D

THE PROPHET

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PREFACE

THE idea of writing an exhaustive life of the Holy Founder of Islam has ever been present in my mind since I took up the work of translating the Holy Qur'an into English about fifteen years ago, but owing to various other engagements, I was not able to give it a practical shape. The short sketch that is now being presented is by no means a fulfilment of that idea. It is but a very brief and hurried account of a life which is full of the noblest lessons for humanity, a mere bird's-eye-view of the greatest transformation which has been wrought in the history of man. I do not know if I shall live long enough to attempt the more laborious work of presenting that ennobling story in all its details ; for the present I offer this humble tribute to the memory of him who devoted his whole life to the service of humanity.

I believe, as every Muslim does, that every nation had its superman, the luminary who gave it light, the reformer who inspired it with noble ideas, the prophet who raised it morally. But Muḥammad, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, is *par excellence* THE PROPHET, because he is the Prophet not of one nation but of all the nations of the world, because it was he who declared belief in all the prophets of the world as an essential of the faith he preached and thus laid down the basis of a lasting peace among different nations, because "he is the greatest of all reformers",* having brought about a transforma-

* Bosworth Smith

tion the equal of which has not been brought about either before or after him, and lastly because "he is the most successful of all prophets and religious personalities"¹ Every man ought to be judged by what he does, and Muḥammad the Prophet accomplished within twenty years what centuries of the labours of Jewish and Christian reformers could not accomplish notwithstanding the temporal power at their back. He swept away centuries-old idolatry, superstition, credulity, ignorance, prostitution, gambling, drinking, oppression of the weak, internecine war and a hundred other evils from a whole country. History cannot show any other reformer who wrought so wonderful and complete a transformation on such a large scale within so short a time. Never "was reform more hopeless" than at the advent of the Prophet, as Muir has remarked, and never was it more complete than when he departed. In one word, "it was a birth from darkness into light" as Carlyle says. A life so great cannot be devoid of potentialities as great for the future; it cannot but inspire the noblest ideas of the service of humanity into any heart. If there is any one trait of his character which is more marked than another, it is his care of the orphan and the widow, his support of the weak and the helpless, his love of labour and work for the distressed. It is the life of a man who lived for God and who died for God. "If ever man on this earth found God, if ever man devoted his life to God's service with a good and great motive, it is certain that the Prophet of Arabia was that man."²

¹ Encyclopædia Britannica, *Art. Koran.*

² Leonard.

The original work was written by me in Urdū, and the English rendering now being presented to the public is the result of the labour of love of Maulvi Muḥammad Ya'qūb Khān, at present Imam of the Mosque at Woking, who did this work in addition to his duties as a Muslim preacher at Woking. My sincerest thanks are due to him, as well as to Khawāja Kamāl-ud-Dīn, head of the Woking Muslim Mission, who afforded every facility to M. Muḥammad Ya'qūb Khān for completing the work. And I place the manuscript in the hands of M. Sadr-ud-Dīn, who is now propagating Islam in Germany, as I did in the case of the English Translation of the Holy Qur'ān, for getting the work through the press, for its revision, and correction of proofs.

Ahmadiyya Buildings

LAHORE

August 25, 1923

MUHAMMAD ALI

SECOND EDITION

In issuing a second edition I have gone through the book very carefully. Besides some minor alterations, two new chapters have been added, one on the Prophet's Wars, and the other on the False Allegations of Atrocities against him.

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CHAPTER I
ARABIA AND THE ARABS

"Surely the first house appointed for men is the one at Mecca, blessed and a guidance for the nations." (The Holy Qur'an, 3:95.)

The Arabian Peninsula. The land known as *Jazīrat-ul-'Arab*, or the Arabian Peninsula, occupies a central position in the hemisphere comprising the continents of Asia, Africa and Europe. It forms the heart, so to speak, of the Old World. This is the country that gave birth to Muḥammad, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, the last of the great religious reformers who founded a religion. The Indian Ocean washes its coast on the south, the Mediterranean and the Red Sea on the west. To the east lie the Persian Gulf, the Tigris and the Euphrates, the latter two traversing its northern part as well. According to ancient historians and geographers it comprises within its boundaries the strip of land known as Mesopotamia as well as Arabian Syria. The modern map of the world, however, does not show these as forming an integral part of Arabia. Leaving them aside, the country yet covers an area of twelve hundred thousand square miles. About a third of this is covered by sandy deserts, the largest being the one known as *Ad-Dahnā*, lying in the middle of the southern part. There are practically no rivers worthy of mention in the country. Small streams, however, are met with here and there.

Some of these lose themselves in the sands of the desert, while others wind their way up to the sea. Right across the country runs a chain of mountains, from south to north, known as *Jabal-us-Sarāt*, the highest peak of which is eight thousand feet. Dates are the main produce. In ancient days, Arabia was famous for its gold, silver, precious stones and spices. Of the animals found here, the camel is the most valuable and useful, while the Arab horse has no match in the world for beauty, speed and mettle.

Mesopotamia and Syria. As a matter of fact, Mesopotamia and Arabian Syria form an integral part of Arabia, though modern political distribution shows them as distinct from the mainland. Of these, Mesopotamia stretches adjacent to Persia. The towns of Baṣra and Kūfa, which long remained the centres of Islamic learning, were founded here during the caliphate of 'Umar the Great. Arabian Syria lies in the north, extending right up to Aleppo. The Arab geographers have, therefore, shown the Euphrates as the northern boundary of Arabia. In this part lies the Mount Sinai where Moses received Divine revelation. The Amalekites once had a mighty kingdom here.

Ḥedjāz. Arabia proper is sub-divided into a number of parts. Of these Ḥedjāz is the province in which the sacred land of *Ḥaram* is situated. The *Ḥaram* (Forbidden or Sacred territory) is so called because from time immemorial the place has been held in the highest veneration, and every kind of warfare is forbidden therein. It is within the precincts of the *Ḥaram* that the sacred house of Ka'ba stands. The

Torah, the sacred book of the Jews, speaks of Hedjāz by the name of Paran. Its chief towns are Mecca, Medīna and Ṭāif. This province extends along the Red Sea in a rectangular strip. Jedda and Yenbo are its two main sea-ports, where pilgrims for Mecca and Medīna respectively land. On the east, Hedjāz is bounded by the province of Najd, and on the south, by 'Asīr, a part of Yemen.

Yemen. The second main province is Yemen which lies in the south of the island.

Hadzramaut and Aḥqāf form parts of this province. It is the most fertile tract in the country and has consequently been the most civilized. Even to-day, relics of some of the most magnificent buildings are met with here. Huge embankments were once constructed here to control the springs of water from the mountains and utilize them for purposes of irrigation. The most famous of these was Ma'ārib, the destruction of which is mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān.¹ Yemen was moreover the centre of trade in minerals, precious stones and spices, for which Arabia was once so famous. The mighty empire of 'Ād, of which the Holy Qur'ān speaks,² was established here. This particular area is known as Aḥqāf. Hadzramaut is that part of Yemen which lies in the extreme south, along the shore of the Indian Ocean. Ṣan'ā is the capital of this province and 'Aden its chief port. To the north of Ṣan'ā lies Najrān, where Christianity had spread before the advent of Islam. The well-known Christian delegation that waited upon the Holy Prophet,

¹34 : 16. ²7 : 65.

and which was allowed to put up in the Prophet's Mosque, came from this place. To the north of Najrān lies 'Asīr.

Najd. The third great part of Arabia is Najd which extends from *Jabal-us-Sarūt* eastward, across the interior of the country. It is a rich and fertile plateau, some three to four thousand feet above sea-level. Here lived the clan of Ghatafān, for whose chastisement the Holy Prophet had once to lead an expedition. The desert bounds it on three sides, while in its south lies Yemāma. The Banū Ḥanīfa, of which tribe came Musailma, the impostor, lived here.

'Ummān. In the south-east of Arabia, and along the coast of the Gulf of Oman, stretches the tract of land known as 'Ummān. Its capital is Masqaṭ, where a separate, though nominal, Sultan has now been set up. To the north of 'Ummān lies the part known as Bahrain, also called Al-Aḥsā, famous for its pearls. Close by is Ḥira, once a kingdom.

Ḥijr. Ḥijr, the home of Thamūd among whom Ṣāliḥ was raised as a prophet, is another place of note. It lies to the north of Medīna. On his march to Tabūk, the Holy Prophet happened to pass by this place. To the west of Ḥijr lies Madyan, the place of the prophet Shu'aib. To the north of Medīna is Khaibar, once the stronghold of the Jews.

Mecca and Ka'ba. The three chief towns of Hedjāz, as previously mentioned, are Mecca, Medīna and Ṭāif. Ṭāif owes its fame to the fact that, situated

as it is at the foot of the mountains, it is cool and rich in verdure, with innumerable springs of water and abundance of fruits. It lies to the east of Mecca and is the general summer resort of the Hedjāz nobility. But the most famous towns of Hedjāz are Mecca and Medīna. Mecca or Becca is also known as *Umm-ul-Qurā* or the Mother of towns. On all the four sides it is enclosed by mountains. Its present population numbers fifty thousand. From days of hoary antiquity it has been the spiritual and religious capital of Arabia, for here stands the sacred house of God known as Ka'ba, which has been the resort of pilgrims from every nook and corner of Arabia from pre-historic days. Sir William Muir thus comments on the antiquity of the House in his "Life of Muḥammad":

Antiquity of Ka'ba. "A very high antiquity must be assigned to the main features of the religion of Mecca..... Diodorus Siculus, writing about half a century before our era, says of that part of Arabia washed by the Red Sea, 'there is in this country a temple greatly revered by all the Arabs'. These words must refer to the holy house of Mecca, for we know of no other which ever commanded the universal homage of ArabiaTradition represents the Ka'ba as from time immemorial the scene of pilgrimage from all quarters of Arabia:—from Yemen, Hadzramaut, and the shores of the Persian Gulf, from the desert of Syria, and from the distant environs of Hira and Mesopotamia, men yearly flocked to Mecca. So extensive a homage must have had its beginning in an extremely remote age."

To establish the antiquity of the Ka'ba, Muir has drawn upon historical facts and oral traditions. The Qur'ān also points to the same. It speaks of the Ka'ba as "the first house appointed for men;"¹ in other words, the first house on the face of the earth assigned

for the worship of God. The rays of Divine revelation emanated first of all from this place. And it is a remarkable coincidence that this same place enjoys the distinction of giving birth to the Last of the prophets. Mecca owes its importance to this house. In days as early as 2,500 years B. C., it was a halting station for caravans plying between Yemen and Syria. The Holy Qur'ān also confirms that the sacred house was in existence before Abraham.¹ When leaving his son, Ishmael, there, the great patriarch prayed : " O Lord ! I have made some of my off-spring settle in this barren valley, near Thy Sacred House."² These words show that the Ka'ba was there even at that remote date.

Medina. Medīna was originally called Yathrib.

Later on when it was adopted by the Holy Prophet as his residence, it came to be known as Madīnat-un-Nabī, or the Prophet's Town, which was gradually contracted into Al-Medīna, the Town, and ultimately into mere Medīna. This too is an ancient town. Certain historical evidences suggest its foundation as early as 1600 B. C. It was originally inhabited by the Amalekites, after whom came the Jews, the Aus and the Khazraj. When the Prophet came to settle here, these three peoples formed the population of the town. It was the latter two who, later on, came to be known by the name of *Anṣār* or the Helpers. In the fourteenth year of his mission, the Holy Prophet emigrated from Mecca to Medīna, where he spent the remaining days of his life. Here it was that he

¹ 2 : 125. ² 14 : 37.

breathed his last, and here stands his tomb to this day. Medīna lies 270 miles to the north of Mecca, and unlike the latter, is not barren. Besides rich cultivation it has an abundance of fruit-bearing trees. In the winter it is comparatively cooler than Mecca.

ARABIAN 'Ād, Thamūd, Ṭasm and Jadīs are Races. the most ancient races of Arabia, as far as can be traced, the first two having been spoken of in the Holy Qur'ān. These aboriginal races are known as the *Bāida* or ancient Arabs. The destruction of the tribe of Noah was followed by the rise of 'Ād whose settlements spread far and wide beyond the limits of Arabia. Historical evidence proves their domination over Arabia, Egypt and many other places. On the fall of this race, Thamūd rose to power.

Then came the rise of the Banū Qaḥṭān, whose homeland was Yemen. In their day, they too attained to great power and ascendancy. The Aus and the Khazraj were the off-shoots of this tribe. All these races are known as the 'Āriba, or pure Arabs.

Ishmael and Last of all came Ishmael whose progeny his progeny. goes by the name of *Musta'riba* or naturalized Arabs. In obedience to a Divine behest, he was left by his father, Abraham, along with his mother Hājira, at the place where stands the Ka'ba.¹ There is little truth in the belief that they were banished by Abraham at the instance of his second wife, Sārah. The idea is emphatically repudiated in a saying of the Holy Prophet which says that on Hājira's question whether

¹ 14 : 37 ; 2 : 125.

Abraham was leaving them there in obedience to a Divine behest, the Patriarch replied in the affirmative. The account given in the Qur'ān also leads to the same conclusion. Later on, the father and the son reconstructed, at Divine injunction, the Sacred House of Ka'ba, which, it seems, was in a dilapidated condition.¹ This done, together they addressed the Almighty with a prayer, which the Qur'ān reports in these words, "O our Lord! raise among them a Prophet from among themselves," which found fulfilment in the person of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace be with him.² For this reason the Holy Prophet is also called the "prayer of Abraham". Ishmael's progeny multiplied and ramified into numerous tribes. One of these is known as the Quraish, which is descended from Nadzr. This tribe was later sub-divided into a number of clans, the Prophet being a scion of one of these, known as Banū Hāshim.

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CHAPTER II
THE DARK AGE

"Corruption appeared on
land and sea."

(The Holy Qur'an, 30 : 41.)

D a r k n e s s THE period preceding the advent of the before Islam. Prophet has been designated the Dark Age by the Qur'an which epitomizes in two words what would take volumes to describe.¹ The picture drawn in the above verse portrays the fallen state of the Arab idolaters, the Jews and the Christians alike. It avers that corruption was rampant throughout the world. This does not, however, imply that the world had never before witnessed a better state of things ; but whatever of civilization and of moral life had ever sprung up anywhere through the various prophets raised from time to time, among different peoples, had by that time utterly disappeared in consequence of the lapse of long ages. Every nation of the world had at the time fallen into a state of decrepitude. These words found utterance through the mouth of one who was, no doubt, quite illiterate. He had had no opportunity of going round the world to study the condition of different countries ; nor had he the benefit of the publicity systems of to-day that might have acquainted him with the state of the world at that time. Nevertheless, a reference to the pages of history corroborates the truth of the assertion in a striking manner.

¹ 33 : 33, 48 : 26

Barring the fact that Europe had a mighty Empire towards its south-east—the Christian Empire of Rome—it was sunk deep in barbarism. Asia, of all the continents of the world, had once been the nursery of civilization. But a study of the various countries of this cradle of philosophies and religions shows that, here as elsewhere, rank immorality was the order of the day. India, once the centre of the ancient Eastern culture, presented the same horrid picture. Foul, base and heinous things were attributed even to those whom the people regarded as their gods. Evil had taken so great a hold on them, that even the virtuous were painted in dark colours. Persia and China too, were in the same plight. This no doubt was due to the fact that centuries had elapsed since the advent of former teachers and whatever reformation had been previously brought about had become gradually weak and finally extinct. The Holy Qur'an says: "Time became prolonged to them so their hearts hardened."¹

A modern writer* who has studied the different systems of religion and the civilizations that grew up therefrom has come exactly to the same conclusion :

"In the fifth and the sixth centuries, the civilized world stood on the verge of chaos. The old emotional cultures that had made civilization possible.....had broken down and nothing had been found adequate to take their place.....It seemed then that the great civilization that it had taken four thousand years to construct was on the verge of disintegration and that mankind was likely to return to that condition of barbarism where every tribe and sect was against the next and law and order were unknown.....The new sanctions created

¹ 57 : 16.

* "Emotion as the Basis of Civilization" by Devison.

by Christianity were working division and destruction instead of unity and order.....Civilization like a gigantic tree whose foliage had overreached the world.....stood tottering.....rotted to the core.....It was among these people that the man¹ was born who was to unite the whole known world of east and south."

Christianity in a decrepit state. Jesus was the prophet most proximate to the Holy Prophet Muḥammad in point of time. One would have naturally expected amongst the Christians some relics of virtue and morality. But what was the state of Christianity at the time? Let us have the evidence of the Christian writers themselves on the point. Drawing a picture of those days, a bishop says that the heavenly kingdom was utterly upset, and a state of veritable hell had been established on the earth, in consequence of inner corruption. Sir William Muir writes to the same effect: "Moreover, the Christianity of the seventh century was itself decrepit and corrupt. It was disabled by contending schisms, and had substituted the puerilities of superstition for the pure and expansive faith of the early ages."

This is a picture of Christianity concerning its general state. Belief in the oneness of God had disappeared long since. The doctrine of Trinity had given rise to numerous complications. Diverse schisms and sects vied with one another in the exercise of their ingenuities in the disentanglement of the riddle how man became God or how three made one and *vice-versa*. This led to the production of heaps of polemical works, removing man far off from the true purpose of religion. Gibbon, commenting on the event of the famous-

¹ The reference is to the Holy Prophet Muḥammad

library at Alexandria, having been set on fire by the intolerant Christians, makes a significant observation in this connection: "But if the ponderous mass of Arian and Monophysite controversy was indeed consumed in the public baths, a philosopher may allow, with a smile, that it was ultimately devoted to the benefit of mankind." The general evils of Christianity, drinking, gambling and adultery, were in full swing even in those days. Dozy quotes the Caliph 'Alī as speaking of the Taghlib, a Christian tribe, in the following significant words: "All they have borrowed from that Church is the practice of wine-bibbing." In short, Christianity which was the last of the revealed religions of the world was practically defunct. It had lost all driving force to bring about moral reformation. Indeed, the fallen state of the human society at large, all over the world, bears testimony to the truth of the Quranic statement quoted above.

Arab poetry. As to Arabia itself, it is true that Arab poetry was at its zenith, and pre-Islamic poetry displays a high degree of ability and skill. It is also true that the art of writing was not unknown to the Arabs; but they seldom turned it to any use. Even their poetry was not preserved in writing. Poetical compositions of the Dark Age have all come down to us through oral tradition with the solitary exception of the pieces known as the *Mu'allaqāt* which were committed to writing and suspended on the walls of the Ka'ba. As regards the fact that the Arabs had developed the art of poetry, it is enough to say that mere poetry, as such, affords no sure criterion of a people's stage of civilization.

Interest in poetry is observed in almost every stage of society, however crude and primitive. And the reason is not far to seek. The people at this stage have very few objects of interest, which multiply only with the growth of civilization, and hence their whole devotion to the only available form of fine art—poetry. But Arab poetry is devoid of the breadth of vision and loftiness of thought which come only with culture. Beauty of language is all it can boast of.

Arab character There were, no doubt, certain noble traits in the Arab character. Hospitality, love of freedom, daring, manliness, tribal fidelity and generosity were some of the qualities in which the Arab had no equal. But a few virtues, by themselves, especially when overbalanced by the height of barbarity and brutality can hardly be taken to constitute civilization. Side by side with the most hospitable treatment accorded to a guest, it was a common practice to rob a wayfarer. The sentiment of tribal patriotism, though highly commendable in itself, had also been carried to excess and abused. Trifling disputes between individuals would lead to terrible conflagrations of war and blood-feuds extended from generation to generation.

Arab Idolatry No doubt the Arabs professed faith in the unity of God, but it was too shallow. Their practical life belied their profession. They were given to idolatry, thinking that Almighty God had entrusted the discharge of the various functions of the universe to different gods, goddesses and idols. They would therefore turn to these, invoking their blessings in all their undertakings. Thus their belief in the unity

of God was an empty dogma, finding no place in the system of their practical life. Besides idols, they looked upon the air, the sun, the moon, and the stars as the controllers of their destinies, and worshipped them as such. They had fallen so low that they would worship pieces of stones, trees and sand-heaps. They would fall prostrate before any fine piece of stone they might come across. Should they fail to find a piece of stone, they would worship a sand-hill, after having milked their she-camel thereon. They looked upon angels as the daughters of God. Even men of fame were worshipped, images being carved out after their names. It was not necessary to have the stones properly carved or shaped. Even rough unhewn ones served the purpose. Going out on a journey they would carry four stones along with them, three to make a hearth, and the fourth to serve for an object of worship. Sometimes no separate one for purposes of worship would be carried. The cooking done, any of the three would be pulled out and worshipped. Besides the three hundred and sixty idols set up in the Ka'ba, every tribe had an idol of its own. In fact, one was kept in each and every household. Idol-worship had, in short, become a second nature with them and it influenced their everyday life in all its details. The central idea of their faith was that God had made over the control and administration of this system of the universe to others, in whom He had vested all power, such as healing the sick, granting children, removing famine and epidemic. Divine favour could not be obtained but through the intercession of these idols. They would prostrate before them, circumambulate around them, offer sacrifices

to them, and set apart some of the produce of their fields and their animals as an offering to them. Out of such a debasing idolatry, the Holy Prophet Muḥammad uplifted the whole of Arabia in the brief span of twenty years. Not only was idolatry extirpated root and branch from the soil of Arabia, but over and above that such a spark of enthusiasm for the unity of God was kindled in the hearts of the self-same Arabs, that it carried them far and wide over the length and breadth of the then known world to uphold the name of One God. The weaning of a whole country extending over a vast area of twelve hundred thousand square miles from the curse of idol-worship to which it was hopelessly wedded by long established traditions and heredity, in no more time than a fifth of a century, so far as to win for it the title of iconoclast -- is it not the mightiest miracle that the world has ever witnessed?

Religion a In addition to idol-worship, which was
mockery. the order of the day, star-worship had taken as firm a root in the soil of Arabia. Human destiny was associated with the movements of the various stars. Phenomena of nature affecting the fortunes of man for good or evil were attributed to their influence. Whereas on the one hand the worst form of idolatry had its hold on the Arab mind in general, there were also some who had no faith in the existence of God, the immortality of the human soul and the day of retribution. To them religion was all mockery. They would hold up to ridicule the very idols they professed to adore. It is said of the famous poet, Imra-ul-Qais, that on the murder of his father, he consulted an oracle

in accordance with the traditional practice among the Arabs, to divine whether or not he should avenge the murder. The process consisted in marking two arrows, one with the word *na'am* (yes), the other with *lā* (no), to indicate respectively whether the undertaking should be entered upon or not. A blank one was also put in, which, if drawn, advised the lot to be drawn afresh. Imra-ul-Qais drew the arrows three times and each time the negative one came out. In a fit of rage he flung the arrow in the face of the idol, saying: "O wretch! had it been the murder of thy own father, thou wouldst not have forbidden me to avenge it."

Social life. Such was the state of irreligion and idol-worship in Arabia. As regards their social life, they presented no better picture. They were ignorant of the very rudiments of social virtues. Their manner of life made the evolution of any social virtue impossible. Tribal feuds engaged their whole attention. A settled and peaceful mode of life, which is indispensable for the cultivation of social qualities, was unknown to them. The prospect of hostilities with another clan that might break out at any time was ever present before their minds. They led a nomadic life, wandering with their cattle from place to place. They would set up their tents of camel-skins, wherever they found water to drink and forage for their cattle. Only a small minority of them had settled in villages, and still fewer in towns. How was it possible, under such circumstances, that the blessings of an ordered and settled society should accrue to them?

No law and order. There was no central government to enforce law and order in the country.

The whole country was rent into innumerable petty states, each clan forming a separate and independent political unit. The few petty states that existed here and there were too weak to enforce justice. To wrench one's right from another, one had to depend upon one's strength of arm. Each tribe had a chief of its own who would lead it in battle against a hostile tribe, to vindicate its rights. But there was no law whatsoever, binding the tribe to the nation. Each was independent, owing no allegiance to any central authority. Islam came with its unifying force. Muir says:—

“The first peculiarity, then, which attracts our attention is the sub-division of the Arabs into innumerable bodies, governed by the same code of honour and morals, and exhibiting the same manners, speaking for the most part the same language, but each independent of the others; restless and often at war amongst themselves; and even where united by blood or by interest, ever ready on some insignificant cause to separate and give way to an implacable hostility. Thus at the era of Islam the retrospect of Arabian history exhibits, as in the kaleidoscope, an ever-varying state of combination and repulsion, such as had hitherto rendered abortive any attempt at a general union.....The problem had yet to be solved, by what force these tribes could be subdued, or drawn to one common centre; and it was solved by Muḥammad.”

The Holy Qur'an sums up succinctly this utter deterioration that embraced every phase of life in a single sentence: “You (the Arabs) were on the verge of a fiery abyss.”¹ Hostilities once breaking out would continue for generations. Trifles, such as a word of contempt, or a slight mischief in a horse race, would

lead to the slaughter of thousands, and the eternal bondage of those who fell captive into the hands of their victors. It was this fallen humanity whom the Prophet raised to the highest level of moral rectitude. He welded these discordant elements into a brotherhood which stands unique in the history of the world. A mighty transformation! A miracle, as a modern writer* calls it:

"A more disunited people it would be hard to find, till, suddenly, the miracle took place. A man arose who, by his personality and by his claim to direct Divine guidance, actually brought about the impossible—namely the union of all these warring factions."

Position of Woman occupied a very low position in Arab society. Barring the love-songs in praise of the beloved, which were the outcome of carnal lust, woman was accorded no better treatment than lower animals. Polyandry which is a characteristic of the very primitive stages of human society was also in vogue among them. There was no limit to the number of wives a man could take. Besides a plurality of wives, he could have illicit relations with any number of sweethearts. Prostitution was a recognised profession among them. Captive women, kept as handmaids, were forced to make money for their masters in this debasing manner. Married women were allowed by their husbands to conjugate with others for the sake of offspring. The practice was called *Istibdzā'*; and was similar to the practice of Niyoga still prevalent among the Hindus. Moreover, woman was looked upon as mere chattel. She was entitled to no share

* "Ins and Outs of Mesopotamia."

of the legacy of her deceased husband, father or other relations. On the contrary, she was herself inherited as part of the property of the deceased. The heir was at liberty to dispose of her as he would. He could marry her himself, or give her in marriage to anybody he chose. On the death of his father, a son would even marry his stepmother, she being a part of the inheritance. The practice of divorce in vogue among them was no less barbarous. A thousand times could a man divorce his wife and take her back within a prescribed period known as *'idda*. Sometimes he would swear he would not go near her, sometimes he would announce that he would look upon her as his mother, thus leaving her in a state of suspension, being neither a wife nor yet divorced. These methods were adopted simply to annoy her. She had no way out of her sad plight. The worst type of obscene language was used in expressing sex-relations. Stories of love and illicit relationships were narrated proudly and with utter want of shame, in verses of the most indecent kind. Women of high families were openly addressed in love-songs. Considering the state of things obtaining among the Arabs with regard to the status of woman, it is not difficult to judge what a heavy debt of gratitude woman owes to Muḥammad, may peace be on him, who lifted her up from the depth of lowness to a position of respect and dignity. Even the modern European civilization which has but a superficial respect for the gentle sex, fails to grant those rights to women which Islam has given them. Genuine respect for the sex lies in having proper regard for her chastity and the

equality of her rights with man, which is, unfortunately, nowhere met with in Western society.

As a contrast, let us turn to the amelioration wrought in the condition of woman by Islam. The Quranic injunction, "Women shall have the same rights over men as men have over them,"¹ was the Magna Charta, so to speak, of woman's franchise. In the same strain observed the Holy Prophet: "The best of you is he who treats his wife best." To implant veneration for woman in a soil where it was regarded as a mark of nobility to bury female offspring alive, is surely no mean service to humanity. On hearing of the birth of a daughter, the father's face would turn black with grief and rage. He had either to bury her alive, or to put up with social disgrace.² He would take his daughter to the desert, make her stand on the verge of a pit dug there beforehand, and hurling the screaming child down with his own hands, bury her alive underneath a heap of earth. The Holy Prophet when once informed of one such incident burst into tears of pity. Sometimes an explicit agreement was made at the nuptial ceremony that female offspring was to be killed. It was, in this case, the duty of the mother herself to commit the barbarous deed. She had to do it in the presence of all the female members of the family, especially invited to attend the grim function. All these cold-blooded brutalities were put to an end, at a single stroke, by the Quranic words: "And when the one buried alive is asked for what offence she was killed."³ Never thereafter even in a single instance

¹ 2:228 ² 16:58-59. ³ 81:8.

was the horrible cruelty repeated. In this respect, Muḥammad, peace be upon him, stands unrivalled in the history of the world, for his service to mankind.

Drinking. Drinking was another vice to which the whole of Arabia was hopelessly wedded. Intoxicating liquors were served several times daily. There was not a household but had a number of wine pitchers in store. No sooner, however, was the Quranic prohibition proclaimed¹ than the very pots used for storing liquor were broken to pieces and thrown out; and it is related, wine flowed like rain-water in the streets of Medīna. Centuries-old habit of drinking was thus rooted out in no time, and utter abstinence became the order of the day.

Gambling. Gambling was another curse having a firm hold on the Arab society. It was indulged in as a common daily pastime. Those who abstained were looked down upon as miserly. Muḥammad's spiritual force made short work of this as well, and relieved Arabia of the long standing evil.

Superstition. There was no education worthy of mention among the Arabs. Those able to decipher a script could be counted on fingers. Ignorance bred superstition, and they were given to all sorts of queer beliefs. They had faith in the existence of genii and evil spirits, whom they would conjure up in solitary places. To these they also attributed certain kinds of diseases, to escape which they would make use of charms and incantations. They held the human soul to be a tiny creature which entered the body at man's

birth and went on growing. At his death it left the corporeal frame and kept hovering over the tomb. In time of drought, they would fasten dry blades of grass and underwood to a cow's tail and set fire thereto and drive the animal to the mountains. They thought the flame of fire resembled a flash of lightning and would, by reason of similarity, attract rainfall. In case a calamity befell them, they would enter the house by the backdoor. From the flight of birds they took good or evil omens. If a bird crossed their way from the left to the right, it was regarded as a good omen ; from right to left, it was a bad omen. Those who believed in a life after death would tie a camel at a tomb and starve it to death, thinking the deceased would mount on its back on the day of resurrection. They also believed that the soul of man assumed the form of an owl at his death and kept hovering over his tomb. In the case of the slain, the owl would thus keep droning "Give me water, Give me water," until the murder had been avenged. They believed in sooth-sayers and fortune-tellers, and had implicit faith in whatever they told them. In short, these and a hundred and one other superstitions were believed in by the Arabs of the pre-Islamic days of ignorance. In the course of a few years, Muḥammad, peace be on him, emancipated them from all these shackles of hereditary bondage, and elevated them to the pinnacle of morality, learning and culture. History will vainly turn its pages to point to a parallel of the wholesale reformation and elevation of a fallen people such as the Arabs were. A mighty achievement indeed !

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CHAPTER III
WAVES OF REFORMATION IN ARABIA

"That thou mayest warn
a people whose fathers were
not warned, so they are
heedless."

(The Holy Qur'ān, 36 : 6.)

Prophets raised on borders of Arabia

PROPHETS were raised in various parts of Arabia before the dispensation of the patriarch Abraham, as well as after. Reference to some of these has also been made in the Holy Qur'ān. Hūd was deputed for the reformation of the tribe of 'Ād that settled in a part of Yemen, known as Aḥqāf, and Ṣālīḥ was raised for Thamūd, inhabiting the part called Ḥijr, to the north of Medīna. Both these reformers preceded Abraham; while two others, Ishmael and Shu'aib, raised in Yemen and Madyan respectively, came after him. Traditions as well as inscriptions show that the 'Ādites were a very mighty people. They had founded a great empire which extended far beyond the confines of Arabia. It seems that prophets had been raised among them even before the advent of Hūd, who made his appearance at a time when the nation was sunk very low. They turned a deaf ear to this prophet and were severely punished. Their destruction was wrought by a dust-storm from the desert which lies to the north of Aḥqāf and goes by the name of the *Rub'-i-Khālī* or the Barren Quarter. The Thamūdites, therefore, betook themselves to the mountains, where they carved for

themselves homes out of the rocks.¹ But when their doom was sealed, strongholds could not save them. They perished in an earthquake. A look at the map of Arabia will show that of these four, the mission of Hūd and Ishmael was confined to the south, while that of Ṣāliḥ and Shu'aib, to the north of Arabia; the middle portion, known as Hedjāz, remained without a prophet. But Abraham's visiting Mecca and his leaving Ishmael there, and afterwards his building the Ka'ba, have preserved to this day the association of Abraham's name with certain places here.

Judaism in Arabia. During the dispensation of the Israelite prophets, idol-worship had reached its highest pitch in Arabia. A queen of Yemen was converted to the doctrine of the Unity of God by Solomon. This was followed by another feeble ripple on the religious deep of Arabia. The Jews migrated and settled there, probably about the 5th century B. C. when Nebuchadnezzar drove them out of their homelands. Prophecies as to the appearance of the Last Prophet from the soil of Arabia were also current among them. Therefore they took up their abode there, and Khaibar became a purely Jewish settlement. When they gained a firm footing here, they began propagating their faith. About the 3rd century B. C., the King of Yemen, Dhū-Nawās by name, embraced Judaism. This added fresh momentum to the Jewish movement of proselytism and in the course of time Judaism won considerable ascendancy in Arabia. But the Arab nation as a whole remained

addicted to its ancestral religion of idol-worship, and after a short-lived career, the Jewish religious movement died a natural death, leaving the Arabians as they had been.

Christianity in Arabia. A second wave of reformation followed. Christian missionaries began pouring into Arabia in the 3rd century A. D. and settled in Najrān. Their proselytizing activities were supplemented a good deal by the political influence of the two Christian powers in the neighbourhood of Arabia, the Abyssinian to the west and the Roman Empire to the north. Consequently, the entire province of Najrān which lies between 'Asīr and Ṣan'ā accepted Christianity. But beyond this Christianity could make no headway. Barring just a bare sprinkling of converts here and there, little impress was made by Christianity on Arabia proper. Thus ended in utter failure this second attempt at the reformation of Arabia.

The Ḥanifs. The third reformatory wave set in motion was internal. Just a little before the advent of Islam, there had sprung up a new school of thought known as Ḥanif. It was a small band of earnest men who discarded idolatry, but were no better disposed towards Judaism or Christianity. They worshipped only one God. Nor did they trouble themselves at all about reformation in the social life of their country. Feeling aversion for idol-worship, some of these did no doubt join the fold of Christianity, such as Warāqa-bin-Naufal, Khadija's cousin, and 'Abdullāh-bin-Jahsh, Ḥamza's nephew, but their number was insignificant. Majority of them found

no satisfaction either in Christianity or in Judaism. Of these the noteworthy were Zaid bin 'Amru-bin-Nufail, 'Umar's uncle, and Umayya, a renowned poet and the chief of Ṭāif. These people had little zeal for promulgating their newly conceived notions. Nevertheless they made no secret of their abhorrence of idolatry, and openly avowed Unitarianism as their faith, which they professed to be the religion taught by Abraham. Feeble though the movement was, it was undoubtedly there. It took no note of the social evils of Arabia. Mere profession of the unity of God in place of idol-worship was its sole aim. But like its predecessors, this internal movement also failed to go beyond the surface, leaving the Arab society as unaffected as ever. In fact, it was far more feeble than either the Jewish or the Christian movements.

Failure of all these movements. The Jews had family affinity with the Arabs. Both came of the same stock. Their language their manners, their customs had much in common. Both held the great patriarch Abraham in high esteem. A king of Yemen, the most fertile province of Arabia, had accepted the Jewish religion. Thus to all human calculations, these various forces in favour of Judaism had a cumulative effect potent enough to secure the conversion of the whole of Arabia. But Arabia proved adamant to all these influences. Then came Christianity with quite a new message. Its so-called Unitarianism resembled the Arab conception of Godhead. The idolatry obtaining among the Arabs was akin to Greek idol-worship under the influence of which the Christian

doctrine of Trinity had taken its birth. St. Paul, the real founder of the Church religion as we have it, had given such an idolatrous form to the monotheistic teaching of the Israelite prophets, as to make it fascinating for the idolatrous peoples of his day. Consequently, Christianity secured large numbers of converts from among these people. It had another feature particularly attractive to the Arabs. It dispensed with the necessity of observing the law—a license quite in keeping with the Arab mode of life. Having no religious or secular code of laws to regulate their conduct, these wild children of the desert had given themselves up to unbridled debauchery. Christianity allowed ample latitude for the gratification of their licentious propensities. It was therefore a creed offering the least line of resistance, and hence the easiest for them to adopt. In addition to these inherent attractions, Christianity had the advantage of temporal power to commend it to the Arabs. The great Roman Empire to the north, the Abyssinian kingdom to the west, the conversion of one of the provinces of Yemen and the hold acquired by Christianity over the states of Hīra and Ghassān—these were the manifold influences in favour of Christianity. Under such circumstances the conversion of the whole of the island seemed but a matter of days. Nevertheless, the Church failed to make any appreciable impression on Arab society, except that it gave a fresh impetus to drinking, gambling and sexual indulgence. The third movement, that of the Hanīfis, was purely internal in origin and had little to do with the social reformation of Arabia, confining its aims to one single object—the supplanting of idolatry

by Unitarianism. Notwithstanding such an unambitious programme, it found the soil of Arabia far less congenial than had the preceding movements. It proved the weakest of all, perhaps for the reason that it had no worldly power at its back.

It is remarkable that just before the appearance of the Holy Prophet, three different movements are set afoot, all aiming at the reformation of Arabia. Keeping at work for centuries with all the advantages that worldly power can afford, all these movements vanish in smoke. But then arises an individual, who achieves, single-handed and in a state of utter helplessness, what they had all failed to achieve. In the course of a few years, he brings about a transformation unparalleled in the history of the world. Not only is the debasing superstition of the country—idolatry—eradicated, but the entire social fabric is reclaimed, and released from long-standing and deep-rooted corruption.

Arabia im-
pervious to re-
form.

In view of all this, a critical eye cannot fail to perceive that behind the scenes, it was the mighty hand of the Lord, that helped the Holy Prophet Muhammad in working such a radical transformation in the religious, social and moral life of Arabia, within the brief space of twenty years—a transformation that stands unique in the history of the world. Sir William Muir, by no means a friendly critic of the Prophet, has to admit this miraculous regeneration of Arabia, in the following words :

“During the youth of Mahomet, the aspect of the peninsula was strongly conservative; perhaps reform never was at any period more hopeless. Causes are sometimes conjured up to account for results produced by an agent apparently inadequate

to effect them. Mahomet arose, and forthwith the Arabs were aroused to a new and a spiritual faith. Hence the conclusion that Arabia was fermenting for the change, and prepared to adopt it. To us, calmly reviewing the past, pre-Islamite history belies the assumption. After five centuries of Christian evangelization, we can point to but a sprinkling here and there of Christian converts."

"In fine, viewed thus in a religious aspect, the surface of Arabia had been now and then gently rippled by the feeble efforts of Christianity; the sterner influence of Judaism had been occasionally visible in a deeper and more troubled current; but the tide of indigenous idolatry and of Ishmaelite superstition, setting strongly from every quarter towards the Ka'ba, gave ample evidence that the faith and worship of Mecca held the Arab mind in a rigorous and undisputed thralldom."

Further on he observes :

"The prospects of Arabia before the rise of Mahomet were as unfavourable to religious reform as to political union or national regeneration. The foundation of the Arab faith was a deep-rooted idolatry, which for centuries had stood proof, with no palpable symptom of decay, against every attempt at evangelization from Egypt and Syria."

Thus the Prophet Muhammad was raised as a warner to a people who were proof against all warning. They had baffled all previous attempts at their regeneration. But phenomenal success attended his labours in bringing about the reformation of the self-same incorrigible race.

CHAPTER IV

PROPHECIES ABOUT THE ADVENT OF THE HOLY PROPHET

“Those who follow the Apostle-Prophet, the *ummī*, whom they find written down with them in the Torah and the Gospel.”

(The Holy Qur'ān, 7 : 157.)

The Promised one of all prophets. PROPHECIES about the advent of the Prophet Muḥammad, peace be on him, are met with in the previous sacred books and had great currency among the nations. In fact, those very prophecies might have impelled the Jews and the Christians to settle down in Arabia; for the land of the Promised Prophet was specified by name in the Scriptures. We would touch upon a few of them.

The Qur'ān asserts that the appearance of the Holy Prophet was foretold by each and all of the foregoing prophets, through whom the covenant was also made with their respective peoples that they would accept him when he made his appearance. The distinguishing feature of the Promised One, they were told, was that he would bear testimony to the truth of all the prophets of the world.¹ It seems that Providence had deemed it fit to depute a separate prophet for the reformation of each nation, in the days of yore, when the various peoples inhabiting this planet lived in absolute isolation from one another. and modern means of communication

¹ 3: 80.

had not come into existence. To amalgamate the diverse religious systems into one, all-comprehensive faith as well as to weld humanity into one universal brotherhood, He then raised a Prophet with a mission for the whole of mankind. Thus, while on the one hand the happy news of such a World-Prophet was given to each preceding prophet, the Promised Prophet was, on the other, commissioned to testify to the truth of all the foregoing prophets wherever and whenever raised, all the world over. And the Holy Prophet Muḥammad, peace be on him, is the one Prophet who answers to this description. He laid it down as one of the cardinal doctrines of faith that all the other prophets of the world should be accepted along with him. At the very opening of the Qur'ān, a description of the faithful is given in the following words: "And those who believe in that which has been revealed to thee, and that which was revealed before thee."¹ Then as regards the raising of a reformer among every nation, it makes a general statement: "There has not been a nation but it had a warner."² On another occasion it says that it makes mention of some of the prophets while there are others who have not been expressly spoken of.³ So the Holy Prophet Muḥammad stands out unique from both these view-points. On the one hand, the predictions of all his predecessors find due fulfilment in his person, while, on the other, he alone out of all the prophets, has made it a binding article of faith to believe in all the prophets of the world. Thus, he is the last of that noble band of prophets, as foretold

¹ 2 : 4.² 35 : 24.³ 4 : 164.

by all his predecessors.

Abraham's prophecies. The Israelites and the Ishmaelites sprang of a common progenitor—Abraham. Though the Divine Scripture revealed to Abraham has not come down to us, yet much light is thrown on God's promises to him concerning the future of his sons, Isaac and Ishmael, by the Old Testament in the book of Genesis. The Holy Qur'ān also alludes to the same promises when it says: "And when his Lord tried Abraham with certain words, he fulfilled them. He said, I will make thee a leader of men. Abraham said, And of my offspring? My covenant does not include the unjust, said He."¹ And again in the joint prayer of Abraham and Ishmael: "Our Lord! raise up a Prophet to them from among themselves, who should recite Thy verses to them, and teach them the Book and wisdom, and purify them."² The Old Testament records a Divine promise to the same effect, made to Abraham, even before the birth of Isaac and Ishmael:

"And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee and make thy name great and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that crueth thee and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12 : 2—3).

Then reference is made to Ishmael by name, in the same book of the Genesis (17 : 20):

"And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold I have blessed him and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly: twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation."

¹2 : 124.

²2 : 129.

Moses' pro- The second prophecy announcing the
 phecies. advent of the Holy Prophet Muhammad
 found utterance through Moses :

"I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth." (Deut. 18 : 18)

No one of the Israelite prophets that followed Moses in a long succession, down to Jesus, ever claimed to be the Prophet promised in this prophecy. And for obvious reasons. Moses' successors, who came only to fulfil his law, could not be like unto him. The prophecy was of common knowledge among the Jews, who expected, generation after generation, a Prophet like unto Moses. This is amply borne out by the conversation that passed between John the Baptist and those who came to ask him "Who art thou?" "And he confessed... I am not the Christ. And they asked him, what then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that Prophet? And he answered, No" (John 1 : 19—21). This shows positively that the Jews were in expectation of the appearance of three different prophets. Firstly Elias, who, they thought, was to reappear in person; secondly the Christ; and thirdly a Prophet of such universal fame that in his case, no further specification was thought necessary—"That Prophet" was enough to convey who was meant. Such was the household currency which Moses' prophecy concerning a Prophet like unto him had gained among the Jews. It is thus evident that just before the appearance of Jesus, the Jews were in expectation of three prophets, as foretold in their scriptures—the Christ, Elias in his second advent and *the Prophet* "like unto Moses." Now two of these

prophecies were fulfilled in the persons of Jesus and John, the one claiming to be the Christ, and the other to have been raised in the spirit of Elias. But neither of the two laid any claim to be the Promised Prophet like unto Moses. Nor did any of those who accepted them, identify them as such. With Jesus, the chain of prophethood among the Israelites came to an end. Thus the prophecy of Deut. regarding a Prophet like unto Moses remained unfulfilled, so far as the Israelites were concerned. Now, turning to the history of the world, we find that no other prophet except Muḥammad, peace be on him, ever claimed to be the Prophet foretold by Moses, and no other sacred book but the Holy Qur'ān ever pointed to any one as fulfilling the prophecy. Facts also bear out the same conclusion. Moses was a law-giver and so was Muḥammad, peace be on them. Among the Israelite prophets who succeeded Moses, no one brought a new law. The Holy Prophet Muḥammad, being the only law-giving Prophet, was thus the only Prophet like unto Moses. The Holy Qur'ān says: "Verily We have raised a Prophet among you, like unto the prophet that We sent to Pharaoh."¹ Again, it invites the attention of the Jews to the prophecy in Deut. in these words: "A witness from among the Israelites has borne witness of one like him."² The words of the prophecy, "from among their brethren," throw further light on the fact that the Promised Prophet was to rise, not from among the Israelites themselves, but from among their brethren, the Ishmaelites.

¹ 73:15. ² 46:10.

A third prophecy in equally clear terms is met with in the same book—Deuteronomy (33:2). It says:

“The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir to them; he shined forth from Mount Paran, and he came forth with ten thousands of saints; from his right hand went a fiery law for them.”

“Coming from Sinai” refers to the appearance of Moses, while “rising up from Seir” refers to the conquest of Seir by David. Now Paran is admittedly the ancient name for the land of Hedjāz, where arose Muḥammad, on whom be peace, from among the descendants of Ishmael. The words “he came forth with ten thousands of saints” point still more unmistakably to the identity of the person to whom they refer. The Holy Prophet Muḥammad, of all the world-heroes, is the one solitary historical personage whose triumphal entry into Mecca with ten thousand saintly followers, is an event of common knowledge. The law he gave to the world is to this day known as *baidzā* or shining, for it throws full light on all matters pertaining to the religious, moral and social welfare of man. And it is to this that allusion is made in the words, “from his right hand went a fiery law for them.”

Isiah's pro- A fourth prophecy specifies the land of
phesies. the Promised Prophet as Arabia :

“The burden upon Arabia. In the forest in Arabia shall ye lodge, O ye travelling companions of Dedanites. Unto him that was thirsty they brought water, the inhabitants of the land of Tima did meet the fugitives with their bread. For they fled away from the swords, from the drawn sword and from the bent bow and from the grievousness of war” (Isiah 21: 13—15).

In the first place the word ‘Arabia’ is by itself sig-

nificant enough. Then the mention of one who fled sheds still further light on the object of the prophecy. The history of the world records but one such flight that has won the importance of a red-letter event—the flight of the Holy Prophet Muhammad from Mecca. It is from this point of time that the Muslim era commences; for it marked, in fact, the opening of a new chapter in the history of Islam, or rather in the civilization of the world. A yet clearer testimony, however, is contained in the words “he fled from drawn swords”. History confirms that the Holy Prophet Muhammad fled from Mecca while his house was surrounded by his blood-thirsty enemies with drawn swords ready to fall upon him in a body as soon as he should come out. You will in vain turn the pages of history to find another instance of flight which resulted in issues so far-reaching and momentous, or another prophet who ran for his life through drawn swords. These two authoritative facts of history, supplemented by a direct mention of the land of Arabia as the birth-place of the Promised Prophet, furnish an indisputable clue that the prophecy refers to the Holy Prophet Muhammad.

Jesus' prophe- There are several other similar prophe-
cies. cies by Israelite prophets, such as David, Solomon, Habakkuk, Haggai, and others. But for the sake of brevity I would refer to one only, by the last of the Israelite prophets, viz. Jesus, which runs thus :

“ If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray to the Father and He shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of Truth” (John 14 : 15—17).

Again,

"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things" (John 14 : 26).

And again,

"Nevertheless I tell you the truth ; it is expedient for you that I go away ; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart, I will send him unto you " (John 16 : 17).

Yet again,

"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of Truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth" (John 16 : 12, 13).

All these prophetic words predict in unequivocal terms the advent of another prophet after Jesus. The terms of the prophecy do not warrant the conclusion that they are applicable to the Holy Ghost. "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you" are words too clear to need any comment. The New Testament says that John was filled with the Holy Ghost even before he was born. Then it speaks of Jesus himself as receiving the Holy Ghost in the shape of a pigeon. Thus the Holy Ghost used to visit men before Jesus as well as in his own time. To what is then the reference made in the words, "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you?" Surely not to the Holy Ghost; for it is almost sacrilegious to think that Jesus was without the Holy Ghost. Genuine reverence for Jesus requires that we should recognize even his disciples, purified as they were at the hands of their great Master, to have been pure enough to merit the company of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Qur'ān, at least, credits the companions of the Holy

Prophet Muḥammad with such company in clear terms: "And He aided them with the Holy Spirit from Himself."¹

The words "Holy Ghost" which have also been used in the prophecy, if not an interpolation, are intended to betoken that the Promised One would have such an inseparable union with the Holy Ghost that his advent might be taken, metaphorically of course, as the coming of the Holy Ghost itself. There are other words in the prophecy, which are not applicable but to the Prophet Muḥammad. The characteristic features set forth in the prophecy are found one and all in him. "*That he may abide with you for ever*" indicates that there would be no prophet after the Promised One. This is exactly what the Holy Qur'ān says of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad: "The last of the Prophets."² Again, "He shall teach you all things," says the prophecy. The same says the Holy Qur'ān about the dispensation of the Prophet Muḥammad: "This day I have made perfect for you your religion."³ Then the Promised One is called the Spirit of Truth in the prophecy, which is also confirmed by the Holy Qur'ān in the words: "Say, the Truth has come and falsehood has vanished."⁴

¹ 58 : 22. ² 33 : 40. ³ 5 : 3. ⁴ 17 : 81.

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CHAPTER V
DESCENT AND BIRTH

“ Hast thou not considered
how thy Lord dealt with the
possessors of the elephant? Did
he not cause their war to end
in confusion ”?

(The Holy Qur’ān 105 : 1,2)

Prophet's genealogy. ISHMAEL was the eldest son of Abraham. He had twelve sons, as confirmed by the Old Testament, one of them being Kaidār by name whose progeny spread over the Arabian province of Hedjāz. That the Arabs are the descendants of Kaidār also goes without saying on the authority of the Old Testament. Again, it is admitted on all hands among the Arabs that ‘Adnān, to whom the Holy Prophet Muḥammad’s genealogy has been traced beyond all doubt, was also a scion of Ishmael in about the fortieth descent. There have never been two opinions as to the fact that the Holy Prophet Muḥammad was in direct descent from ‘Adnān. Further down, in the ninth descent from ‘Adnān, there follows Nadzr-bin-Kināna, the founder of the Quraish dynasty. Another descent in the genealogical scale and then comes in the ninth place, one, Quṣayy by name, to whom was entrusted the guardianship of the Ka’ba—an office of the highest honour in Arabia. He was the grandfather of ‘Abdul-Muṭṭalib, the Holy Prophet’s grandfather. Thus in respect of nobility, the Prophet’s dynasty occupies the highest position.

On mother's 'Abdul Muṭṭalib's mother came of the side.

Banū Najjār, which tribe thus stood in the relation of maternal ancestors to the Prophet. 'Abdul Muṭṭalib begot ten sons, noteworthy of them being, Abū Lahab who was the arch-leader of the opposition to the Prophet, Abū Ṭālib who brought him up, Ḥamza who was among the earliest converts and fell at the battle of Uḥud, 'Abbās though a long time without the pale of Islam, yet remained very affectionate to the Prophet, and 'Abdullāh the Prophet's father. 'Abdullāh was married to Āmina, daughter of Wahb-bin-'Abd-i-Manāf, of the Zuhra family. The pair stood eminent, not only in respect of the nobility of their families, but for what stood for greater distinction in that age of darkness and corruption, they were both possessed of a pure and sublime character.

Date of birth and name. A few days after the nuptials, 'Abdullāh undertook a commercial journey to

Syria. On his way back he fell ill and passed away at Medīna. The Holy Prophet was thus born a posthumous child. Monday, the 12th of Rabī'-ul-Awwal, is the commonly known birth-date of the Holy Prophet. According to another research it is the 9th of the same month as corresponding to the 20th of April 571 of the Christian era. Before his birth, his mother received the happy news in a vision. It transpires from certain sayings of the Prophet that he was given the name Muḥammad by his grandfather, and Aḥmad by his mother, each in accordance with a vision. He has been spoken of in the Qur'ān by both of these names.¹ He

¹ 61 : 6 ; 3 : 143 ; 33 : 40 ; 48 : 29.

himself is reported on trustworthy authority to have said "I am Muḥammad as well as Aḥmad." In poetical compositions too, he was addressed by both these names.

Coincides with
Abraha's attack
on Mecca.

This is hardly the place for dwelling at length on the extraordinary events that attended the Prophet's birth. We would content ourselves with referring to just one, by itself a mighty sign. The very year that the Prophet was born, the Christian chief of Yemen erected a magnificent church in his capital Ṣan'ā, with a view to making it a general centre for people, both commercial and religious, in place of the Ka'ba which he resolved to demolish. This was, in fact, a life and death struggle between Trinity and Unity. Abraha, the chief, marched at the head of a large army against the Ka'ba to pull it down. He encamped at a distance of three stages from Mecca, and sent word to the Meccans, intimating them of his mission. In the meantime, some of 'Abdul Muṭṭalib's camels were captured by Abraha's soldiers. 'Abdul Muṭṭalib came in person to the chief to demand his camels back. Much impressed with his imposing appearance, Abraha asked him what had brought him thither, believing no doubt that he had come to implore him to spare the Sacred House. 'Abdul Muṭṭalib told him that he was there to demand his camels. Astonished at this unexpected reply, Abraha said: "You are so anxious about your camels, but you are not concerned about the Ka'ba, which I have come all this way to demolish." "I worry myself about the camels," replied, 'Abdul Muṭṭalib, "for I am their master; as to the

Ka'ba, its Master will Himself look after it." The Quraish, finding themselves too weak to offer any resistance to Abraha, evacuated Mecca, taking shelter in the neighbouring hills. While leaving Mecca, 'Abdul Mutṭalib took hold of a curtain of the Ka'ba and thus prayed : " O Allāh ! this is Thy own house. We feel too feeble to defend it. Be pleased to take care of it Thyself." Historians say that a most virulent form of small-pox broke out, in the meantime, in the camp of Abraha, which wrought a terrible havoc, destroying the major part of his forces. The rest took to flight in utter confusion. This miraculous event came to pass simultaneously with the Holy Prophet's birth. According to some reports, the day of Abraha's discomfiture was the very day of the Holy Prophet's birth. According to others, he was born forty days after this event.

CHAPTER VI
BEFORE THE CALL

" Indeed, I have lived a
life-time among you before it ;
do you not then understand ?"
(The Holy Qur'an, 10 : 16.)

Given in
charge of
Ḥalīma.

It was a custom among the Arab gentry and nobility that the mothers did not nurse their children ; they were on the contrary sent out to be reared in the country. At his birth the infant Muḥammad was nursed by his mother for a couple of days, and for two or three days by Thuwaibiya, a handmaid of Abū Lahab. After this he was entrusted to Ḥalīma, of the tribe of Banū Sa'd. Two years later, Ḥalīma brought the child to his mother, Āmina, who sent him back with her, Mecca being at the time stricken with an epidemic. He remained in the charge of Ḥalīma till the age of six, when he was returned to his mother. At this time, his mother, desiring to pay a visit to the tomb of her husband, undertook a journey to Medīna where he was buried, taking the child along with her. On the way, however, the orphan child was deprived also of his mother, who passed away at a place called Abwā where she was interred. The would-be World-Prophet was thus bereaved at the tender age of six, both of his father and mother. It was not his lot to be brought up under the loving care of his father or that of his mother, nor had he the opportunity to prove his filial devotion to

his parents. Nevertheless, he gave the same affectionate treatment to his foster-mother and foster-sisters, in his older days, as though they were his blood relations. Ḥalīma once called upon him, after he had received the Divine call. No sooner had she appeared, than the Prophet stood up to greet her—a mark of deep respect—and spread his own mantle for her to sit upon. Likewise he showed special regard for his foster-sister and foster-brothers, indeed for the whole tribe of Banū Sa'd of which Ḥalīma came.

In guardianship of 'Abdul Muṭṭalib and Abū Ṭālib. At the death of his mother, the charge of the child fell to his grandfather, 'Abdul Muṭṭalib. Barely two years had elapsed, however, when this patronage was also snatched away from him by the hands of death. Thus he was eight years old when his guardianship passed to his uncle, Abū Ṭālib. From his very childhood he was possessed of virtues which won him the deep affection of Abū Ṭālib. Whosoever came in contact with him, even at that early age, was impressed with his ways and manners. Abū Ṭālib always kept him in his own company, took him out with himself wherever he went, and even at night had him in his own bed. As reading and writing was almost unknown in Arabia, there being only rare exceptions, the Prophet had no book-learning. When he was twelve years of age, Abū Ṭālib undertook a mercantile journey to Syria. The nephew was so attached to his uncle that he could not bear the idea of such a long separation. Abū Ṭālib consequently allowed him to accompany him on that long journey. It was

during this journey that he is said to have met a Christian anchorite, called Baḥīra. Beholding the boy, so goes the story, he could discern in his face marks of his future greatness and he advised Abū Tālib to take good care of him, for he would some day be the recipient of Divine call.

Participating in Alliance for protection of the weak. At the age of twenty, the Prophet took part in the battle between the Quraish and the Qais which goes under the name of *Ḥarb-ul-Fijār*, lit., a war of transgression, so called because it was fought in the sacred months when warfare was forbidden. But his part in it was not that of actual fighting, but only of handing over arrows to his uncles. After that, he participated in the alliance known as the *Ḥilf-ul-Fudzūl*, formed to vindicate the rights of the weak and the oppressed against tyranny. Each member of the alliance was bound in honour to defend the helpless against all manner of oppression. The credit of taking the lead in the formation of this humanitarian organization was due to the Prophet and his family, the Banū Hāshim. Thus his early inclinations to render help to the distressed go to show that human sympathy was implanted in his very nature.

Al-Amin. At this early age, the Prophet's integrity had already won household fame in the town of Mecca. He was commonly known as *al-Amin*, the Trustworthy. The epithet does not imply honesty in money matters alone but is all-comprehensive, denoting righteousness in every form. Whosoever happened to have any dealings with him at this period,

never ceased to praise him all his life. It was about this time that the necessity arose for the reconstruction of the sacred house of Ka'ba. The requisite material being all provided, the Quraish jointly undertook the work. In the course of construction a serious dispute arose as to who should have the proud privilege of laying the Black Stone. This might have resulted in the outbreak of inter-tribal feuds and the consequent destruction of a number of families, when at length there rose a hoary-headed man with his elderly advice to refer the matter to an arbitrator. Whoever, he suggested, should be the first to appear at the Ka'ba the following day, should be accepted as a judge to decide the point at issue. The proposal was unanimously agreed to. All were eagerly awaiting the next morning, when lo, to the satisfaction of all it was a personage no other than Muḥammad, peace be on him. "Here is *Al-Amīn* ! Here is *Al-Amīn* !" all shouted in one voice. And the general confidence in him was fully justified. Taking a sheet of cloth he placed the Black Stone thereon with his own hands. Then he invited principal men from every clan to hold the sheet by the four ends and thus equally share in the honour of lifting the stone to position. Muḥammad thus averted what might have developed into a terrible conflagration of internecine warfare. He was then thirty-five years old.

Marriage with Khadija. A high-placed widow, Khadija, who had acquired in pre-Islamic days, by her virtue and righteousness, the title of *Tāhira* (the virtuous), hearing of the righteousness of Muḥammad, entrusted to

him the sole charge of her business. Before long much profit accrued to her through his honest dealings. These dealings gave evidence of his high morals and it was this circumstance which led Khadija to make proposals for marriage. Thus was he married, at the age of twenty-five, to a widow, fifteen years older than himself. Of Khadija the Prophet begot four daughters and two sons. The eldest of all was Qāsim after whom the Prophet was called Abul Qāsim but he died young at the age of two. His eldest daughter was Zainab who was married to Abul Āṣ. Next to her was Ruqayya, married to 'Uthmān. She died on the day of the Muslims' victory at the battle of Badr. Next to her came Umm-ī-Kulthūm, who was also married to 'Uthmān at the death of her elder sister. The youngest of all the daughters was Fāṭima from whom sprang the progeny known as *Sayyids* in the history of Islam. She was wedded to 'Alī. The youngest offspring of Khadija was a male child who passed away while yet an infant. The Prophet lost all his children in his life-time except Fāṭima, who survived him for only six months. He had only one son, Ibrāhīm, from another wife whom he married later at Medīna, but the child died in infancy while only 18 months old. The Prophet was much attached to Khadija and would often remember her in affectionate terms, ever after her death. Once when he was speaking highly of her, 'Āysha put him a pert question. Had not God given him, in herself, she asked, a better substitute for Khadija? "No," replied the Prophet, "she accepted me at a time when others rejected me." He was devoted heart and soul to

Khadija for her moral excellences. He would freely spend of her wealth in the way of God. Khadija never rejected his recommendation for spending her riches on charitable purposes. She purchased at her own expense a slave for the Prophet, but was only too pleased when the latter set him free. Zaid, the well-known companion of the Prophet, who too had once been a slave, was thus liberated through Khadija's generosity. When the Call came to him, the Prophet was weighed down with the sense of onerous responsibility, and was diffident as to his ability to carry out the charge entrusted to him. Khadija, at this moment, cheered up his distressed mind with the encouraging words: "God will never let you see the humiliation of failure. Verily, you show due regard for blood-ties, carry the burden of the infirm, practise virtues that are extinct, entertain guests and stand by what is righteous in the face of calamities." This shows how deeply Khadija was impressed with the virtues and human sympathy of the Prophet. This, in fact, was the cause of the deep love between the husband and the wife. Both were imbued with a profound sense of human sympathy. No one can be better informed of the ways of a man than his own wife, who is in a position to have free access to the innermost recesses of his heart. The fact, therefore, that Khadija had such an implicit faith in the Prophet, furnishes an indisputable testimony to the unimpeachable integrity of his character. The most hostile critic cannot in the face of this evidence dare to throw suspicion on the Prophet's sincerity. For an impostor cannot possibly command the whole-hearted devotion of one so privy to

his secrets.

Charming Khadija's testimony to the sublimity of morals. the Prophet's character carries, no doubt, the greatest weight. But others who came in contact with him were no less devoted to him. The father of Zaid, the liberated slave of the Prophet, hearing of his son's freedom, came over to Mecca to take him away with him. The Prophet, gentle as he was, could not possibly bear to stand between the father and the son. He was only too glad to see a son restored to his father. Nevertheless, he could not separate Zaid from himself against the latter's own wishes. So on his father's request to allow Zaid to go with him, he left the matter to the free choice of Zaid himself. And what else could a father wish for? Little did he dream that his son's love for the Prophet outdid his filial affection. Though set free from his physical bondage, Zaid had already been enthralled by the charm of the Prophet's personality. To the disappointment of the father, he preferred to stay with the Prophet. Similarly Abū Bakr's steadfast attachment to the Prophet is a fact of common knowledge. Abū Ṭālib was no less impressed with the nobility of his character. Notwithstanding his adherence to his ancestral form of religion, he stood by the Prophet through thick and thin, defending him, at a grave risk to his own person, against the wrath of the united Quraishite tribes. Such was the deep impression Muḥammad's charm of character had made on his mind. He looked upon it as the height of cowardice to desert one so sublime of character. He would rather run any risk for his sake, in opposing overwhelm-

ing odds. When asked by the Quraish to give up Muhammad, he rebuked them in a beautiful couplet:

"Woe unto you! no tribe has ever deserted its chief—a chief who carefully guards everything worth guarding. He is not overbearing, nor is he so weak as to entrust his affairs to others. He is generous of heart; through the intercession of his face rain is prayed for. He shelters the orphan and the widow."

In a word, the Prophet commanded the deepest attachment of all those who came into contact with him. But what is still more significant, all who associated with him were men possessed of sterling moral qualities. Besides his fast friends, well-known in the history of Islam for the sublimity of their morals, there were others among his earlier friends, equally distinguished for the nobility of their character, such as Ḥakīm-ibn-Hazām, a respectable Quraish chief, who did not give his adhesion to Islam until after the fall of Mecca, and Dzamād-ibn-Tha'iba. Both were his intimate friends and both were men of strong moral calibre. This leads to the conclusion that, like the golden touch in the story, whosoever came into contact with the magnetic personality of the Prophet, even at this early stage of his life, was enlivened with the sublimity and nobility of his morals.

One of the most precious gems in the Prophet's character was his deep sympathy for the poor, the helpless, orphans and widows. He would exert his utmost to see to their needs. As regards this virtue, friend and foe were at one in admiring him. Khadija's consolatory words to him bear testimony to this same trait of his character. Abū

Ṭālib gave it as an argument why he must defend him against his enemies. His participation in the *Ḥilf-ul-Fudzūl*, an alliance formed with the express object of championing the cause of the oppressed, testifies to his solicitude for the weak. Sympathy for the poor, the helpless, orphans and widows, was in short ingrained in his very nature. The teachings of the Holy Qur'ān clearly lay it down as the very essence of religion to look after the orphan and the helpless. Whoever discards the orphan or does not prompt others to feed the poor, is spoken of as belying religion itself.¹ The loftiest summit of human dignity consists, says the Qur'ān, in tending the orphan and the poor.² Whosoever does not show respect to the orphan has been threatened with degradation. National decadence follows as a matter of course where neglect of the orphan and the poor prevails.³ And the Qur'ān is replete with teachings, like these emphasizing the care of the orphan and the poor.

Modesty.

We learn from the account of the Prophet's early life that he was, from his very childhood, possessed of the highest order of modesty and gravity. He was not given to the boyish frivolities characteristic of his age. Abū Ṭālib, speaking of him to 'Abbās, bears testimony to this effect: "I have never seen him tell a lie, indulge in jests and vulgarity, or mix with street boys." Warfare was the favourite pastime in the Arabia of his days, but the Prophet by his very nature held it in aversion. At the battle of *Fijār* he did not go beyond supplying arrows and other fighting

¹ 107 : 1-3. ² 90 : 11-16. ³ 89 : 17, 18.

material to his uncles. Superstitions of all sorts, rampant in the country, were repugnant to his nature. He abhorred idol-worship from his very youth. On a certain occasion when conversation turned upon the chief Arab idols, the *Lāt* and the *'Uzzā*, he observed that he held nothing in greater detestation than idolatry. He would never participate in the observation of the polytheistic rites of his day. He refused to partake of the meal intended as an offering to an idol.

His heart ached within him at the fallen state of humanity. A burning desire to elevate degraded fellow-beings and bring them round to the path of righteousness, agitated his bosom. He would often retire to the cave of *Hirā* and fervently pray to God, with his eyes shedding tears, for the regeneration of mankind.

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CHAPTER VII
THE CALL

“ 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
the pen, He taught man what
he knew not.”

(The Holy Qur'an, 96 : 1—5.)

Just a little before he attained to the age of forty, Muḥammad, peace be on him, began to take himself more frequently to solitary meditation. Retiring to the cave of Hīrā, he would give himself up to Divine contemplation for days. In the meanwhile he received many visions, which came to fulfilment to the very letter. While thus absorbed in Divine worship in the Hīrā, the angel Gabriel appeared before him one night, in the month of Ramadzān—it was the 609th year of the Christian erā—and told him to read out. “I do not know how to read,” was the Prophet's reply. Then the angel hugged him close to his bosom and asked him again to read. Three times the angel repeated the request to read, as many times the Prophet pleaded his inability to do so. Then the angel recited the verses quoted above and so did the Prophet. This was the first day when the heavy responsibility of prophethood was placed on his shoulders. The right path in the quest of which he had been so long engaged was at last revealed to him. The light for which he had been eagerly searching came to him. It was, how-

ever, made known to him at the same time, that the stupendous charge of human reformation was to rest on his shoulders. Weak as man is by nature, he is apt to feel the weight even of an ordinary responsibility. Reformation of mankind is the heaviest task that can be placed on human shoulders. Moses was commissioned for the reformation of a single nation; yet he found it too much for him single-handed, and cried for Divine help: "Give to me a helper." The Holy Prophet Muhammad was charged with the regeneration of the whole of mankind, sunk into the lowest depths of degradation. Yet his strong heart did not give way for a single moment to the slightest oscillation, notwithstanding the almost crushing weight of the responsibility. He shouldered it all by himself, relying solely upon the help of God. He asked for no assistant. But Divine inspiration is an extraordinary phenomenon and beyond average human experience. It necessitates absolute detachment from one's environments. At the time of this experience the entire corporeal frame of the recipient is possessed with Divine Power. Even when the Prophet grew used to the experience, his body would perspire profusely and become very weighty. One of his companions reports that on one such occasion, the Prophet's thigh happened to be on his knee. It became so heavy that he feared lest his knee should be crushed. The first experience of inspiration told all the more heavily on his body and caused him to tremble. Thus shivering he went home; his hands and feet grew cold and he asked Khadija to wrap up his body. After a short while when the shaking, with its inevitable

accompaniment, a feeling of fear, disappeared, he related the whole thing to Khadija. On hearing of the novel experience he had, she encouraged him with the inspiring words that God would never desert him and that he would succeed in his mission. She spoke of his many virtues, his treatment of his kith and kin, his helping the poor, the helpless, the orphan and the widow, his hospitality and his vindication of right under the most trying circumstances. How, she assured him, was it possible that one possessed of so many virtues should ever come to grief?

Waraqah-ibn-Naufal, reference to whom has already been made, was Khadija's cousin. Wearying of idolatry he was on the look-out for a true religion and had at length embraced Christianity. Khadija was well aware of her kinsman's mental anguish for lack of a religion that would carry conviction to his heart yearning after truth. Probably she had heard him talk of the appearance of the Promised Prophet, the Comforter whose advent had been foretold by Jesus. As soon as she found Muḥammad called to that office, she took him to her cousin, out of sympathy, of course, for the latter who had lost his eyesight and was unable to move, aged as he was. No sooner did Waraqa hear what inspiration Muḥammad had received and how, than he spontaneously exclaimed: "This is the very angel that God sent down to Moses," referring obviously to the prophecy by Moses. Then he said: "Would that I might be alive when you are exiled by your people". The Prophet asked him in surprise if he would be thus treated by his kith and kin.

"Yes", replied Warāqa, "this is the treatment meted out to every prophet". Soon, thereafter, Warāqa passed away. For this very confirmation, on his part, of the truth of the Prophet's mission, he is regarded as one of the companions of the Prophet.

After the first revelation in the cave of Hirā, Gabriel did not visit the Holy Prophet for some time. This is known as the period of *fatrat-ul-wahy* or the cessation of revelation. There is a great divergence of opinion as to the duration of this period. With some it was two or three years long. But the version of Ibn-i-'Abbās that it lasted but for a short time, is more reliable and corroborated by historical evidence. The story that during this period, the Prophet would go out to the tops of mountains to hurl himself headlong is sheer nonsense. According to the established criteria of the authenticity of reports, this is not reliable, for Zuhri, from whom the report has come down, belonged to a later generation, and a report to be reliable must be traced back right up to some of the Prophet's companions. Hence little weight can be attached to it. Moreover, the idea that the Prophet was thinking of committing suicide is utterly incompatible with the ideas which ruled uppermost in his heart. From his early age his heart had been glowing with the desire for human reformation. Now that the very mission was entrusted to him, is it conceivable that he should have thought of suicide? If the Prophet was observed doing anything unusual, it was only the bare fact that he would retire to the mountains oftener than before;

but we must not jump to the preposterous conclusion, unwarranted by evidence, that he went there to commit suicide. He used to go to the mountains long before he received the revelation. Having a meditative turn of mind, he would seek the solitude of mountains, a retreat best suited for calm uninterrupted contemplation. But there is no reason whatever to suppose that he went to the mountains in order to commit suicide. If he roamed about in a state of greater perplexity than before, and this is the utmost that may be alleged, the reason is not far to seek. Divine Light, after which he had been so eagerly seeking, disappeared no sooner than it had flashed upon his mind. This made him all the more restless. All the more did his heart long to hear once again the word of God. It was thus in search of what was so dear to his heart that he would go out to mountains. It was done with no idea of suicide. Every incident of his subsequent as well as previous life belies the conjecture. In the face of the most disappointing circumstances, his faith in Divine help never wavered for one moment, nor did he ever yield by an hair's breadth, to the most overwhelming difficulties.

s e c o n d At length, there came an end to the revelation. period of cessation. To the Prophet the period looked unusually long; for it was a period of separation from One he loved with all his heart. It is in this sense that the period has been spoken of by some as having been prolonged. As a matter of fact, the cessation of revelation was based on Divine providence. The pressure attendant upon it had

already told upon the Prophet's physique. His body might not stand a rapid repetition. The interval, therefore, was necessary for the sake of his physical health. Even after a lapse of time which can in no case exceed six months, the revelation was accompanied with the same feeling, though not in the same intensity. Again he asked Khadija, now less awe-stricken than before, to wrap him up. This was the first time he was required to set about his mission in right earnest: "O thou that hast wrapped thyself up! Arise and warn."¹ With this command commences another stage in the life of the Prophet—that of announcing the word of God and delivering His message to all.

¹ 74 : 1-2.

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CHAPTER VIII
THE EARLY CONVERTS

“And the foremost are the foremost; these are they who are drawn nigh (to God).”
(The Holy Qur’an, 56 : 10—11.)

Khadija. The foremost to profess faith in the truth of the Prophet's mission was his wife Khadija. Never for a moment did she entertain the slightest doubt as to the truth of his claim to prophethood. In moments of depression, she proved a never-failing source of solace to him. Fifteen years before when she did not yet stand to him in the relation of a wife, she had discerned in him noble qualities which had deeply impressed her. And this early impression had grown deeper and deeper the more she came to know of him, through their greater intimacy as wife and husband. When the Prophet received Divine inspiration for the first time, and was in a state of perplexity as to how he should accomplish the mighty task of reformation set before him, this virtuous lady consoled him with the genuine testimony of her own heart. A man of the Prophet's lofty character and broad sympathies, she observed, could not possibly come to grief. No one could claim greater privacy to the Prophet's character. No details of a husband's life are concealed from his wife. With such an intimate knowledge of his innermost thoughts, she felt convinced that he alone was the right person to have received the-

Divine summons for human reformation. Khadija was thus the first as well as the most earnest believer in the mission of the Prophet.

Waraqah. Next to Khadija comes Waraqah on the list of early believers. He passed away during the Cessation period, before the Prophet was called upon to preach his religion, and was thus deprived of the opportunity to formally declare his faith. Nevertheless, he had borne testimony, at the interview already referred to, arranged by Khadija between him and the Prophet, to the fact that the latter was undoubtedly the Promised Prophet. This is enough to entitle him to a place in the list of believers.

Abū Bakr Then follows Abū Bakr, one of the Meccan notables. He was held in high esteem for his soundness of judgment and commanded great respect among his compatriots. Long before the Prophet received the call, Abū Bakr had been on intimate terms with him. His faith in the righteousness of the Prophet was as implicit as that of Khadija. Like her, his faith never wavered for a minute. No sooner did he hear of Muḥammad's claim to prophethood, than he made an open profession that Muḥammad was indeed a Prophet of God. He comes at the top of the list of male believers.

'Alī. 'Alī, the son of the Prophet's uncle, Abū Tālib, was also one of the earliest believers. He knew the Prophet very intimately, for he had been brought up under his loving care. Knowing that the Prophet's veracity was unquestionable, he did not hesitate for a moment to

accept him.

Zaid. Zaid-ibn-Hārith was a liberated slave of the Prophet. His deep attachment to his master has already been touched upon. He gave preference to the company of the Prophet to that of his kith and kin, refusing to accompany his father back to his home. He was also one of the earliest believers.

First to believe were those who knew the Prophet most intimately. Khadija, Abū Bakr, 'Alī and Zaid were on most intimate terms with the Prophet and had the greatest access to his private life, and they had also the most implicit belief in the sincerity of his claim to the prophetic office. Not one of them entertained the slightest doubt as to the genuineness of his mission. They had known him to be truthful, *al-Amin*, throughout his life so far. Never during the long period of forty years, before the call came to him, had they heard the Prophet tell a lie. Thus it was inconceivable to them to think for a moment that he should have fabricated a lie in laying claim to prophethood. Surely they could not look upon him as an impostor. Being his associates from his early days, they had an opportunity to have a thorough insight into the innermost traits of his character. The more a person knew of the Prophet, the more he was enamoured of him, and the more forward he was to accept his claim. This aspect of the Prophet's character constrains even critics like Muir and Sprenger to admit that Muḥammad, peace be on him, was quite sincere in his claim. He had full confidence in the Divine character of his revelations.

If there were even the shadow of hypocrisy in his claim, the first to suspect and reject him would have been those so intimately connected with him. On the contrary, they were the foremost to accept him as a true Prophet.

Other important converts. As soon as Abū Bakr embraced Islam, he set about preaching the truth to others. So deep-rooted was his faith in the righteousness of the Prophet's claim ! At a very early period, men of eminent position such as ' Uthmān, Zubair, ' Abdur Raḥmān, Sa'd and Ṭalḥa, who subsequently made a figure not only in the history of Islam but also in world-history, accepted Islam through his earnest missionary zeal. Of those belonging to a humbler status, Bilāl, Yāsir, his wife Sumayya and his son 'Ammār, also joined the faithful at this early period. ' Abdullāh-ibn-Mas'ūd and Khabbāb were also among the early converts, and so was Arqam, whose house was made the centre of the Prophet's missionary activities, about the fourth year after the Call. Within the first three years as many as forty persons accepted the faith. This fact belies the conjecture that the Cessation period extended over three years. For if that conjecture were true, the commencement of the propagation of the faith would have to be relegated to the fourth year, whereas the historical fact stands that Islam had won quite a considerable following by that time. It was this steady growth of Islam that alarmed the Meccans and aroused them to bitter opposition. For this reason the Prophet had to betake himself to a quarter removed from the hostile atmosphere to carry on his mission more

peacefully. Arqam's house was selected for the purpose.

Hamza. The number of Muslims continued to grow, and the conversion of some prominent men from among the Quraish added to the strength of the small brotherhood. Of these the most noteworthy was Hamza, the Prophet's uncle and foster-brother. He was a man of martial spirit and fond of sport. For his high morals he enjoyed great esteem and regard among his compatriots. He cherished special love for the Prophet. His conversion came about in the following manner. One day, Abū Jahl was as usual persecuting the Prophet when Hamza's hand-maid appeared on the scene and was shocked to see the cruel treatment. Hamza had been out on a hunting trip. On his return home the maid related the incident to him. He was already impressed with the character of his nephew. Now that he heard how pitilessly he was being subjected to all manner of ill-treatment, he was deeply moved. He thought it unchivalrous in the extreme not to stand by a righteous man such as the Prophet was. So he made up his mind to throw in his lot on the side of truth and defend it with all might and main. Straightway he made for the Ka'ba, where Abū Jahl and his partisans were holding a meeting to wage a campaign against Islam, and announced his acceptance of Islam.

'Umar. The second great man, who proved a tower of strength to Islam, was 'Umar. A man of fiery temper, he was equally bitter in his opposition to Islam. He made up his mind one day

to put the Prophet, the root-cause of the new movement, to the sword and thus put an end to the whole trouble. With this intent he took up his sword, and made for the Prophet's house. As yet, he did not know that his own sister, Fāṭima, and her husband Sa'īd, had both joined the faith. On his way, a Muslim happened to meet him and, noticing that he was out for mischief, asked him where he was going to? "To kill Muḥammad," replied 'Umar. The Muslim told him he had better set his own house in order first and then think of killing the Prophet, for his sister and cousin had both embraced Islam. On hearing of the conversion of his own relations, he was much enraged. He took his way towards their house first to settle accounts with them. It so happened that Khabbāb was reciting a passage from the Qur'ān to them when 'Umar entered their house. Out of fear they concealed the sheets on which the passage was written. But 'Umar had ample proof of their conversion. He had overheard them recite the Qur'ān. No sooner did he step into the house than he shouted at them saying he had come to know of their apostasy, and taking hold of Sa'īd began to belabour him. His sister, trying to save her husband from his wrath, interposed; but she too received injuries and got besmeared with blood. At length, she broke out in a defiant tone: "Do what you will, we have professed Islam." This bold front on the part of his sister in spite of 'Umar's maltreatment had an immensely pacifying effect on him. Forthwith he ceased beating them and asked for the sheets of the Qur'ān to be

shown to him. His sister fearing lest he should offer any insult to the Holy Book felt reluctant ; but on his assurance that he would no more hurt their religious susceptibilities, she handed over the sheets to him, which contained the chapter entitled *Tā-hā*. This is how it opens : “ O man ! We have not revealed the Qur’ān to thee that thou mayest be unsuccessful. Nay, it is a reminder to him who fears. A revelation from Him Who created the earth and the high heavens.” As he listened, he could no longer resist the force of the truth of the Qur’ān. It made him think of the foolishness of hostility and opposition to what was so beautiful and noble. Khabbāb, who had out of fear kept concealed all this time, was not slow to seize upon the psychological moment. Coming out, he began preaching to him. The mighty ‘Umar fell a victim to the spiritual force of Islam. Enquiring of Khabbāb as to the whereabouts of the Prophet, he went straight off to Arqam’s house, which sheltered, at that moment, the Prophet with forty of his companions, male as well as female. ‘Umar knocked at the door, at which one of the inmates peeped to see who it was. Seeing ‘Umar, with his sword hanging about his neck, he was filled with fear, suspecting he was there on a foul errand. The Prophet, however, told him to open the door and let him in. On his appearance, the Prophet had hardly addressed him with just a sentence when he proclaimed : “ O Apostle of Allāh ! I declare faith in Allāh and His Prophet.” This filled the whole of the Muslim congregation with intense joy, and all proclaimed aloud

the glory of Allāh, till the surrounding hills resounded to their shouts of "*Allāh-u-Akbar*," i. e., Allāh is Great.

Humble converts. 'Umar's conversion proved a tower of strength to the young Muslim brotherhood, too tender yet, to face the storm of opposition. It was in the sixth year of the Holy Prophet's mission that these two important additions, i. e. Ḥamza and 'Umar, were made. So far, the Muslims had not ventured to come out into the open. They had confined their religious activities to within the four walls of Arqam's house. Now that 'Umar had declared his adherence to Islam, they felt strong enough to come out and say their prayers publicly in the sacred house of Ka'ba. In the meantime many from the humbler class had also joined. Those coming from higher families would sometimes manage to escape the persecutions of the Meccans; but the poor slave converts were in a very helpless and miserable plight. They were ruthlessly put to all manner of tortures, with nobody to protect them from the wrath of their masters. One of the virtues that constitute the sublimity of Abū Bakr's character was that he freely spent his wealth in purchasing these persecuted slaves from their cruel masters, and set them free. Bilāl, 'Āmir, Lubaina, Zunnāra, Nahdiya and Umm-i-'Ubais were some of those who owed their freedom to Abū Bakr's generosity.

The blind man. It is a striking feature of the early spread of Islam that it was limited mostly to the common hewer of wood and drawer of water. The aristocracy turned almost a deaf ear to the message. An incident narrated in the Qur'ān throws enough light

on the Divine purpose why the upper classes were deprived of the blessings of Islam in the days of its infancy. The Prophet was one day busy preaching to some of the Quraish nobility when a poor blind man, Ibn-i-Umm-i-Maktūm by name, made his appearance. Not knowing that the Prophet was busy, he put him a few questions, expecting thereby to attract attention. The Prophet, occupied as he was with important talk, naturally did not like the interruption. He did not scold him nor did he utter a word of displeasure, but just a shadow of disapproval passed over his forehead. But the Almighty God Who wanted him to attain to the highest pinnacle of morals as well as manners did not let this incident pass unnoticed. Forthwith came the warning through Divine revelation : "He frowned and turned away his face when the blind man came to him."¹ It went on to say that it was just possible that that very blind man might benefit by his preaching ; for the Qur'ān was a code of life whereby humble people could be raised to the highest altitudes. It also advised the Prophet not to attach much weight to great persons ; the advancement of the cause of Islam was bound up with the poor and the weak who, in their struggle to uphold the cause of Islam, would themselves be glorified. And as a matter of fact this was the underlying Divine purpose why the light of Islam was hailed mostly by the weaker element of the inhabitants of Mecca. They were intended to serve as a concrete illustration of how ordinary people, supported by the Divine hand, can accomplish what is beyond the power

of the most mighty. And we know it for a fact, in the light of history, that not only did Islam enable the same class of the weak and the despised to wield the sceptre of royal authority, but at the same time raised them to the highest plane of morality and made them the torch-bearers of learning, art, science, and philosophy, at a time when the world was enshrouded in the darkness of ignorance. What can be a greater testimony to the uplifting force of Islamic teachings?

The incident of the blind man, however insignificant, throws a flood of light on another problem of great moment. It furnishes data to determine the much disputed nature of the Divine revelation of which the Prophet was the recipient. Was it a voice from within the Prophet's own heart, or was it a message received from an external source? The revelation made in consequence of the Prophet's inattention to the blind man bears a testimony to the fact that it could not possibly be the outcome of the inner workings of the Prophet's own mind. It consists in a Divine admonition reproaching the Prophet for his ignoring the blind man. Nobody can afford to have his faults brought to public notice, if he could only help it, however penitent he might feel within himself. The Prophet, notwithstanding the magnanimity of his heart, could have no special anxiety to give general publicity to the omission on his part however immaterial. This shows that it was some external source from which the revelation came—the Divine Being Himself. He gave it currency, though he knew it was a standing Divine disapproval of his action.

for all time to come. Cheerful submission to the supreme will of God was the key-note of his life. In addition to establishing conclusively the external source of revelation, the incident speaks volumes for the Prophet's entire self-effacement in submission to the will of God,

CHAPTER IX PERSECUTION

“Do men think that they
will be left alone on saying,
We believe, and not be tried?”
(The Holy Qur’an 29 : 2.)

Persecution of the faithful. Whenever the Divine will ordains to inspire a band of righteous people to work as torch-bearers of truth to a corrupt humanity, there never fails to appear at the same time a band of those who pitch themselves in deadly opposition to them, and inflict upon them all kinds of troubles and tortures. And in truth the storm of opposition is absolutely indispensable. The persecutions to which they are subjected serve as a crucial test of the *bona-fides* of their motives. They cheerfully put up with humiliations, endure hardships and cruelties, but never for a moment give up the truth for which they stand. In fact, they live if they can, for the truth, and die, if they must, for the truth. Besides, afflictions constitute the only training ground for fostering virtues of steadfastness and perseverance, without which man cannot attain to moral perfection. Unless one is hemmed in on all sides by overwhelming obstacles and visited with hardships and privations, one cannot cultivate these qualities. Adversities that befall such people are, in fact, blessings in disguise, which conduce to their moral advancement. Over and above these, there is a third object in view. The Almighty

God wants to bring home to mankind that a plant tended by Divine hand, however slender it may look, survives the most furious blasts of hostile winds. Consequently in accordance with this Divine law, the Prophet and his companions had to suffer untold troubles at the hands of the Meccans.

The Prophet In the beginning, the opposition of the persecuted. Meccans to the message of Islam took the form of sneering and jeering at the Prophet. They did not attach much importance to the movement, thinking that it would die out in due course. It was treated with contempt and indifference unworthy of any serious attention. All that the believers received at the hands of the Meccans in those days was ridicule and disdain. Resort to violence was not yet thought necessary. When they passed by the believers, they would laugh and wink at them by way of derision.¹ Sometimes they would call the Prophet an idle visionary, given to poetic fancies, destined to come to nought as a matter of course.² There was something wrong with his brain, they would say. But as men of light and leading gradually gathered round him, the Meccans were awakened to a sense of the danger. Now they did not content themselves with indifference and ridicule, but took to active violence. Once, when the Prophet was saying his prayers in the Ka'ba, lying prostrate, Abū Jahl placed the dirty foetus of a she-camel on his neck. As he used to go out of his house for prayers at early dawn, one way adopted to annoy him was that branches of prickly shrubs were

¹ 84:30; 34. ² 52:30

strewn on his way, so that owing to darkness he should become entangled in them. Sometimes dust was thrown at him; sometimes he was pelted with stones. One day, a number of men from among the Quraish nobility fell upon him. One, 'Uqba-ibn-Abī-Mu'ait̄ threw his mantle around his neck and twisted it till he was on the point of getting strangled. Abū Bakr, appearing on the scene, intervened and rescued him, saying: "Do you mean to kill a man, merely because he says that God is his Lord?"

Slave con- But the brunt of the oppression had to
verts tortured. be borne by those not coming of some family of note among the Quraish, especially by the slaves, male as well as female. These were subjected to the most cruel tortures. Islamic teachings, however, possessed a charm too strong for all these afflictions. They would part with life itself rather than give up Islam, which had taken deep root in their hearts. Bilāl, the Abyssinian, was tortured in a most heartless manner by his master to make him renounce Islam. His oppressor would make him lie flat on burning ground under the scorching heat of the Arabian sun at midday. Heavy slabs of stone were then placed on his chest. Notwithstanding such extremely painful torments he would loudly repeat in a state of senselessness, "*Aḥad*" (One), i.e. there is but one God. 'Ammār's father, Yāsir, and his mother, Sumayya, were persecuted in a most barbarous way. The tale of their afflictions makes one's hair stand on end. Yāsir's legs were tied to two camels and the beasts were driven in opposite directions. He was brutally torn to pieces. Sumayya

was killed in a similar brutal but far more disgraceful manner. Lubaina was the hand-maid of 'Umar. The latter used to go on beating her in his pre-conversion days till he would get tired. Then he would say: "I leave thee now, not because I pity thee, but because I am tired of beating thee."

Even converts of high birth were not spared. They were persecuted by their own kinsmen. 'Uthmān came of a noble family and occupied a high social position. Yet his uncle tied him with a rope and gave him a severe beating. 'Umar's treatment towards his cousin and sister has already been described. Zubair was wrapped up in a matting and made to inhale smoke. Abū Bakr was not immune. They were, one and all, subjected to one form of cruelty or another; but no amount of suffering could drive the love of Islam out of their hearts. The Meccans themselves were struck with wonder at such a steadfast adherence on their part. But their fortitude only added fuel to the fire of their persecutors' rage, and the latter resorted to still more bitter persecutions.

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CHAPTER X
EMIGRATION TO ABYSSINIA

"And those who fly for Allah's
sake after they are oppressed,
We will most certainly give them
a good abode in the world."
(The Holy Qur'an, 16: 41.)

First Emigration to Abyssinia. The fifth year after the call set in, and the Prophet had by now collected round him a band of over fifty devoted comrades. A common faith consolidated them into a brotherhood, which was cemented all the more closely by the persecutions on the part of the Meccans. Besides, their numerical strength was growing day by day. The Prophet was so tender-hearted that his heart would ache at the sight of pain even of his foes. How could he bear then the sight of the tortures of his own friends? Doubtless, these friends were a source of great strength to himself, and of much good to his cause. He could ill afford to dispense with a single one of them. Nevertheless when he saw that the Meccans were daily growing in their bitterness and cruelty, he advised the Muslims to betake themselves to a place of safety. Single-handed would he brave the worst storms of the Meccans' opposition, rather than see his companions subjected to such ruthless tortures. He had no anxiety, or dread of his infuriated foe, on his own account. He, therefore, advised his companions to seek shelter in Abyssinia, saying: "There is a land where no one is wronged—

a land of justice. Stay there until it should please Allāh to open for you a way out of these difficulties." The inhabitants of Abyssinia as well as their king, called the Negus, were Christians by faith. Consequently the first batch of emigrants, numbering eleven, was formed to sail for Abyssinia. Four of them were accompanied by their wives, 'Uthmān with his wife, Ruqayya, the Prophet's daughter, being among them. In the month of Rajab in the fifth year of the call, the party left Mecca, some mounted, others on foot. Arriving at the port they embarked in a hurry, and left the shores of their homeland to seek safety elsewhere.

Pursuit by The Quraish, as soon as they heard of Quraish. their departure, despatched their men post-haste to bring them back. To their disappointment, however, the vessel had already left, and they had to go back empty-handed. But this was not the end of their wrath. They were anxious that Islam should not get a foothold anywhere. It was at last decided to send a delegation to the King Negus to ask him not to give the Muslims shelter, and to hand them over to the Meccans. 'Abdullāh-ibn-Rabī' and 'Amr-ibn-'Āṣ were chosen for the mission, and they went to Abyssinia with handsome presents. The first step they took on reaching there was to enlist the sympathies of the priestly class. They told them that the Muslims had set up a religion which was also antagonistic to Christianity, and supplemented this appeal to their religious prejudice by making them valuable presents. Thus they succeeded in prevailing upon the clerics to exert their influence with the king on their behalf, and

made their way to the court of King Negus. They put up a claim for the extradition of the Muslim immigrants, who, they alleged, were guilty of an innovation in religion, in opposition to their ancestral faith as well as to Christianity. The King thereupon summoned the Muslims to his court, demanding of them to submit what defence they could, to the charge of heresy brought against them. On this, one of them, Ja'far-ibn-Abi Tālib, rose, and thus addressed the King:

Ja'far's address to Negus.

"O, King! we were an ignorant people, given to idolatry. We used to eat corpses even of dead animals, and to do all kinds of disgraceful things. We did not make good our obligations to our relations, and ill-treated our neighbours. The strong among us would thrive at the expense of the weak, till, at last, God raised a Prophet for our reformation. His descent, his righteousness, his integrity and his piety are well-known to us. He called us to the worship of God, and exhorted us to give up idolatry and stone-worship. He enjoined us to speak truth, to make good our trusts, to respect ties of kinship, and to do good to our neighbours. He taught us to shun everything foul and to avoid bloodshed. He forbade all manner of indecent things, telling lies, misappropriating orphans' belongings, and bringing false accusations against the chastity of women. So we believed in him, followed him, and acted upon his teachings. Thereupon our people began to do us wrong, to subject us to tortures, thinking that we might thus abjure our faith and revert to idolatry. When, however, their cruelties exceeded all bounds, we came out to seek an asylum in your country, where we hope, we shall come to no harm."

Negus' refusal to hand over Muslims.

After this Ja'far recited to him a passage from the Holy Qur'ān, which touched his heart. The Negus told the Quraish embassy that he would by no means hand over the refugees to them. Thus disappointed they hit upon

another plan. Next day, they tried to incite the King, by telling him that the heretics did not believe in the Divinity of Jesus. But in this too their hopes were frustrated. The Muslims confessed they did not look upon Jesus as God but as a prophet of God. The Negus picking up a straw and pointing to it said: "Jesus is in fact not even this much more than the Muslims have described him to be." The Quraish delegation was unsuccessful. This is known as the First Emigration to Abyssinia.

Reasons of pursuit. It is noteworthy that the Quraish felt so much upset at the Muslims' emigration to Abyssinia. They pursued them first to the port to capture them, and being disappointed, followed them to the court of the Negus. What, after all, made them so ill at ease? Was it the Muslims' anti-idolatrous propaganda that turned the Quraish so dead against them? But the emigrants were now too far off to offend their susceptibilities by speaking ill of their idols. To be sure, the animosity aroused through religious differences had by now become personal. They could not tolerate that the Muslims, whom they had driven from their homes, should flourish anywhere abroad. They were bent upon their destruction, and therefore went all the way long to the Negus to bring them into trouble. This exactly was the reason why they allowed the Prophet and his companions no rest, even at Medīna, where they subsequently emigrated. At Medīna, there was no power to shield the Muslim refugees against their blood-thirsty enemies, the Quraish, who, therefore, were emboldened to extirpate them.

with the sword. The instinct of self-preservation roused the Muslims to strike a blow in self-defence. This was the beginning of Islamic wars, entered upon as a purely defensive measure. The Quraish did not let them alone, even when they had driven them from their hearth and home. The Muslims were therefore left no alternative but to turn at bay and face their persecutors manfully. Nevertheless, there are critics who, blindfolding their eyes to solid historical facts, ascribe the initiatory step in these battles to the Prophet, and on that account stigmatize Islam as a religion of the sword. Nothing, however, can be further from the truth. The events in connection with the Abyssinian Emigration, as set forth above, throw enough light on the fact, that heresy or no heresy, the Quraish were bent upon an utter annihilation of the Muslim brotherhood at all costs.

The Second Emigration. When the Quraishite delegation returned unsuccessful from Abyssinia, their rage knew no bounds. They continued their persecutions with added fury. So far they had been viewing the Muslims' fortitude under such cruelties with great astonishment. But the Abyssinian emigration gave them a conclusive proof that the Muslims were ready to run all risks, and undergo every form of hardship in the cause of Islam. They would shrink from no danger in the path of Allāh. Moreover, when the rest of the Muslims at Mecca came to know of the Negus' generous protection extended to their brethren, a number of them left for Abyssinia next year. This is known as the Second Emigration to Abyssinia. The

Quraish did their utmost to check this tide of emigration, but all in vain. Besides children, as many as one hundred and one, both male and female, fled to Abyssinia. They settled there, all of them, with the exception of 'Uthmān and his wife, who returned to Mecca, soon after. It was not until seven years after the Prophet's flight from Mecca that they rejoined their Muslim brethren at Medīna. In accordance, with the Truce of Ḥudaibiya in the sixth year of Hijra there was to be a state of truce between the Muslims and the Quraish for ten years. This provided a certain amount of security for the Muslims in the land of Arabio, and made it possible for the Abyssinian Muslims to come back to their kith and kin. It also furnishes a clue to the fact that even in Medīna, the Muslims were not in a state of safety until 7 A.H. when the Truce of Ḥudaibiya brought them a brief respite.

Muslims' relations with Negus. The sympathetic treatment accorded to the Muslims by the Negus was gratefully reciprocated by the former. During their sojourn in the kingdom, when hostilities broke out with one of the adversary states, the Muslims ungrudgingly placed their quota of service at his disposal. They also prayed to God for his victory. This shows how grateful a people they were. From that early period, they had for their motto the Quranic verse that "nothing but good must be the return for good".¹

Alleged compromise with idolatry. An incident in connection with the First Emigration to Abyssinia is noteworthy.

Some time later, the chapter entitled *Al-Najm*¹ was revealed to the Prophet, at the end of which comes the verse enjoining prostration before God. The Prophet while reciting this chapter prostrated as soon as he came to the verse which says: "Then prostrate before God and worship Him."² According to an authentic report, the idolatrous Meccans present there also joined in the prostration, for they professed faith in God notwithstanding their worship of idols. A perverted version of this incident has been given by some. The Prophet, they allege, thinking it expedient to make a compromise with the idolators, allowed in this chapter a concession to idol-worshippers. And this is why the idolators too bowed down in prostration. But the report on which this allegation is based is absolutely unwarranted. There is no trustworthy report of the incident except the one referred to above. The fact that some Abyssinian emigrants returned home does not show that some compromise had been effected. The news of the unbelievers' prostration may, on the other hand, have created an impression that they had accepted Islam, and the news having reached the Abyssinian Muslims, some of them may have come back to their motherland. But as a matter of fact, the few emigrants who returned to Mecca did so with a view to informing the rest of their brethren of the peace and liberty they enjoyed under the rule of the Negus, and thus persuading them to accompany them thither, and this was what actually happened in the Second Emigration to Abyssinia.

¹ Chap. 53. ² 53 : 62.

CHAPTER XI

ATTEMPTS AT SUPPRESSION

“And had it not been that We had already established thee, thou wouldst certainly have been near to incline to them a little.”

(The Holy Qur'an, 17 : 74.)

Public Attempts to suppress the propagation preaching. of Islam were not confined to the persecutions to which the Prophet and his comrades were subjected. Many and varied were the ways adopted to extinguish the Divine light. Preaching was in the beginning carried on in secret. But soon the Prophet received Divine revelation to promulgate broadcast what he had been commissioned with and to warn his near relations¹. Thereupon he had to openly proclaim the Divine message. Climbing one day on Mt. Şafâ, he called out to each one of the Quraishite tribes till they all assembled there. “Have you,” enquired the Prophet, “ever heard me tell a lie ?” In one voice they replied that they had ever known him to be righteous and trustworthy. “If I should tell you that hidden behind this mountain is a large army ready to attack you,” enquired the Prophet, “would you believe me ?” “Certainly,” was the unanimous reply, “for we have never heard you tell a lie.” Then he announced to them the word of God, exhorted them to give up idolatry, to eschew all forms of evil, to

¹ 15 : 94 ; 26 : 214.

believe in the unity of God, and to come to the path of virtue. At this they all became furious, Abū Lahab behaving most rudely to him. By and by this man's enmity to the Prophet became extremely bitter. He and his wife would torment and persecute him in every way possible. In the days of pilgrimage when people from all parts of Arabia met together, the Prophet would move about among them communicating his message. Wherever he went, Abū Lahab would follow close upon his heels, warning the people not to take him seriously, for, he said, he was insane.

When the Quraish saw that neither oppression nor obstacles succeeded in suppressing the Islamic movement, and that its adherents did not mind undergoing any amount of hardship, and they would rather suffer exile than give up Islam, they secretly resolved to make away with the Prophet, the root cause of the whole trouble. Consequently, every effort was made to put an end to his life in an underhand manner, which failing, the Quraish made up their mind to make an open attempt on his life. But according to the social code of Arabia, every tribe was in honour bound to protect each one of its individual members. An attempt to take the life of the Prophet, it was apprehended, might lead to civil war. It was thus necessary to obtain the consent of Abū Ṭālib, the Prophet's uncle, before taking the proposed bloody step. Accordingly, a deputation, consisting of the Quraish chiefs, including Abū Jahl, waited upon Abū Ṭālib in this connection. In order to win him over to their wicked plot, they

First deputation to Abū Ṭālib.

addressed him thus : "Your nephew slights our gods, finds fault with our ancestral religion, calls us and our forefathers ignorant and misguided. You should deal with him yourself or permit us to settle accounts with him. You are as much duty-bound to vindicate the honour of our common faith as we are." Abū Ṭālib, however, put them off with evasive though polite words. Obviously the accusations brought against the Prophet were highly exaggerated. He never abused their gods, for the Holy Qur'ān positively forbids doing so : "Do not abuse those whom they worship besides Allāh".¹ The Holy Qur'ān, intact, as it is to-day, in all its original purity, may be consulted from one end to the other to see that there is not a word therein of abuse to the gods of the infidels. All it says concerning them is that they can do them no good, nor can they avert any harm that may come to them, and that polytheism and idolatry are evil courses.² In order to inflame Abū Ṭālib, the Quraish misrepresented these statements as abuses.

Secon depu- The Prophet, however, delivered his
tation. message, as usual, and as days rolled by, many a heart was deeply impressed with the truth of Islam. The Quraish, finding their previous warning to Abū Ṭālib utterly ignored, firmly resolved this time to press the point to a decisive issue. They reminded Abū Ṭālib of their first representation to him concerning the matter, and told him they could no longer tolerate that state of things. He must either withdraw his protection from the Prophet or make common cause

¹ 6 : 109. ² 25 : 55.

with him, so that they might fight it out to a finish. To be sure this was an ultimatum to Abū Ṭālib. It was, no doubt, a very critical situation. Abū Ṭālib found himself between the horns of a dilemma. The prospect of a war against his own kith and kin on the one hand, and the deep attachment he cherished for his nephew on the other, made it hard for him to decide which course to adopt. In this state of perplexity, he sent for the Prophet, and explained the entire situation to him. "Have pity on me," he said, "and do not charge me with a responsibility too heavy for me. I am not a match for the united opposition of the whole of the Quraish."

The Prophet's strong stand. A critical situation! The entire clan is thirsting for his blood, and, but for the intervention of Abū Ṭālib, would have taken his life in broad daylight. But alas! Abū Ṭālib's door is also about to close against him. No earthly protection is now there to shield him against the wrath of his enemies. His companions who would have laid down their lives for his sake, are far off on the continent of Africa. Does all this mean anything other than sure and imminent destruction? It were but human, should the Prophet's heart sink within him. It were but natural, should the instinct of self-preservation reconcile him to the expedient of coming to a compromise with his opponents, and thus, having saved his life, betake himself to some other place and there propagate his faith. Does any such inclination, perfectly excusable under circumstances so critical, creep into his heart? No, not the shadow of it. He

has an unshakeable conviction in Divine protection. He will not yield an inch of ground in regard to his mission, which is, in fact, the be-all and end-all of his life. No sooner do the above words come out of Abū Ṭālib's lips than he declares without the least hesitation: "O uncle! should they place the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left, in order to make me renounce this mission, it shall not be. I will never give it up until it should please God to make it a triumph, or I perish in the attempt." But conscious of the disappointment his attitude must have caused to his uncle, who had so tenderly brought him up and had been protecting him at great risk, tears welled up in his eyes and he departed with a sad heart. Abū Ṭālib had not abjured his ancestral form of worship, but of the Prophet's high character he was much enamoured. It was far easier to him to face death rather than leave the Prophet alone. Forthwith he sent for the Prophet again, and thus assured him: "Do whatever you will. Under no circumstances will I desert you."

Third depu- The Quraish had little doubt about
tation. Abū Ṭālib's yielding to their united
demand. They were much surprised when they heard
of his determination to stand by the Holy Prophet,
come what may. An internecine war among themselves,
they thought, was fraught with grave danger. It might
ruin the sovereign authority of their clan for good.
This time, therefore, they made an attempt to prevail
upon Abū Ṭālib by offering him a lure, instead of
forcing him with a threat. Taking 'Ammāra-ibn-Walīd,

a handsome youth, along with them, they asked Abū Ṭālib to adopt him as his son and hand over Muḥammad to them, to be executed for his offence against their established ancestral religion. "What a funny proposal!" replied Abū Ṭālib. "You want me to take charge of your boy to bring him up, while you should have mine to be put to death. This can never be." The Quraish were thus once more disappointed. Apprehending lest they should resort to some violent measures against his family, the Banū Hāshim, Abū Ṭālib summoned together all the members of the family, and forewarned them against the danger. It was unanimously agreed upon that the Holy Prophet would in no case be handed over to the Quraish, whatever measures they might adopt against Banū Hāshim. With the solitary exception of Abū Lahab, who had joined hands with the enemy, the entire family was prepared to take up arms in defence of the Holy Prophet. Such was the regard in which he was held by the whole family of Banū Hāshim. They all loved him for his lofty morals. Notwithstanding their religious differences with him, they were ready to protect him at the risk of their lives.

Quraish offer leadership and wealth.

The Quraish, however, had not yet exhausted their resources for arriving at a settlement without resort to bloodshed. They had yet another card to play. Persecution had proved futile, but allurements, it struck them, offered direct to the Holy Prophet, might yet succeed. Abū Ṭālib and the Banū Hāshim being inexorable, the only

alternative left was to try this method. A deputation was accordingly formed to come to an understanding with the Holy Prophet on this basis. They called on the Holy Prophet and offered him the most tempting terms, which were :

“If your ambition is to possess wealth, we will amass for you as much of it as you wish ; if you aspire to win honour and power, we are prepared to swear allegiance to you as our overlord and king ; if you have a fancy for beauty, you shall have the hand of the finest maiden of your own choice.”

Irresistible temptations no doubt ! From a destitute, helpless and persecuted man to a mighty potentate is a big lift. But the Holy Prophet's heart was free from the alloy of self-seeking. To the utter surprise and disappointment of the Quraish delegation, he replied :

“ I want neither pelf nor power. I have been commissioned by God as a warner to mankind. I deliver His message to you. Should you accept it, you shall have felicity in this life as well as in the life to come ; should you reject the word of God, surely God will decide between you and me.”

This frustrated the last attempt of the Quraish at a compromise. Persuasion through temptations proved as fruitless as persecution. The persecution was unbearable, but the temptation was far more irresistible. Were it not for Divine steadfastness infused into the Holy Prophet's bosom, the tortures inflicted on him and the temptations placed in his way would have shaken him from his position. But there he stood, firm as a rock, baffling all attempts to dissuade him from his mission. It is to this that the Holy Qur'ān alludes in the following verse : “And had it not been

that We had already made thee firm, thou wouldst certainly have been near to incline to them a little."¹

Ban against the Hashimites. Disappointed on all sides, the Quraish decided to resort to the use of their last weapon. It was the seventh year since the Call, and the majority of the Muslims had made good their escape to Abyssinia. Ḥamza and 'Umar had embraced Islam. Abū Ṭālib had refused point blank the Quraishite demand that he should withdraw his protecting hand from the Prophet. Excepting Abū Lahab, the whole of the family of Banū Hāshim had decided to stand by him, and fight for him till the last man. Moreover, the light of Islam went on spreading from one clan to another. The Quraish therefore decided to place a social ban on the Banū Hāshim. Inter-marriage and commercial relations with them were strictly forbidden. An agreement to this effect was drawn up and the scroll hung up in the Ka'ba, to give it a look of sanctity. On hearing of this, the Banū Hāshim betook themselves to a secluded part of Mecca, known as the *Shi'b*, the prohibited quarter. But Abū Jahl spared no pains to keep a vigilant watch to ensure that the blockade was strictly observed. When Ḥakīm-bin-Ḥazām, for instance, tried to supply some provision to Khadija, who was nearly related to him, Abū Jahl offered obstruction. But never throughout these trying times did the Banū Hāshim waver in their resolution. They cheerfully suffered all this for the sake of the Prophet, which they would never have done, if they had not had a deep-rooted

respect for him. During the period of ban the preaching of the Prophet was confined to within the four walls of the *Shi'b*. In the days of pilgrimage, however, when bloodshed was looked upon as an unpardonable sacrilege among the Arabs, he would come out and communicate his message to the people assembled from far and near. Abū Lahab would follow him like a shadow, warning the people against his teachings. He was a liar, he would say, and must not be believed. As a result, wherever the Prophet went to deliver his message, he met with the rebuff why it was that his own people discarded him, if he was righteous in his claim. In short, this was a period of great hardship for the Banū Hāshim, and of suspension of all propagating activities.

Ban removed. In the meantime, there arose a murmur against the hardship to which the Banū Hāshim were subjected. The gentle-hearted among the Quraish were feeling the injustice and severity of the ban, till the day came when some openly condemned it. Consequently, five of the leading men of the Quraish decided among themselves that the ban should be removed, and the agreement torn to pieces. The scroll containing the agreement, suspended in the Ka'ba, was eaten up by ants. This was brought to the notice of the Quraishite chiefs by Abū Ṭālib as a mark of Divine disapproval. It was consequently agreed upon that the pledge should be declared as null and void, if on inspection it was found defaced. Accordingly they went to the Ka'ba to examine the agreement, which turned out to be actually eaten up by

ants. The opportunity was eagerly seized upon by those who had already felt the injustice of the ban. Putting on their arms they went over in a body to the gate of the *Shi'ib* and openly announced their opposition to the agreement of interdiction. They brought the Banū Hāshim out and sent them to their respective homes. Nobody had the courage to offer any resistance. The ban lasted three years.

Death of Abū Ṭālib and Khadija. Immediately after coming out of the *Shi'ib*, Abū Ṭālib, the Prophet's uncle, who had so far proved his mainstay, passed away. Though he did not accept Islam, yet the Prophet had a very deep attachment for him. The bereavement was, therefore, a great shock to him. But calamities, they say, seldom come single. Shortly afterwards, his faithful wife and staunchest friend, Khadija, also died. She had all along served the Prophet whole-heartedly and had been a never failing source of solace to him in moments of sadness and sorrow. In her death he suffered an irreparable loss. Both these losses the Prophet sustained in the tenth year after the Call, which is on that account known in Islamic history as '*Ām-ul-Huzn*, i.e., the Year of Grief. With the loss of two great comforters and helpers, such as Abū Ṭālib and Khadija, the Prophet had to face greater difficulties. Their death ushered in a new era of troubles.

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CHAPTER XII
THE LATER MECCAN PERIOD

“And surely they purposed to
unsettle thee from the land that
they might expel thee from it,
and in that case, they will not
tarry behind thee but a little.”
(The Holy Qur’ān, 17 : 76.)

Journey to The Prophet had now to face still
Ta'if. greater difficulties in the propagation of
his message. Whatever restraint Abū Ṭālib and
Khadija had exerted on the malice of the Quraish was now
removed. Their hands were now perfectly free to deal
with the Prophet to the full gratification of their malice.
In spite of the gloomy situation, however, the Prophet's
conviction in his ultimate triumph remained unshaken.
When walking about one day, dust was thrown at him. He
came home; his daughter washed his head and shed tears
at the sad plight of her beloved father. “Do not weep,
my child,” he consoled his daughter, “Allāh will surely
help your father.” So deep-rooted was his faith in the
ultimate success of his mission, in the face of this bitter
opposition! He never entertained the idea of betaking
himself, like the rest of his companions, to Abyssinia,
where he would have found a safe asylum. He did not
for one moment despair of the regeneration of the
land of his birth. He felt confident that the
peninsula must some day awaken to the truth of Islam.
Surrounded as he was by a thick mist of disappointing
circumstances, his eye could yet perceive a ray of hope.

The conviction that his deadly enemies would one day be his devoted friends was deeply seated in his heart. The hard-heartedness of the Meccans, however, forced him to turn his attention to Ṭā'if, where he hoped people might listen to his word. Thither he went with Zaid in his company, and approached three respectable gentlemen, who were brothers, and came of the noblest family of the place. But to his disappointment, all of them turned a deaf ear to him. For about ten days he stayed there delivering his message to several people, one after another, but all to no purpose. On every side, he was met with the taunt that he must first convince his own people, if he was true in his claim. At last, he was asked to go away; but as soon as he walked out of the town, the dregs of society, at the instigation of the elders of the town, followed him hooting. They lined the route on both sides to a great distance, and as he passed along between them, he was pelted with stones in the legs. When dripping with blood and unable to walk further he would seat himself, a wretch would again raise him up by the hand. "Walk on," he would shout at him, "this is no place for you to rest at." This went on for about three long miles. He was pelted with volleys of stones, till his very shoes were covered with blood. At last, when his persecutors left him, he seated himself in an orchard, to take a little rest. The owner of this small garden, 'Utba-ibn-Rabi'a, a non-believer though he was, took pity on him and sent him a bunch of grapes by his Christian slave 'Addās. The Prophet, as he stretched out his hand towards the grapes, uttered the words,

"In the name of Allāh,"—words which every Muslim is commanded to repeat when setting his hand to any piece of work. Surprised at this, the slave curiously asked the Prophet what the words were. On being informed of the message of Islam, he readily accepted the truth.

Prophet's Rejected by man in every quarter, the prayer.

Prophet turned in this state of utter helplessness to Almighty God. His prayer is not an expression of the feelings of despondency or plaintiveness; on the other hand, notwithstanding apparent helplessness, it is full of confidence in the future. It runs thus:

"O my Lord! to Thee do I complain of the feebleness of my strength, of my lack of resourcefulness and of my insignificance in the eyes of people. Thou art most Merciful of all the merciful. Thou art the Lord of the weak. To whom art Thou to entrust me, to an unsympathetic foe, who would sullenly frown at me, or to a close friend, whom Thou hast given control over my affair. Not in the least do I care for anything except that I may have Thy protection for me. In the light of Thy face do I seek shelter—the light which illumines the heaven and dispels all sorts of darkness, and which controls all affairs in this world as well as in the hereafter. May it never be that I should incur Thy wrath, or that Thou shouldst be angry with me. There is no strength, nor power, but through Thee."

Would, there were a feeling heart within human bosom to appreciate the purity of the soul that gave utterance to sentiments so sublime, under circumstances so trying! Is it imaginable that the heart of an impostor should be capable of emotions so noble, especially when he gives vent to them immediately after

suffering so much? With marvellous calmness he underwent all the hardships that no son of man can bear. With surprising fortitude he bore privations that might drive others to self-destruction. What a firm faith in God, what a cheerful resignation to His supreme will, what an unalloyed spiritual happiness! All sufferings, he says, are insignificant so long as he enjoys God's pleasure.

Visits to pilgrims. A few days later he returned to Mecca, on the assurance of Muṭ'im-ibn-'Adī to protect his life. Here he awaited Divine instruction, as to whither he might be required to emigrate. The days of Pilgrimage came and he called on each one of the clans that had flocked there from all parts of Arabia. But whichever gathering he addressed, explaining Islamic principles, Abū Lahab would keep by him, telling the people not to believe him; for he was a heretic and wanted to overthrow the spiritual sway of the Lāt and the 'Uzzā. Consequently, he could attract little attention. Some of the clans harshly rejected him. But he did not lose heart. One tribe expressed a liking for his teachings, but pleaded their weakness to renounce their ancestral religion all at once. Another put him a question whether, in the event of his triumph, they would have a share in the kingdom he might achieve, should they join hands with him. In reply, the Prophet told them that it rested entirely with God to bestow kingdom on whomsoever He thought fit. The incident, though trivial, speaks volumes for the Prophet's sincerity of purpose. If personal ascendancy

were the object of his efforts, as so often alleged, what prevented him from winning over a whole clan, by just holding out a promise to them? But the fact is that the achievement of temporal power was never the goal of his endeavours. His heart was burning within him at the degenerate state of man. Man's elevation in the scale of humanity was the one purpose of his life. He was eagerly looking to Divine help, which, he had not the shadow of a doubt, must be forthcoming, but when, he could not tell.

First Pledge While thus preaching Islam to the of 'Aqaba. various clans at the time of pilgrimage, the Prophet happened to meet a few men of the Khazraj, a clan of Medina. After ascertaining who they were, he asked them if they were from among the associates of the Jews, to which they replied in the affirmative. Then he communicated the message of Islam to them. As Medina contained a considerable Jewish element in its population, they had already heard that the time of the appearance of the Promised Prophet, as prophesied in the Jewish scriptures, was at hand. Thus the claim of the Prophet to be *that Prophet* was not altogether a surprise to them. What with the intrinsic beauty of the teachings of Islam which the Prophet explained to them, and what with their expectation of the advent of that Prophet, the conviction that he was indeed the Prophet went home to these visitors. Consequently all the six accepted Islam. This came about in the eleventh year of the Call. On their return to Medina, much enthusiasm concerning the new faith prevailed there and the

Prophet's name became a household word. A considerable number joined the fold of Islam, and a dozen of them went over to Mecca next year to perform the pilgrimage. These swore allegiance to the Prophet, at a place known as 'Aqaba, in the following words:

We will not set up any associates with Allāh. We will not steal, nor commit fornication, nor kill our offspring, nor bring false accusations against others. We will not disobey the Prophet in anything that is right." This goes by the name of the First Pledge of 'Aqaba, and it took place in the twelfth year of the Call.

Second Pledge Mus'ab-ibn-'Umair was deputed by the of 'Aqaba.

Prophet to instruct them in the teachings of Islam. As a result of Mus'ab's efforts, Islam spread in Medīna by rapid strides. Leading men from among the Aus and the Khazraj embraced the faith, so that on the occasion of the next pilgrimage season as many as seventy-three men and two women visited Mecca. The Prophet met them, one night, at the same place 'Aqaba. 'Abbās, his uncle, who bore him company, though yet a non-believer, thus opened the conversation :—

"You are aware of the position Muḥammad occupies amongst us. So far we have been protecting him from his enemies. He is quite safe and respected here. But now you wish him to accompany you to your town and live with you there. If you believe you will fulfil the covenant on which you wish to take him there, and pledge to shield him in every way, you are at liberty to undertake the responsibility. If, however, you think you will not be able to protect him, better give him up from this very moment. And mind you, you are welcome to take him along with you, provided you are prepared to withstand the united opposition of both the Arabs and the Gentiles."

The Medinites, who came to be known as *Ansār*, or Helpers, in the history of Islam, replied that they were ready to swear allegiance to the Prophet just as it might please the latter. Thereupon the Prophet recited a passage from the Holy Qur'ān, delivered a brief sermon and then said: "I demand allegiance of you to the effect that you would defend me against my enemies, just as you defend your wives and children." On this, the chief among them, Barā-ibn-Ma'rūr, placing his hand on the Prophet's, said that they all swore allegiance to him on the point. This done, the Prophet appointed twelve of them as their chiefs.

It is thus evident that the Prophet went over to Medīna on the invitation of the Medinites themselves. It was customary in Arabia that whenever a member of a particular clan joined another, they would pledge themselves to protect him; for as a rule, a clan was responsible only for the protection of its own particular members. It also transpires from the event that the Prophet knew full well, as well as 'Abbās, that even in Medīna, the Meccans would allow him no rest. It was therefore necessary to have the Ansār's pledge to defend the Prophet in the event of an attack by the enemy. The apprehension was justifiable; the Meccans had already given ample proof of their malice by going all the way long to Abyssinia in pursuit of Muslim emigrants. The pledge taken on this occasion is known as the Second Pledge of 'Aqaba and it took place in the thirteenth year of the Call.

Meccans pursue the Ansār. The understanding arrived at, and the allegiance sworn, being strictly

confidential, its knowledge was confined to the few Muslims, and 'Abbās. Even the non-Muslims of Medīna did not know what exactly had happened. The Meccans, therefore, could get no information from them. But when the pilgrimage was over, and people had departed from Mecca, the matter became known ; for the Prophet himself was not keen about the secrecy. The Meccans went out in pursuit of the Medinite caravan, but could not overtake it. They got hold of two men, one of whom escaped, while the other, Sa'd-ibn-'Ubāda, was dragged all the way back to Mecca. But Sa'd had once done a kindly office to some Meccans at Medīna, and on their intercession he was set free. Thereafter the companions emigrated to Medīna, in small parties, in perfect secrecy from the Meccans.

Prophet at Mecca with only two companions.

At last the time came when the Prophet was left at Mecca in the company of but two of his companions, Abū Bakr and 'Alī, all the rest having reached Medīna. The event throws further light on the implicit faith which the Prophet had in God. The bitterness of the Meccans' enmity was daily growing in intensity. The fact that Islam was taking root in Medīna added fuel to the flame of their wrath. Almost all alone in the midst of his deadly foes, the Prophet was exposed to great danger. Nevertheless he was not so anxious on his own account as on that of his companions, whom he sent off to a place of safety, himself staying behind in the midst of his blood-thirsty enemies. On all sides he was hemmed in by such enemies, as had grown all the fiercer at the migration of the Muslims to Medīna and

their securing safety there. This affords a sure evidence as to how deep-rooted the Prophet's faith in Divine protection was. He could have betaken himself to Medīna before any other. No one of his friends would have had the least reason to grumble at such a course, for everybody knew that the safety of their faith, Islam, for which they were prepared to sacrifice their all, was bound up with that of the Prophet. But his deep love for his companions caused him greater anxiety on their account than on his own. He therefore removed them all to Medīna, himself remaining at Mecca in the midst of deadly foes, thereby displaying his anxiety for the safety of his comrades, and his firm conviction in the Divine promise concerning his personal safety.

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CHAPTER XIII
THE FLIGHT

“If you will not aid him, Allāh certainly aided him when those who disbelieved expelled him, he being the second of the two, when they were both in the cave, when, he said to his companion: ‘Grieve not, surely Allāh is with us.’”

(The Holy Qur’ān, 9 : 40.)

Council of the Quraisht. The fourteenth year of the Call set in, and the Prophet, with Abū Bakr and ‘Alī for his only companions, was left in Mecca in the midst of his enemies. All the rest of his comrades, bidding farewell to their homes, had taken shelter either in Abyssinia or Medīna. But the scene of the Prophet’s utter helplessness was yet to come. Abū Bakr would often ask him to emigrate to Medīna; but God, he replied, had not yet commanded him to do so. In this too there was a Divine purpose at work, which was made manifest by the final decision of the Quraish. Up till then, individual efforts to make away with the Prophet had been made, and all had failed. Bitter opposition had been offered, and severe persecution inflicted. But a drop was yet needed to fill the cup of the Meccans’ crimes to the brim. At last the hour came. Finding the Prophet almost all alone, they held a big conference in the *Dār-un-Nadwa* or the House of Assembly, where national affairs were discussed and settled. The chiefs of the Quraish met there to deliberate over what might be done with the Prophet.

Some thought he should be fettered, thrown into a cellar, and starved to death. But this was open to the objection that his companions, gaining strength some time, might effect his release. Another proposed that he should be exiled. But it was apprehended in this case, that wherever he might be sent, he might win over the people there with his impressive teachings, and, gaining strength, might some day overcome the Quraish. Abū Jahl, at length, came forward with the proposal that strong and stout youths of noble lineage should be selected, one from each of the Quraishite clans, and be equipped with sharp swords. They should fall upon the Prophet all in a body. Thus no particular clan would be held accountable for his murder. The Banū Hāshim would therefore have to content themselves with blood-money instead of vengeance. This was unanimously agreed to.

Prophet leaves his house and betakes to a cave.

While the Quraish were thus maturing their plans, Divine revelation informed the Prophet of their foul intent, requiring him not to remain in his bed that night. Sending for 'Alī, he informed him of the Divine command, and told him to keep in his bed in place of himself; for he had many a trust in his custody which he ('Alī) should duly make over to the respective owners the following morning, and then follow him to Medina. What a firm confidence in his integrity, notwithstanding such a strong opposition, that public trusts were still entrusted to his charge. And for this express purpose he commissioned 'Alī to stay behind, whereas Abū Bakr was informed to make necessary

preparations for the flight; for the Divine behest had been received. Abū Bakr eagerly enquired if he might accompany him. On being told that he should, he burst into tears of joy. But why at all such intense pleasure at the prospect of hardships and troubles? Only because he would be in the company of him for whom he was prepared to sacrifice his all. Abū Bakr had already arranged for two camels, in anticipation of this hour. All other necessaries being forthwith provided, an appointment was made between him and the Prophet. Presently after dusk, the body of the armed men, drawn up from among the Quraishite tribes, laid siege to the Prophet's house, ready to fall upon him as soon as he should venture out. It was against the Arab sense of chivalry to kill any one within the four walls of his house. 'Alī, however, who was to return deposits, was lying in the Prophet's bed. This gave the Quraish the ostensible impression that the Prophet was there and lulled them to a sense of security that their victim was well in their hand. Meanwhile, the Prophet, perceiving it was dark enough and trusting in the protecting hand of Allāh, Who had all these thirteen years preserved him in the midst of his enemies, calmly walked out through the midst of his would-be assassins and went to Abū Bakr's house as pre-arranged. Both set out for Medīna and reached a certain cave known as the cave of Thaur, at a distance of three miles from Mecca. Abū Bakr went in first, cleaned it and closed the holes that he could feel in the dark cave. Then the Prophet followed in. The names of two caves occupy an important position in the

history of Islam. It was in the cave of Hirā that Divine Call first came to the Holy Prophet. Now it was in the cave of Thaur that Islam was taking a new birth. The Flight is a red-letter day in the annals of Islam, so much so that the Muslim calendar begins from this time. Thus, it may be said that Islam sprang from these two caves.

Enemy on the mouth of the cave. Next morning, at daybreak, the Quraish were amazed to find 'Alī getting out of the Prophet's bed. Careful search was made on all sides. Large prizes were offered. A tracking party, following the footprints of the fugitives, reached the mouth of the cave. Abū Bakr, hearing the sound of their footsteps, grieved within himself, not on his own account, but for one whose life was dearer to him than his own. It was a critical moment! The sword of the blood-thirsty enemy is hanging on their heads. Just a peep inside, and the inmates are sure to be cut into pieces. In such a situation the bravest of hearts may sink, and the calmest of minds may be bewildered. The enemy is intent upon their murder. Death is staring them in the face. There is no way of escape. There is no earthly protection left. Even in this extreme hour of uttermost helplessness the Prophet's heart was at perfect peace and knew no fear. With a supreme and matchless faith and trust in the protecting arm of God, the All-mighty, the All-protecting, he quieted the anxiety and fears of his friend, with the words: "Do not be grieved, for surely Allāh is with us." Surely this could not be a voice from within. For the heart of a mortal human being, as the Prophet

was, could not by itself preserve such an imperturbed state, under circumstances so imminently perilous. It was not the voice from within, but the voice from above, from Allāh, the Lord of all, come to console and compose a heart afflicted in His path. And who but the All-knowing God could tell that notwithstanding their reaching the very mouth of the cave, the enemy would still be unable to get at them ?

For full three days the Prophet remained in the cave. Abū Bakr's son used to bring them news of all that went on in the town. His daughter, Asmā, used to bring them food. His servant, 'Āmir-ibn-Fuhaira, while tending his goats, would drive them up to the mouth of the cave and milk them for its inmates. At last, when the search was over, and all was clear, they came out on the fourth day. They took one 'Abdullāh-ibn-Uraiqīṭ, a non-Muslim, as their guide. 'Āmir mounted behind Abū Bakr on the same camel. When on the way the heat grew scorching, they halted to take rest. Abū Bakr, cleaning the ground in the shade of a rock, spread his mantle for the Prophet to lie down upon, and himself went off in search of some food. Coming across a Bedouin tending his goats, he cleaned the teats of a goat, milked her in a clean pot and then covering it with a piece of cloth brought it to the Prophet. The Prophet's companions knew how he loved cleanliness.

The Quraish had announced that whosoever should apprehend the Prophet should have a hundred camels as reward. Pursued by Surāqah. Among those that were on the look-out for him, in

order to win the prize, there was one, Surāqa-ibn-Mālik by name. A certain man gave him the news that he had seen three mounted persons on their way to Medīna. Surāqa was a strong-built man. Without letting anybody know, he put on his armour, mounted on a swift horse, and went out in pursuit of them. On the way the horse stumbled, and he fell down. On drawing lots to divine whether he should continue the chase or not, as the Arabs used to do on such occasions, he found the reply in the negative. Disregarding the omen he resumed the chase, but the same stumbling and the same forbidding lot followed. Again he jumped on horseback and galloped on till he came quite close to the Prophet, and was about to shoot an arrow at him, when the horse stumbled once more, its feet this time sinking deep into the sand. "Then it transpired to me," Surāqa is reported to have recounted the incident later on, "that it was pre-ordained that the Prophet's cause should triumph." Abandoning the intention of murder, he came to the Prophet with a penitent heart, begged his forgiveness, asking not to be punished for his offence when the Prophet should come to power. The Prophet gave him in writing the promise asked for. Pen and ink were always kept at hand, in order to write down Divine revelation as soon as it was received. He also gave Surāqa the happy news that the time would come when he would be wearing the gold bangles of the ruler of Persia. This was a wonderful vision of the event that was to come about sixteen years later—an event far beyond the imaginative faculty of man, especially in the case of one fleeing for his very life. In this state

of helplessness, with his life hanging in the balance, the Prophet gets the happy news of the kingdom of the Chosroes of Persia coming into his possession. The words then uttered found fulfilment during the caliphate of 'Umar, when at the fall of Madāin, the capital of Persia, Surāqa was sent for and decorated with the bangles of the Chosroes.

Consoling The marvellous steadfastness of the revelation. Prophet, displayed in the midst of such overwhelming perils, was due to the Divine revelations that came down every now and then to cheer him up. "Verily, He that enjoined the Qur'ān upon thee shall bring thee back to Mecca,"¹ was another consolation which he received in the course of his flight to Medīna. In fact, the emigration was to him nothing unexpected. He had been informed long before that he would have to leave Mecca and that the rise of Islam was to commence from some other centre. The Holy Qur'ān abounds in prophecies to this effect. Just at the time when the storm of opposition was at its highest, and the helplessness of the Prophet at its uttermost, it was proclaimed that Islam must triumph in the long run, even though the opponents should exert themselves tooth and nail. The accounts of the previous prophets, the opposition they had met with, and their ultimate success, as narrated in the Holy Qur'ān, were mostly revealed in this period of the Prophet's career, as a sort of consolation to sustain him in his troubles. A little before the flight, he had a vision that he had emigrated to a place, rich and fertile. It was no other than

Medīna, which is still famous for its gardens.

Importance of the Flight. That the prosperity of Islam was bound up with the *Hijra* or the Flight, was well-known to the early Muslims. Thus they looked upon this event as the birth of Islam, and the Muslim calendar, as already observed, dates not from the first Call in the cave of Hīrā, but from the time of the Prophet's flight. It was in the *Hijra* that the climax of the Prophet's helplessness was reached. Therefore the Holy Qur'ān refers to this event as a testimony to the fact that the helping hand of God was at the back of Islam, which was also a guarantee for its ultimate success. If the Meccans did not help him, the Holy Qur'ān says, Allāh did surely help him, in the hour of his extreme helplessness, when he had to flee from Mecca, with but one companion.¹ The two had to take refuge in a cave, it goes on to say, but even there they were not safe. The pursuers following close on their heels, traced them up to the mouth of the cave. His companion felt anxious that they were overtaken. At such an anxious moment, he consoled his friend not to entertain any fear, for Allāh was surely with them. This implicit and deep-rooted faith in Divine help was in fact the very secret of his courage and hope under the most trying and discouraging circumstances. Never did a word of despair or complaint escape his lips. What a contrast ! There was a prophet who, when confronted by such overpowering obstacles, uttered words of despair saying he would rather join his forefathers. There was another who expressed similar feelings of

despair in a state of extreme helplessness : “ *Eli, Eli, Lama Sabaktani* ” (O my God, O my God, why hast Thou forsaken me) ? But Muhammad, peace and the blessings of God be on him, knew no despondency, no despair, no dismay. In the most critical situations, his heart is all the more aglow with hope. In this hour of dire helplessness, when, humanly speaking, the very last shelter in the cave appeared to have also been withdrawn, he exclaims with a heart full of hope and confidence : “ Most surely Allāh is with us.”

The change brought about in Mecca.

During the Meccan period, extending over thirteen years, the Holy Prophet had to work in the teeth of the very bitterest opposition. His spiritual force produced about three hundred giants of spirituality, who never for a single moment wavered in their faith in him, stood by him in spite of excruciating tortures, bade farewell to their homes and their property, but did not desert him. The phenomenal transformation brought about by him in the brief space of thirteen years, notwithstanding the united resistance of the whole nation, has won unwilling appreciation, even from a critic like Muir, who thus draws a sketch of his companions :

“ In so short a period, Mecca had by this wonderful movement, been rent into two factions which, unmindful of the old landmarks of tribe and family, had arrayed themselves in deadly opposition one against the other. The Believers bore persecution with a patient and tolerant spirit, and though it was their wisdom to do so, the credit of a magnanimous forbearance may be freely accorded. One hundred men and women, rather than

abjure their precious faith, had abandoned home and sought refuge, till the storm should be overpast, in Abyssinian exile. And now again a larger number, with the Prophet himself, were emigrating from their fondly loved city with its sacred Temple, to them the holiest spot on the earth, and fleeing to Medina. There the same marvellous charm had within two or three years been preparing for them a brotherhood ready to defend the Prophet and his followers with their blood. Jewish truth had long sounded in the ears of the men of Medina ; but it was not until they heard the spirit-stirring strains of the Arabian Prophet that they too awoke from slumber, and sprang suddenly into a new and earnest life. The virtues of his people may be described in the words of Mahomet himself :

‘ The servants of the Merciful are they that walk upon the earth softly, and when the ignorant speak unto them, they reply, peace.

‘ They that spend the night worshipping their Lord, prostrate and standing ;

‘ And who say, O our Lord ! turn away from us the torment of Hell ; verily, from the torment thereof there is no release. Surely it is an evil abode and resting place.

‘ Those that when they spend are neither profuse nor niggardly, but take a middle course ;

‘ Those that invoke not with God any other god ; and slay not a soul that God has forbidden, otherwise than by right ; and commit not fornication ;.....

‘ They who bear not witness to that which is false ; and when they pass by vain sport, they pass it by with dignity.

'They who, when admonished by the revelations of the Lord, fall not down as if deaf and blind;

'Who say, O our Lord! Grant us of our wives and children such as shall be a comfort unto us, and make us examples unto the pious.'"

As a matter of fact, these as well as hundreds of other verses in the Holy Qur'ān, which depict the characteristics of the virtuous, do not draw an imaginary picture. They set forth a true description of the lives of the Prophet's companions. It was the soul force of a single personality that wrought this miraculous transformation. In a marvellously short time, hundreds of people, sunk in vice and superstition, given to the most debased forms of idolatory and fettered in the shackles of the dirtiest and most cruel social customs, were uplifted and raised to the heights of morality. He breathed a new life into them, so that the principles of truth, of virtue, of doing good to fellow-men, which they once accepted, they never parted with, even though harassed in a most terrible manner. He infused into them a sense of human dignity and responsibility. Here indeed was the greatest benefactor of humanity. :

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CHAPTER XIV
THE NEW ERA
(Early days at Medīna)

“Surely those who believed and fled (from their homes) and struggled hard in Allāh’s way with their property and their souls, and those who gave shelter and helped—these are the guardians of each other...”
(The Holy Qur’an, 8:72.)

The Prophet reaches Medīna. The Prophet and his companions accomplished in eight days the journey to Medīna, which usually takes eleven days, and arrived there on the 12th of Rabī’ I, in the 14th year of his mission, corresponding to June 28, A.D. 622. News of his disappearance from Mecca had reached there before him, but his three days’ hiding in the cave was known to no one. The city had been in eager expectation of his arrival. Each morning some people would go out for miles on the road to Mecca to watch the appearance of their Master. The tedious hours of impatient expectancy were at last over, and the illustrious visitor appeared on the horizon of Medīna. At a distance of three miles from the city lies the habitation known as Qubā. It is considered as the suburbs of Medīna. Here dwelt several families from among the *Anṣār* or the Helpers, of which that of ‘Amr-ibn-‘Auf was the most distinguished. Before entering the city, the Prophet accepted his

invitation and stopped at Qubā. A number of the *Muhājirīn*, i.e. the Emigrants, were also putting up here. Muslims from the city flocked to Qubā in crowds to meet their revered leader. For fourteen days the Prophet stayed here. 'Ali too joined him at this place. A mosque was built here, the first mosque in the history of Islam, known as the mosque of Qubā. It is of this mosque that the Holy Qur'ān speaks in the ninth chapter as "the mosque founded on piety."¹ The Prophet and the companions erected it with their own hands, all working as ordinary workmen and labourers. This was followed by his entry into the city of Medīna, which was wearing a look of jubilation all round. People came out to greet him, clad in their gayest attire. Women climbed to the tops of their houses, and sang in chorus to welcome their noble guest. Everyone was desirous that he should stop at his house. Slackening the reins of his camel, he let her have her own way. Wherever she should stop, he said to the eager crowds around him, there would he lodge. The camel moved on till she reached an open space in front of Abū Ayyūb's house, where she halted.

The Prophet's Mosque. The courtyard belonged to two orphan boys. They offered it as a free gift for the erection of a mosque, but the Prophet would not have it without payment. They had therefore to accept the price. The first thing done was the construction of a mosque here, the Prophet and his comrades working at it with their own hands. Each

looked upon this labour of love as a proud privilege and, as they worked, all chanted in a chorus after the Prophet, "O Lord! there is no felicity, but the felicity of the Hereafter; O Lord! help the Helpers and the Refugees." The mosque was a monument of simplicity—walls made of mud bricks, the roof supported by trunks of palm-trees, and covered over with the leaves and twigs of the same. As such, it could not keep out rain, which would make the unpaved floor all muddy. To remove this difficulty, the floor was strewn with gravel. In a corner of the courtyard, a sort of a platform with a shed was raised to accommodate those having no home or family. Those who lived there were known as the residents of the *Şuffa* or Platform. This was, so to speak, a kind of seminary attached to the mosque, for these people devoted their whole time to the study of religion. Adjoining the mosque were erected two apartments for the household of the Prophet.

Call to prayer. While in Mecca, the Muslims could not say their prayers openly in congregation. Now that the peaceful conditions of Medīna permitted of holding prayers publicly, various ways, as to how to summon the faithful to prayers at the fixed hours, were one day considered. The same night, 'Umar had seen a vision to the effect that a certain man was repeating the words *Allāh-u-Akbar*, *Allāh-u-Akbar* and so forth—the full text of the Muslim call to prayer, since in vogue. Next morning he narrated his vision to the Prophet. Another of the

companions, too, had had exactly the same vision. This was approved by the Prophet as the call to prayer. The first Friday congregation prayer was held here on the day when the Prophet left Qubā and entered into the city of Medina.

A Muslim Prayers being thus regulated, the brotherhood. Prophet next turned to the question of providing for the Refugees. Most of them, while in Mecca, lived in ease and plenty, but they had to leave their wealth and property all behind. So the Prophet established a brotherhood between the Helpers and the Refugees – a brotherhood unique in the history of the world, and in respect of the sincerity of the fraternization. Each of the Refugees was bound with one of the Helpers in a bond of brotherhood. The fellow-feeling and love on which this new brotherhood was founded, were practised in a most wonderful way. Each one of the Helpers took a brother Refugee home with him and placed half of his house at his disposal and equally divided all his goods and chattels with him. The Helpers were an agricultural people, and wished to divide their farms equally with their brethren. The Refugees were tradesmen by profession, quite unused to farming. On realising this, the Helpers said they would do the whole labour themselves and give half the produce to the Refugees. So strong, in short, was this new tie that it surpassed even the relationship of two real brothers. When either of the couple thus joined passed away, his property was inherited, not by his brother-in-blood, but by his brother-in-faith. But the Holy Qur'ān forbade that the tie should have such a

far-reaching effect, and enjoined the inheritance to go in the natural course to the blood-relations.¹

Flourishing trade of the Refugees. If such was the genuine sacrificial spirit with which the Helpers embraced their brethren-in-faith, the Refugees too did not take undue advantage of their sympathy. One 'Abdur Raḥmān-ibn-'Auf, when offered half of everything owned by his brother Helper, expressed his gratitude for the kindness, and asked him only to show him the way to the market and he would manage his own living, and in a short time he developed a flourishing business of his own. Similarly, the rest of the Refugees also took to trade. Those who could find nothing to set their hand to, would work as ordinary porters, thereby not only maintaining themselves, but also sparing something to contribute towards the *Bait-ul-Māl* or the Public Treasury, to be expended on communal welfare. Before long, their business flourished to such an extent that the merchandise caravans of some of them consisted of seven hundred camels each. There was a time—a time of want—when, on the arrival of a guest, the Prophet, finding no provisions in his own house, asked Abū Ṭalḥa, one of the companions, to entertain him. On going home with the guest, Abū Ṭalḥa found that the food was hardly enough for his own children. To avoid the awkward situation, light was put out, and whatever food there was, was served to the guest, Abū Ṭalḥa and his wife, who had to bear him company as hosts, taking nothing, but only showing by the movements of their hands and mouths as though

they were also partaking of the food. The food being just enough for the guest, the whole family went without any. But the Muslims worked so hard that poverty was soon changed into plenty and prosperity, and the Muslims began to live a comfortable life. Under both of these fluctuations of fortune, however, they conducted themselves with admirable spirit. Neither in the state of indigence did they ever grumble, nor in the hour of affluence did they become extravagant. They spent it in the way of Allāh—in helping the poor, the needy, the orphans, and the residents of the *Ṣuffa*, whose sole occupation was to attend the whole day long to the teachings of the Prophet and spend their nights in prayers. Out of these sprang up the band of religious teachers and preachers who carried the torch of Islam far and wide, to different countries and different people. The well-known Abū Huraira, through whom a vast number of the Prophet's sayings have come down to us, was one of these. As they had no means of livelihood, the well-to-do among the Muslims used to invite them to take food with them. It is recorded that Sa'd alone sometimes took home as many as eighty.

A pact between various tribes. The third important matter which the Prophet addressed himself to was to establish friendly relations between the various tribes living in Medīna. The Jews were a considerable power here. They used to enter into alliance with the tribes of Aus and Khazraj and to take part in their internecine warfare. It appears they were Arabs by descent, but formed a distinct unit by reason

of their adoption of Judaism. They were subdivided into three clans, the Banū Qainuqā', the Banū Nadzīr and the Banū Quraīza. The other inhabitants of the town were the Aus and the Khazraj, always at war with each other. Of the two chief clans of the Jews, the Banū Quraīza were the allies of the Aus, while the Banū Nadzīr joined the Khazraj. Now it so happened that the major portion of the Khazraj and the Aus embraced Islam. So the Prophet concluded a pact between the Muslims and the Jews. The main terms were as follows: Firstly, the Muslims and the Jews shall live as one people. Secondly, each one of the parties shall keep to its own faith, and neither shall interfere with that of the other. Thirdly, in the event of a war with a third party, each was bound to come to the assistance of the other, provided the latter were the party aggrieved and not the aggressors. Fourthly, in the event of an attack on Medīna, both shall join hands to defend it. Fifthly, peace, when desirable, shall be made after consultation with each other. Sixthly, Medīna shall be regarded as sacred by both, all bloodshed being forbidden therein. Seventhly, the Prophet shall be the final court of appeal in cases of dispute.

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CHAPTER XV
THE BATTLE OF BADR

" Verily, Allāh assisted you
at Badr, while you were weak."
(The Holy Qur'an, 3 : 122.)

Quraish Having settled at Medīna, the Muslims
grow more in- were no longer molested in the
imical. observance of their religion. Mosques were
erected and call to prayer was freely made; but let it
not be taken to imply that enmity to Islam had ceased
to exist. While the Muslims enjoyed perfect religious
liberty within the walls of Medīna, the fire of malice
kept smouldering in the same proportion in the hearts
of the Meccans. Hostility went on growing both in
intensity and extent. When even a small band had
emigrated sometimes before to Abyssinia, the Quraish
were too jealous to leave them in peace there, and
followed them right up to the court of King Negus to
bring about their destruction. Now that the Prophet
and all the Muslims were safely settled at Medīna, and
were steadily gaining in power and influence, the
Quraish could not remain inactive.

Attack on 'Abdullāh-ibn-Ubayy, an important
Medīna appre- personality of Medīna, possessed
hended. immense influence there. Before the
immigration of the Prophet, the people of Medīna were
thinking of making him their over-lord. Naturally enough,
when the Prophet arrived there, his personality was
eclipsed. He felt the sting of jealousy and maintained

a hostile attitude towards the Muslims. The Quraish also instigated him to expel the Muslims from there. But a large number of his own tribesmen had already joined the fold of Islam. An attempt to offer an open resistance to the Prophet might lead to a civil war among his own people. Disappointed in 'Abdullāh-ibn-Ubayy, the Quraish began to incite the inhabitants of the strip of land lying between Mecca and Medīna. Being the custodians of the sacred House of Ka'ba, they commanded the respect of the whole of Arabia. They were thus in a position to exert considerable influence upon the tribes. The success of the Quraishite propaganda among these people set the Muslims once more on their guard. On all sides they were hemmed in by enemies, and even within the walls of Medīna, a deep undercurrent of opposition, set in motion by 'Abdullāh-ibn-Ubayy, was in progress. Notwithstanding the compact, no confidence could be reposed in the Jews. Nor could 'Abdullāh-ibn-Ubayy be relied upon. The Muslims, therefore, felt great concern with regard to their safety. Attack was apprehended every moment from without and treachery from within.

Small detachments of the Quraish used to go out on marauding expeditions and scour the country right up to the outskirts of Medīna. Once, one such party lifted camels from the very pastures of the town. In fact, ever since the Emigration, they were anxiously looking for an opportunity to cause trouble and extirpate Islam with the sword. They had made every preparation for an incursion upon Medīna. The situation called for all

Muslims had to remain on the defensive.

vigilance on the part of the Muslims. Divine revelation had also been received, permitting the unsheathing of the sword in self-defence. The words of the Holy Qur'ān in this connection are significant enough, and deserve the close attention of critics who stigmatise Islam, in season and out of season, as the religion of the sword. The Holy Qur'ān says: "Permission is granted to those against whom war is waged, because they have been tyrannized."¹ And elsewhere: "Fight in the way of Allāh against those who fight against you and do not transgress these limits."² Thus warfare is restricted by two conditions. It must not be waged but in self defence, and secondly it must cease as soon as the necessity for it has passed. Under the behests of the Holy Qur'ān, therefore, a Muslim cannot play the part of an aggressor in a battle. He must wait till the enemy has struck the first blow. This much as to the commencement of fighting, but subsequently at every stage in the course of action he has to observe perfect self-restraint so that if the enemy should show inclination towards peace, he is bound to meet it more than half way, suspending hostilities then and there. He must not transgress the limits.

Precautionary measures. By way of precaution the Prophet had to adopt certain measures. It was necessary under the circumstances to obtain accurate information as to the plans and movements of the Quraish. Establishment of friendly relations with the various Bedouin tribes in the vicinity of Medina was also urgently called for. With these ends in view, the Prophet despatched small reconnaissance parties to

¹ 22 : 39. ² 2 : 190.

keep an eye on the movements of the enemy as well as to approach certain tribes to secure their neutrality. Besides, such a precautionary measure would perhaps serve as a check on the aggressive designs of the enemy. The Muslims, they would realise, were not off their guard, and they would consequently think twice before taking the fateful step. This would also alarm them concerning their Syrian trade to which they owed their whole prosperity. Situated as Medīna was, on the trade route from Mecca to Syria, disruption of relations with the Muslims would seriously endanger their caravans. This, it was hoped, would be effective enough to keep their hostile intentions in abeyance. The parties thus sent out had strict orders to abstain from picking up quarrels.

In consequence of the negotiations referred to above, several of the neighbouring tribes entered into agreement with the Muslims, idolatrous like the Meccans as they were. These pacts, it must be noted, were of a purely defensive character. The terms of one, for instance, which speak for themselves, were as follows: "This is the script of Muḥammad to the Banū Ḥamza. Their life and property shall be safe. Should some enemy attack them, they shall be assisted by the Muslims, unless they wage war against Islam. They shall also come to the Prophet's help when called upon."

It so happened that about the end of the month Jumādī II, 2 A.H., one such party was sent out under 'Abdullāh-ibn-Jaḥsh. They were given sealed instructions by the Prophet, requiring

them not to open the cover, until two days had passed. When opened as directed, after two days' march, it was found to contain the orders that the party should proceed to a certain place, Nakhla, and there gather information about the Quraish schemes. It was nothing more than just a precautionary measure, lest the enemy should fall upon the Muslims by surprise. There could be no other motive whatsoever, no intention of an attack on Mecca. The Muslims were much too weak to think of any such design. The duty of the preservation of the small Muslim brotherhood devolved upon the Prophet. And like a skilled general he realized the importance of keeping a watch on the movements of the enemy.

Ḥadẓramī's murder. On reaching Nakhla, as directed in the sealed letter, 'Abdullāh-ibn-Jaḥsh came across a few Quraishite traders on their way back from Syria. In contravention of the express orders of the Prophet, he fell upon them, killing one 'Abdullāh-ibn-Ḥadẓramī, and taking two captives. When the news reached the Prophet, he severely reprimanded 'Abdullāh for transgressing his orders. The Quraish, who had been anxiously looking for an excuse, were thus afforded the long-awaited opportunity to give vent to their wrath. No great importance, under the then conditions of Arab society, could be attached to an accidental murder such as Ibn Ḥadẓramī's. In fact, it was a commonplace accident, of daily occurrence. The usual course followed in all such cases was to demand blood-money. But the Quraish wanted a pretext with which to rouse the general populace against the Muslims and Ibn Ḥadẓramī's murder furnished it. They took about two

months in making the necessary preparations and fell upon Medīna in the month of Ramadzān in the year 2 A.H. Thus came about what goes in the history of Islam by the name of the battle of Badr.

Qurais h
attack
Medna. By a strange coincidence, a QuraisHITE trading caravan under the leadership of Abū Sufyān was, about this very time, on its way back from Syria. Before departure, Abū Sufyān sent word to Mecca to arrange for the protection of the caravan. This has led to the unwarranted conclusion that the Muslims wanted to waylay the caravan, and hence followed the battle of Badr. The idea is absolutely unfounded. This very caravan had on its way to Syria passed by Medīna quite unmolested. Again, in all their attempts to rouse the people to the attack, and in all their preparations, the QuraisH leaders never uttered a word as to the alleged insecurity of the caravan. The murder of Ibn Ḥadzramī was the only incident they made use of for arousing great excitement for vengeance. Besides, the caravan, deviating its course from the usual route, and passing along the coast, had safely reached Mecca, before the two armies met at Badr. It is thus absolutely baseless to impute any such motives to the Muslims. The long-standing anxiety of the QuraisH to crush the growing power of Islam, was the only cause that led to the battle. The Muslims were in fact dragged into it. The very fact that the Muslim strength counted only 313, including boys, all poorly armed, shows that they could not much relish the idea of a battle against a force 1,000 strong, fully

equipped. The Holy Qur'ân thus depicts their state of mind, when they were called upon to stand up for their defence: "A party of the believers were surely averse. . . . As if they were being driven to death."¹ There were many who looked upon it, it says, as a great hardship, thinking they were being thrust into the very jaws of death. Nevertheless they had to strike a blow in self-defence. The Prophet summoned them together, explained the situation to them and they could not help taking the field against a foe who was bent upon striking at their very existence. The Helpers had promised to defend the Prophet only within the walls of Medîna, but now the situation required to meet the enemy before they should attack the town. Still, when the Prophet turned towards them to know their mind, he found them all ready to follow his lead and to stand by him under the severest trials. This small band of Muslims hastily recruited and ill-equipped, placing their reliance on Allâh, marched out towards the road of Mecca, to check the onslaught of the Quraish. It was inadvisable to let the flames of fighting approach their homes at Medîna. Reaching Badr, so called after a well of the same name, they found the Quraish army already encamped there. They did the same.

Prophet praying in a field. Numerically the Muslim force was hardly one-third of the Quraish. Besides, the latter were composed of skilled veterans, while the Muslims had recruited even inexperienced youths. Therefore, neither in respect of

number, nor in that of strength and skill, were the Muslims a match for the enemy. This caused the Prophet the deepest anxiety. Retiring into a small hut, set up for him, he addressed Allāh with tearful eyes: "O Allāh! shouldst Thou suffer this small band of believers to perish this day, no one will be left on earth to worship Thee and carry Thy message to the world." Having offered special prayers he came out of the hut with a smile on his face, and loudly recited the Quranic verse, revealed long since: "Soon shall the hosts be routed and they shall turn their backs."¹

The fight The Quraish, on the other side, were thoroughly equipped. In obedience to the Quranic injunction, the Muslims desisted from advancing for an attack until the enemy should strike the first blow. At last, three of the Quraish champions came forward and challenged an equal number from among the Muslims to meet them. It was the fashion in Arab warfare in those days that before the commencement of a general conflict between the opposing armies, single-handed combats were tried. The gauntlet was taken up by three from among the Muslims who stepped forward to meet them. And it so happened that all the three Quraish heroes were killed in the duels. This was followed by a few more duels, and then the fighting became general. The Quraish army fell upon the Muslims, but the latter firmly held to their position, and repulsed them. A remarkable phenomenon of Divine assistance came to pass. Almost all the Quraish chiefs, the ringleaders of

the deadly campaign against Islam, were slain in action. Abū Jahl suffered death at the hands of two youths from among the Anṣār. In all, seventy of the hostile army fell in the field. Seeing their chiefs fall, the rank and file were seized with confusion and took to flight. The Muslims pursued them, and took about seventy prisoners. On the Muslim side, the casualties were only fourteen.

The conflict of Badr presents a striking scene of Divine help, perhaps unique in one respect, in the annals of warfare. It does often happen, that an army having smaller numerical strength but otherwise well-equipped, composed of valiant soldiers, well-disciplined and skilled in the use of arms, defeats larger hosts, outnumbering it by far, but not possessing equal advantages. But what makes the battle of Badr so strikingly unique is the fact that every form of weakness on one side is ranged against every form of strength on the other. The Quraish army is three times as large as the Muslim army. The position taken up by the Quraish is advantageous. Their ranks comprise soldiers of fame, with whom fighting has been a lifelong profession. Equipment too is more than ample. Everyone is clad in full armour. They have a hundred horsemen as well as seven hundred camels. And what is the Muslim strength? Their number is one third of the enemy's army. Their ranks are composed of a number of minor youths, of Refugees of advanced age, and of some Medinite Helpers, in no way a match for the war-like Meccans. And what is the number of horsemen

and camels they can boast of ? No more than two and seventy respectively. In respect of equipment, they have no comparison at all. Thus utter weakness is pitched against overwhelming might. But the Divine hand comes to the succour of the weak, inspiring them with strength—strength other than that of numbers, equipment or arms—and worldly might is routed. To this phenomenon the Holy Qur'ân invites attention in the following verse : “ Indeed, there was a sign for you in the two hosts which met together in encounter ; one party fighting in the way of Allâh, and the other unbelieving . . . and Allâh strengthens with His aid whom He pleases ; most surely there is a lesson in this for those who have eyes to see.” ¹

Treatment of prisoners of war. Those who were taken prisoners received kindly treatment at the hands of the Muslims, which impressed many of them with the nobility of Islamic spirit. One of them, when he accepted Islam later on, remembered with gratitude the treatment he had received in captivity. Those, he would recount, to whom he was entrusted, served to him the best of food in the house, the family contenting themselves with dates and other such like eatables. Notwithstanding the fact that hostilities had not ceased, the prisoners of war were repatriated on receipt of ransom. The poor who could not afford to pay their ransom were let go free. Those who could read and write were required to teach ten children each, this having been considered as ample

ransom to secure them their liberty. To forego a big sum of 4,000 Dirhams as ransom money per head and accept the teaching of reading and writing instead, furnishes an ample testimony to the value which learning had in the eyes of the Prophet. The vanquished foe was never treated harshly by him. This was the first opportunity or the Muslims after their long and bitter sufferings at the hands of the Quraish to wreak vengeance on them, if they chose. But how were they treated is well illustrated by the following incident. There was one among the captives, possessed of a remarkable force of eloquence which he used to exercise unsparingly while in Mecca, to arouse opposition against Islam. He was brought before the Prophet, and it was suggested that two of his teeth should be knocked out, as an appropriate punishment, to incapacitate him from stirring agitation against Islam. "If I disfigure any of his limbs," replied the Prophet, "God will disfigure mine."

Fulfilment of Divine promise. The battle of Badr dealt on the one hand a smashing blow to the power of the Quraish, while on the other, it strengthened the roots of Islam. It also produced a marvellous effect on the Jews as well as the neighbouring Bedouin tribes. How could the Muslims overpower such large hosts, they thought within themselves, if they had not been strengthened by Divine aid? Then they were surprised to see how the worst and the most deadly enemies of Islam were picked out each and all, and slain. Did it not clearly point to the Divine hand at work? Another interesting fact in the battle of Badr was that

just in the very field of action, the Prophet was on the one side praying to God with tearful eyes, while the Quraish on the other, even before marching out of Mecca, had made a solemn prayer at the Ka'ba that God might be pleased to grant victory to those who were in the right. Thus the result of the battle was, in fact, a Divine judgment against wrong while right received Divine support and triumphed. The designs of the enemy were frustrated, while the Muslims saw in their destruction the fulfilment of the Divine promises held out to them all these twelve years, that truth was bound to prevail in the long run. Throughout the prolonged period of trials and hardships, they had received Divine consolation that all opposition would break down and Islam would come out triumphant. What they had implicitly believed, they now saw actually come to pass, and naturally enough, the righteousness of the cause of Islam became as manifest to them as daylight.

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CHAPTER XVI
THE BATTLE OF UHUD

“ And be not infirm, and do not
grieve, and you shall have the
upper hand if you are believers,”
(The Holy Qur’ān, 3 : 138.)

Second Qura-
ish attack on
Medina.

The defeat at Badr was an ignominy which the Quraishite pride would not leave unavenged. The contemptible little band of ill-equipped heretics had inflicted a crushing blow on them. Revenge was therefore the watchword all over Mecca. Most of the Quraishite chiefs having fallen at Badr, Abū Sufyān was elected as leader, and he solemnly pledged to avenge the disgrace of Badr. The profit of the caravan which had at the time of the battle of Badr returned from Syria, under his command, was, by general consent, set aside to be devoted to the contemplated expedition of revenge. An army of 3,000 soldiers was collected, twelve months after the defeat at Badr, including two hundred cavalry, and seven hundred mail-clad veterans. Women were also allowed to accompany the force, in order to rouse the spirits of the soldiers with their war-songs. Thus in the year 3 A.H. the army marched out towards Medīna, and on Thursday, the 9th of Shawwāl, encamped at the foot of the Uḥud, a hill three miles north of Medīna. They took possession of the pastures of Medīna; luxuriant crops were cut down to serve as forage for the horses, and camels were let loose to graze in the fields and devastate them.

The next day, Friday, the 10th of Shawwāl, the Prophet summoned together his companions to discuss what was the best course to adopt. It was his habit to take counsel with his friends before every great undertaking. He related some of his visions. He saw that his sword was somewhat broken at the point. This was interpreted to portend some injury to his own person. He saw also that he had covered his body with a coat of mail. This was taken to signify that they should better keep within the walls of Medīna. Another vision in which cows were seen being slaughtered was interpreted to mean damage to his people. On the strength of these visions, the Prophet was of opinion that they should not venture out to meet the enemy in open conflict, but rather stay within the four walls of Medīna and repulse their onslaughts. Companions of age and mature judgment were all at one with him in this suggestion. Even ‘Abdullāh-ibn-Ubayy, who had embraced Islam hypocritically after the battle of Badr, held the same view. But the majority, consisting chiefly of passionate youths, inclined towards giving the enemy an open battle. Keeping within the walls, they argued, would carry an impression of their weakness and embolden the enemy. Moreover, it was shocking to their sense of self-respect to watch with complacency their fields being laid waste. Out of deference for the opinion of the majority, the Prophet yielded to their plan, and, putting on his armour marched out of Medīna about sunset, at the head of a party 1,000 strong, among whom were only two horsemen and a hundred men who wore coats of mail.

Muslim army led to Uḥud. The night was spent at a short distance from the city, the march being resumed next morning early at dawn. But on coming within sight of the enemy, 'Abdullāh ibn Ubbay deserted with his three hundred men, thus reducing the Muslim strength to only seven hundred to meet four times their number. Even these were by no means skilled in warfare. Their only strength lay in their enthusiasm for the defence of truth. The zeal had instilled even into the hearts of the aged the vigour and spirit of youth. The same was the case with those who were minors. It is related of a boy that, on being refused enlistment on the score of youth, he stretched his body, standing on tip-toe to look taller. His zeal, after all, secured him a place in the ranks. Another of the same age stepped forward, asserting his claim to be enrolled. In a wrestling contest, he urged, he could throw his fellow down. He was given a chance to make good his pretensions and on succeeding in throwing him down, he was also taken in. An aged man, in the eve of life, then came forward. "I am, O Prophet of Allāh," he pleaded, "already on the verge of my grave. What a glory, should my life come to an end while striking a blow in the defence of Allāh's Apostle!" The seven hundred were thus recruited, their lack of strength and skill being made up for by their intense zeal for the cause so dear to them. Advancing to encounter the three thousand strong, stout and well-equipped warriors, the Prophet, like a skilled general, took up a position of vantage on the field, with the rocks of Uḥud to protect his rear, and in person drew up his men into ranks. There was,

however, on one side an opening through the rocks which could give the enemy occasion to fall upon the Muslim ranks from the rear. Fifty archers were therefore posted on the eminence at the mouth of the outlet, with strict orders not to leave their posts on any account, whatever may be the fortune of the day.

Besides the women who accompanied Abū 'Āmir. the Quraish army to rouse their martial spirits, there was also a Christian monk, Abū 'Āmir, to play a similar role. Once he used to live in Medīna, where he was held in deep veneration by the people, for his pious and abstemious life. On the arrival of the Prophet at Medīna, the Helpers accorded him so warm a reception that Abū 'Āmir could not bear to see it. He was disgusted, and went over to Mecca. His presence in the Quraish ranks, he boasted, would by itself overawe the Medinites, who would surely desert the Muslim Refugees. Now that the two armies took the field, and faced each other, women came out first of all to the front of the Meccan army and used all their arts to rouse the spirits of the soldiers. Then Abū 'Āmir made his appearance reminding the Helpers who he was. He was, however, received with contempt and was forced to retire.

Quraish defeated and pursued. After a course of duels, in which Ḥamza killed Ṭalḥa, the Quraishite flag-bearer, the conflict became general. The Muslims fell furiously upon the enemy. Abū Dujāna, a famous athlete, and Ḥamza displayed prodigies of valour. As they swept along, they threw the ranks of the Meccans

into confusion, dealing death on all sides. Ḥamza at length fell a victim to the javelin of a negro slave, Waḥshī, hired by Hinda, Abū Sufyān's wife, for the express purpose. Yet the Muslims fought desperately. Seven Meccan flag-bearers fell one after another, till utter confusion seized them. At last they took to flight, the Muslims closely pursuing them. Thus, once more the Muslims were on the point of securing a glorious victory over the Meccans. But there is, they say, many a slip between the cup and the lip. A single act of indifference to duty on the part of the Muslim archers posted at the point where the surprise attack was apprehended, turned the scales against them. Beholding the Meccans put to flight, the archers asked their commander's permission to join the rest of the Muslim army in the enemy's pursuit. Notwithstanding his refusal, they quitted their position which the Prophet had so strictly ordered them to hold to the last, only 'Abdullāh-ibn-Jubair with a few others keeping to their posts.

Khālid's attack from the rear.

Khālid, who had the command of the cavalry, and who was keenly watching the situation, perceived the weak point, now left almost undefended. Losing no time, he wheeled round at the head of his two hundred men to the rear, and sweeping the few Muslim archers left at the opening, fell upon the Muslim army at a time when their line had become loose and irregular in consequence of their hot pursuit. The broken and fleeing ranks of the Meccans, seeing Khālid fall upon the Muslims from the rear, also turned back, and the handful of Muslims were thus pressed on both sides. The overwhelming

numbers of the enemy would have utterly crushed them at the outset, had not a tactical precaution been taken beforehand by the Prophet. When drawing up his army in battle array, he, like a vigilant general, had taken good care to provide for an adverse turn of fortune. That particular position with the mountain at the back had been taken up with the express object of utilising it as a refuge, in the event of a disaster.

Prophet's
bold action.

While the Muslim army was busy pursuing the enemy, the Prophet was keeping behind with Ṭalḥa and Sa'd. No sooner did he see Khālīd advance and take up the position deserted by the archers, than he perceived the critical nature of the danger to which the Muslim army was exposed. Two alternative courses were, under the circumstances, open to him—either to secure his own safety by betaking himself to a place of shelter, leaving his friends to their fate, or to call out to them at personal risk, in order to take them out of the danger. He chose the latter of the two. Finding them hard pressed, he shouted at the top of his voice : “ Rally to me, I am the Apostle of Allāh.” As soon as the Prophet's voice reached their ears, they turned their faces, each and all, towards him, cutting their way through the ranks of the enemy. But whereas the shout attracted the Muslims towards him, it also signalled his whereabouts to the enemy. He was the root cause of all the trouble. The sole object of the war was to get rid of him. In a moment he became the target of the enemy's attacks. But his companions, devoted heart

and soul to him, defended his precious life at the cost of their own, falling one by one around him. In the meantime, Muṣ'ab-ibn-'Umar, who resembled the Prophet in appearance, was slain. The news spread like wild fire that the Prophet had been killed. This caused still greater consternation in the already confused ranks of the Muslims. One of them was so deeply struck with grief that he could no more wield his sword. Another, Ans-ibn-Nadzar, was much surprised to see him stand listless. On enquiry he explained that it was no use fighting when the Prophet was dead. "Of what worth is life then," replied Ans, "if the Prophet is no longer in our midst? Let us fight on for the cause which he fought for."

Muslim rally Thus cheering up one another and piercing through the enemy's ranks, the companions mustered strong around their beloved Leader. By that time he had sustained serious wounds and had fallen down. His devoted friends protected him, making a human wall around his person. The enemy bore down in all force upon this point. But the wall of Muslim soldiers proved invulnerable. A gap created by the fall of one would instantly be filled in by another rushing in to take his place. Recovering from the shock, the Muslims again closed their ranks and once more gave the enemy a good fight, meeting their attacks with good reprisals. Besides, they had now retreated to a position which defied all attempts at their dispersion. The Quraish exerted their utmost, and made repeated assaults, but they were repulsed every time. They lost all hope of smashing the Muslims, now once more

rallied into a compact body. The shots of Abū Ṭalḥa, the famous archer, kept pouring down on them at a tremendous speed. He broke three bows in the operation. Sa'd was also co-operating. He emptied the Prophet's quiver, and took heavy toll of the enemy. Besides, they were now more exposed to the arrows and stones of the Muslims, who held a position of advantage. Thus, partly because of the well-directed Muslim archery and their better position, and partly because of the reckless daring which the Quraish knew was so characteristic of the Muslims, they thought it advisable to retreat.

Quraish
atrocities.

Thus frustrated in their attempts at the destruction of the Muslims, the Quraish indulged in the gratification of their passion of revenge on the field. Terrible acts of barbarity were committed on the slain. Their bodies were mutilated. Hinda tore out Ḥamza's liver and chewed it; she strung his intestines and garlanded herself. Abū Sufyān shouted from a distance: "Is Muḥammad there among you?" The Prophet forbade a reply. Then he called aloud: "Is Abū Bakr there among you?" No reply again. "Is 'Umar there among you?" And he added: "All of them are slain; if they were alive, they must have responded." 'Umar could no longer restrain himself. "O thou enemy of Allāh," replied he, "they are all alive yet to bring woe to thee." Then Abū Sufyān shouted: "Glory to *Hubal*!" On this the Prophet asked 'Umar to reply: "Allāh is the most High and the most Mighty." So long as it was a personal question, the

Prophet cared little for Abū Sufyān's ravings and would rather ignore them than give him a reply. But when the honour of Allāh was involved, he could not keep quiet. Respect for His exalted Name urged him to give Abū Sufyān a befitting retort. Again, the latter cried out : " 'Uzzā is ours, 'Uzzā is not yours " Again, at the bidding of the Prophet, 'Umar replied : " Allāh is our Protector ; there is no protector for you." Nevertheless, the Prophet had a heart full of tender mercy even for the enemy. When he was asked to pray for the destruction of the Quraish, he thus implored Allāh in all humility : " Oh Allāh ! forgive my people, for they do not know."

Some of the Muslims, when they were once cut off from the rest, in the general confusion that seized the Muslim ranks on Khālīd's surprise assault, could not make their way back to the main body, and left the field under the false impression that their army had been defeated. But their wives, on learning that they had left the Prophet in the field, threw dust in their faces. A number of ladies made straight towards the field, all enquiring about the welfare of the Prophet. They felt more anxious on his account than for their kith and kin. It is related that on being informed of the death of her father, a certain lady from among the Helpers simply recited the usual Quranic verse : " For Allāh we are, and to Him shall we return,"¹ and anxiously asked if the Prophet was safe. She was then told that her brother

had also fallen. She repeated the same verse, but put the same question with the same concern on the Prophet's account. But yet another painful news—her husband too had been slain. With a deep sigh she uttered the same words, and on being informed that the Prophet was quite safe, all her grief disappeared. When she saw him with her own eyes, she exclaimed with immense relief: "Now that you are alive, every calamity seems small." With the same dignified resignation, all other ladies bore the loss of their slain and mutilated relations. Some ladies, 'Ā'isha being one of them, had kept with the army on the battlefield and given drink to the wounded, and nursed them while the battle was raging.

With the retreat of the Muslims to the cover of the mountain, Medīna was left entirely exposed. But Abū Sufyān and his hosts had no courage to turn thither. They had not the courage to pursue hostilities to a finish, which, they had good reasons to fear, might mean a disaster to them. In hot haste, they turned to Mecca, marching off several miles the same day. On the way they wondered if they could fairly claim to have been victorious. They had no spoils of victory to show to their people. They had not a single prisoner of war; was that a victory? The Muslim army was still in possession of the field; was that a victory? They had not been able to overrun Medīna, undefended as it was; was that a victory? These were the various thoughts that occurred to them. Suggestions were made that they should return and decide the issue, but they could

Quraish go
back and are
pursued.

not summon courage to do so. While thus wavering news reached them that the Prophet was on their heels with his army. The pluck of the Muslims on this occasion has been spoken of in the Qur'an in highly commendatory terms.¹ Despite so many troubles and afflictions, it says, when the Prophet called on them to come out to chase the enemy, they cheerfully responded. They followed the enemy, the very next day, right up to Ḥamrā-ul-Asad, eight miles from Medīna. But Abū Sufyān, thinking discretion to be the better part of valour, marched off with his army, as soon as the news of the Muslims' pursuit reached him.

It betrays a lack of knowledge of historical facts to conclude that the Muslims were defeated at the battle of Uḥud. Uḥud was not a defeat for Muslims. It is no doubt true that the Muslims sustained a heavy loss, but it is no less true that the Quraish had to turn back disappointed. Does history record a single instance of victory, at which the vanquished foe kept to the field, and the victorious army marched off homeward without taking a single captive; at which the fallen foe had the pluck to pursue the victors the next day only a few hours after the battle, and the victors, on the contrary, took to flight on hearing of the chase? No doubt the Muslims had to pass through grave crises in this battle. The Prophet in person was severely wounded, and even the rumour went forth that he had been slain, and with that it was thought that Islam had, as a matter of course, come to an end. But all this was necessary to come to pass in the life of the Prophet to serve as a

beacon of hope and courage for the succeeding generations of Muslims, lest in times of distress and disappointment they should ever lose heart. The enemy might make jubilations over what appears to him as the overthrow of Islam but the Muslim heart must rest at ease. Islam is imperishable. Every calamity, however great, must turn out to be its real triumph in disguise.

CHAPTER XVII

THE ARAB TRIBES AND THE MUSLIMS

“Thou hast no concern in the affair whether He turns to them mercifully or chastises them, for surely they are unjust.”
(The Holy Qur'an, 3 : 127.)

Effect of Uḥud on Arab tribes. The battle of Uḥud had a very disquieting effect on the Arab tribes in general. It stirred them to open hostilities against Islam. They felt convinced that the Quraish meant to destroy the faith or else they would not have undergone the trouble and cost of undertaking such a big expedition. Thus assured of the Quraishites' resolve, the malice of the several tribes, so far suppressed, began to manifest itself. They thought the Muslim cause was ruined, and they must not lag behind in participating in the honour of its overthrow. Here, there, and everywhere, tribes made preparations to fall upon the Muslims.

Measures for safeguarding Muslim interests. Moral and spiritual culture of the people was no doubt the sole mission of the Prophet. This great object could not, however, be achieved but through the small noble band he had prepared for the purpose. Now that the very existence of those who were intended to devote themselves to the spiritual purification of humanity was in danger, was it not his duty to adopt all possible measures to safeguard them? The interest of the ideal he had set before him called for resolute action.

Besides, the Prophet was the head of the community, and as such was responsible for their weal and woe. His position as their leader laid on him the obligation of looking after the good of his people. In this respect too, he is an example to those placed in authority over others. As demonstrated by that perfect exemplar for mankind, the leader of men must not accept his position merely for the pleasant privileges it affords, but must also face the irksome responsibilities it entails. It is his moral duty to think out ways and means to defend his people against aggression, and adopt measures conducive to their welfare. Had the Prophet no other record of brilliant achievements, this one great deed would have sufficed to entitle him to a unique position in human history. He found his people hemmed in on all sides by deadly foes. Their existence was perpetually in danger. Through his foresightedness and his self-sacrifice he rescued them from all perils, and enabled them to win the laurels of success. The building up of a nation comes under the category of great deeds in human history, and the success the Prophet achieved in creating a mighty nation in the face of stupendous obstacles is unequalled in the annals of nation-building.

Insecurity of As a result of the battle of Uḥud, the Muslims. Jewish communities of Medīna, disregarding their agreement, entered into conspiracies with the Quraish to do injuries to the Muslims. The attitude of the hypocrites as well now became more openly inimical. They made it a point to cause trouble to the faithful in every way. The neighbouring tribes had also resolved to strike a death-blow at Islam,

thinking it was already on the verge of extinction. There was no security left for the Muslims, neither within, nor without the city of Medina. Intelligence was daily received of an attack, now from this side, now from that. It was a very anxious time. The Muslims could not move about without arms. We learn from a report that they could not part with their arms even at night. The continuous strain at last exhausted their patience and they opened their hearts to the Prophet, stating how unbearable things had become. He used to comfort and console them, assuring them that the dawn of peace was at hand. He shared the strain and stress of these days of hardship in person, and took every precaution to avert the danger of attacks threatening on all sides. One day very early while it was yet dark, there was some uproar and it was feared that some enemy had come to assault the city or that some raid had been committed. The Muslims rallied from all parts and were prepared to march out for resistance. But to their amazement they beheld the Prophet coming back on naked horseback, having scoured through the outskirts. There was no danger, he informed them, and no cause for anxiety. The Prophet thus demonstrated that he was not merely a wise superior, but, at the same time, a brave soldier with a daring contempt for danger.

The Bi'r-i-
Ma'una trea-
chery.

In short, Medina was in the grip of constant peril. The Muslims had to keep every moment on the alert. Every precaution was taken to nip the slightest danger in the bud. If trouble was reported to be hatching in some

quarter and an attack upon Medīna apprehended, a detachment was forthwith despatched to deal with the danger before it grew in dimensions. What might have resulted in terrible conflagrations of war was thus averted by timely precautions. Hostile critics accuse Islam of proselytizing at the point of the sword—an allegation diametrically opposed to the real state of things. Conversion was never secured by sword. Not a solitary instance of conversion has been reported as a fruit of expeditions. For the propagation of religion, the Prophet would appoint preachers, prepared expressly for the object. These teachers who had committed the Holy Qur'ān to memory used to spread the light of Islam among the various tribes. Treacherous people would sometimes invite these teachers under the pretext that they would have instruction in the teachings of Islam, and having them at their mercy, would kill them without compunction. One such treacherous barbarity took place at Bi'r-i-Ma'ūna in the month of Şafar in the year 4 A. H. Abū Barā, the chief of the tribes of Banū-Āmir and Banū-Sulaim, came to the Prophet with some presents, asking for a few teachers to be deputed to his people, who, he hoped, might accept the message of Islam. The Prophet did not accept the presents and said he feared treachery from the people of Najd. But on Abū Barā's undertaking responsibility for their safety, the Prophet consented and sent seventy select theologians with him. On reaching a certain place Bi'r-i-Ma'ūna, they found themselves surrounded by a large army. These emissaries of Divine message were all put to the sword, with the solitary exception

of one, 'Amr Umayya, who managed to escape, and narrated the heart-rending tale to the Prophet who had a severe shock at the brutal treachery.

The *Raji'* A similar tragedy is recorded to have been enacted at another place *Raji'*. Certain tribes sent word to the Prophet, saying they had embraced Islam and were anxious to have some teachers. The Prophet thereupon sent ten preachers who met with the same fate. They offered some resistance. Eight were slain while struggling in self-defence, whereas two, Khubaib and Zaid, relying on the traitors' word of honour, surrendered. They proved false to their word, and instead of setting them free as pledged, they sold them as slaves to the Meccans. Khubaib was taken by his masters, the tribe of Hārith, out of the limits of the *Haram*, the sacred area where violence of every form was forbidden even in pre-Islamic Arabia, and was slain. Before meeting his death he said his prayers, and then recited these verses :—

"While I am killed as a Muslim, I do not mind on which side I fall for the sake of Allāh.

"All this is in Allāh's path. He may shower His blessings on my mutilated limbs, should it so please Him."

Zaid was purchased by Şafwān-ibn-Umayya with the same intention. Abū Sufyān and the leading Quraish chiefs were all present at his execution. When the sword was unsheathed to cut off his head, Abū Sufyān threw an irresistible temptation in his way. "Do you like," he said, "that your life may be spared on the condition that Muḥammad be slain in your stead." And how noble and dignified was Zaid's

reply at this critical hour of his life, when death was staring him in the face! "My life is nothing as compared with the Prophet's. I would not like to see him put to the pain of an ordinary thorn prick, even though it were to save my life." This is a typical illustration of the deep attachment the companions of the Prophet cherished for him.

Prophet forbidden to pray against tyrants.

Such ruthless butchering of innocent Muslim teachers by the perfidious Arab tribes was indeed very painful to the Prophet. He could put up with all sorts of hardships, so far as his own person was concerned, but he could not bear the tortures of those who had accepted the Truth and never failed to stand by him in the hour of danger, who had cheerfully sacrificed their all in the path of Allāh, and thus had won exalted positions in the eyes of the Lord. The murder of the preachers was an unbearable shock to him, and he prayed to God to punish the offenders for these heinous crimes. As a matter of fact, these tribes deserved the same form of torturous punishment, but the Prophet, when so deeply grieved, contented himself with praying to God to deal with them. But God had sent him as a mercy to the whole of mankind.¹ He did not approve of his being so harsh as to invoke Divine wrath even upon such arch-criminals. He was to be the embodiment of universal mercy—mercy making no distinction between friend and foe. Hence the Divine revelation: "You have no concern in the affair whether He turns to them mercifully or chastises them, surely they are

unjust."¹ No sooner was this Divine reproof received than he gave up harbouring any ill-will towards the treacherous perpetrators of the cold-blooded murders of the harmless preachers. Can history show another instance like it ?

Smaller engagements. To cut a long tale of woe and misery short, the whole of Arabia was seething with spite against Islam. The Jews, the hypocrites, the idolaters, each and all, were out to annihilate Islam. Were it not for watchfulness on the part of the Prophet in suppressing every storm of opposition before it gained in strength, it would have been impossible for the Muslims to stay a single day in Medīna. There was thus only one practical policy under the circumstances left for the Muslims to act upon—to scatter the enemy's forces before they should unite and become strong enough to crush Islam. The situation called for a forward policy. They could not afford to sit quietly by, watching with complacency the enemy's hosts gathering till they had grown too strong for them. Obviously, this would have spelt the sure and certain extinction of Islam. Compelled by the sheer force of circumstances, the instinct of self-preservation impelled them to take the bull by the horns. Of the several petty skirmishes that took place in this period one is known as the battle of Badr Ṣughrā (smaller Badr) or Badr Ākhira (second Badr). Departing from the field of Uḥud, the Quraish had thrown out a challenge to the Muslims, that fate would be tried again at Badr, the following year. Accordingly, when the time came,

the Muslims marched to Badr, but not finding the Quraish there, peacefully returned, after disposing, at the fair annually held there, of whatever merchandise they had taken with them. The battle of Dūmat-ul-Jandal and Dhāt-ul-Riqā' in the year 5 A. H., and the battles of Banū Lihyān and the Dhū Qarad in 6 A. H., were all of this nature. On the receipt of intelligence as to the enemy's war-like preparations, a body of troops was forthwith despatched and the hostile forces scattered of themselves or, in some cases, after a little skirmishing.

There are a number of other small skirmishes of which the one known as the battle of Muraisī' or Banū Muṣṭaliq, which took place in 5 A. H., is of some note. The Banū Muṣṭaliq came of the Khuzā'a, a tribe which was in strong alliance with the Quraish. They inhabited a place called Muraisī', at a distance of nine days' journey from Medīna. Their chief Hārith-ibn-Abī-Dzīrār made preparations to attack Medīna, possibly on the instigation of the Quraish. Intelligence was brought to the Prophet, who found it on enquiry to be correct. He thereupon ordered counter-preparations to scatter the forces of Hārith. Hārith fled with his army, but the inhabitants of Muraisī' gave the Muslims a battle, and were defeated. Six hundred prisoners of war, including Juwairiya, the daughter of Hārith, fell into the hands of the Muslims. The Prophet paid the ransom of Juwairiya out of his own pocket and took her in marriage on her own request. As a result of this, all the six hundred prisoners of Banū Muṣṭaliq were released without any ransom.

It was on the return journey from Muraisi⁴ in the year 5 A. H. that 'Ā'isha was accidentally left behind in the last stage of the journey. When the army started, she had gone out to search for a necklace which she just then discovered that she had lost, and her camel-driver started with an empty *howda*, thinking that she was in it. When 'Ā'isha came back from the search, there was not a man left. It being yet dark, she sat down, thinking that when the mistake was discovered, her camel-driver would come back. Ṣafwān ibn Mu'aṭṭal had orders to remain in the rear to see if anything was left behind when the march took place. It was day-light when he discovered 'Ā'isha, and seating her on his camel, he joined the army at midday. The hypocrites who were always on the look-out for some opportunity to injure the cause of Islam made this unfortunate accident the basis of a slander against the noble lady, 'Abdullāh ibn Ubayy being the chief source of the slandering rumours. The Holy Prophet made an enquiry which showed that there was not the least ground for casting aspersions on 'Ā'isha's chastity. He further received a divine revelation establishing her innocence.¹ There is nothing strange in the Prophet receiving a revelation clearing a righteous woman of baseless slander; for the Holy Qur'ān had already cleared another righteous woman, Mary, the mother of Jesus, of a similar charge brought against her by the Jews by denouncing them "for their having uttered against Mary a false calumny".²

¹ 24 11—20 ² 4 : 155.

CHAPTER XVIII
THE BATTLE OF AHZĀB OR THE
CONFEDERATES

“ And when the believers saw the allies, they said: This is what Allāh and His Apostle promised us, and Allāh and His Apostle spoke the truth; and it only increased them in faith and submission.”

(The Holy Qur'an, 33 : 22.)

Third Quraish attack on Medina.

While the Prophet was engaged in suppressing mischief on the part of the Arab tribes, in order to obviate war on a large scale, the Quraish were busy preparing for another campaign against Medina. The Jewish clans exiled from Medina, now settled at Khaibar, were also allied with them in the common cause of the extirpation of Islam. They succeeded in rousing the Bedouin tribes in the vicinity of Mecca, so that they also joined the anti-Islamic alliance. Thus the Quraish, the Jews and the Bedouins all combined to deal a crushing blow to Islam. A large army, estimated at from ten to twenty-four thousand, was brought together, in the 5th year of the Hijra. Even the Jewish tribes within the walls of Medina turned false and joined hands at the last moment with the assailants. Humanly calculating, there was little chance for the Muslims to survive the onrush of these overwhelming hosts.

Defended by a ditch.

Intelligence of this impending attack on an unprecedented scale was brought to

the Holy Prophet, who immediately summoned his companions to take counsel as to how to meet the situation. On one side, the city had a natural barrier of rugged rocks; on the other, it was protected by the stone walls of houses, built compactly together, in unbroken continuation, which constituted by themselves a strong fortification. There was thus only one side open to attack, and Salmān, the Persian, suggested that that side should be fortified by a broad and deep ditch. The work of digging the ditch was at once undertaken. The Prophet apportioned the labour amongst parties of ten men each, participating in person like an ordinary labourer. Covered with earth and dust, they all sang these verses in chorus :

“O Allāh! had it not been for Thy mercy, we could not have had guidance. We would not have given alms, neither would we have prayed. Send down tranquillity upon us, and establish our steps in battle. For they are up against us and they wish to pervert us by force, but we refuse.”

The last words, “but we refuse” formed the burden of the song, and were repeated again and again. At the same time the Prophet invoked Allāh’s blessings on the Refugees and the Helpers in these words:

“O Allāh! there is no felicity but the felicity of the hereafter; O Allāh! have mercy on the Refugees and the Helpers!”

History records but one solitary instance of a personage who held spiritual as well as temporal sway over a nation, and yet worked as an ordinary workman, side by side with them, in the hour of extreme national danger. It is a distinguishing feature of the Prophet’s character that he conferred

Prophet
working as a
labourer sees
vision of a
great future.

lustre on whatever he set his hands to. Placed in whatever position, he acquitted himself with marvellous grace. If on the one hand he was the manliest of kings, he was at the same time the kingliest of men. In the course of the digging operations they came to a hard stone. All exerted themselves to their utmost but they could not break it. It was therefore suggested to the Prophet, who had marked out the limits with his own hands, to allow a slight deviation from the original plan. Taking up a pick-axe he addressed himself to the task which others had failed to accomplish. Getting down into the ditch, he struck hard at the stone which gave way, emitting at the same time a spark of fire, on which the Prophet, followed by the companions, raised a cry of *Allāh-u-Akbar* or God is Great, and said that he saw in the spark that he had been awarded the keys of the palace of the Syrian king. A second stroke and the stone was split, the same spark of light coming out. Once more the *takbīr*, "God is Great," was shouted aoud, the Prophet observing that he had been given the keys of the Persian kingdom. The third attempt broke the stone to pieces and the Prophet announced to have seen the keys of Yemen coming into his possession. Then he explained that on the first occasion, he was shown the palace of the Caesar, on the second that of the Chosroes of Persia, and on the third, that of Ṣan'ā, and that he had been informed that his followers would gain possession of all these countries. A wonderful phenomenon! A huge force, 24,000 strong, is at the very gates of Medīna, determined to crush out Islam. The whole of Arabia is thirsting for the Muslims' blood.

And in the midst of these dark clouds of misfortune, the Prophet's eye perceives a distant ray of the future power of Islam. Is it not something passing the wildest stretch of human imagination? Who but the All-wise and All-knowing God could possibly reveal such mysteries of the future, at a juncture when Islam itself was threatened with utter extinction?

Medīna It was an hour of terrible consternation shaken. for the Muslims when the confederate hosts fell in full force upon Medīna. The very foundations of the city were shaken. The Holy Qur'ān depicts the anguish and perplexity of the moment in these words:

"When they came upon you from above you and from below you, and when the eyes turned dull and the hearts rose up to the throats, and you began to think diverse thoughts about Allāh. There the believers were tried and they were shaken with a severe shaking."¹

But through the seeming scene of dread and terror, the hearts of the true Muslims could read the fulfilment of what had been promised to them by Allāh and His Apostle. Their thoughts are thus set forth in the Holy Qur'ān:

"And when the believers saw the Allies, they said: This is what Allāh and His Apostle promised us, and Allāh and His Apostle spoke the truth; and it only increased them in faith and submission."²

Notwithstanding the enormously overwhelming odds bent upon their destruction, and their fears in the grim situation, the Muslims perceived that this was the last desperate attempt of a dying enemy. This would

¹ 33 : 10-11, ² 33 : 22.

break up the enemy's power once for all, and usher in the happy era of the triumph of Islam.

Muslim suf- By way of precaution against a possible
ferings in siege. attack from without, or Jewish treachery from within, the females and children were removed to well-fortified places. The siege lasted for about a month, during which period the Muslims including the Prophet, suffered a great deal from starvation. For days they received no food and had to fasten pieces of stones on their abdomens. But their spirit was not a whit subdued on that account. One day the Prophet suggested the buying off of the tribe of Ghaṭafān by offering them one-third of the produce of Medīna. This would go a great way to weaken the enemy's strength. Notwithstanding their starvation and the straits to which the Muslims had been reduced by a prolonged siege and perpetual watch and vigil, they thought it below their dignity to submit to such humiliation. The Helpers, who were directly concerned in the proposed bargain, said they had never paid any subsidy to them even in the pre-Islamic days, and that they would not cow down before them now, especially when the honour of Islam was involved. Come what may, they would fight to the last man.

Confederates The Jews and the hypocrites were on
routed. the look-out for an opportunity to rise from within, simultaneously with an attack from without. Duels were tried first in which the Muslims had the upper hand. 'Amr-ibn-Wudd, a famous Arab hero, believed to be a match for a thousand, was slain at 'Ali's hands. At last, the Quraish made a general

attack with full force, but they could not press their way across the ditch. Their arrows and stones, however, came down in terrible showers, and were it not for the well-disciplined steadfastness of the Muslims, the enemy must have won the day. Their firmness was at last crowned with success. The large army, 24,000 strong, could not succeed in breaking through their defence and became exhausted. The siege became tiresome to them. Besides, they ran short of provisions. A storm, which blew down their tents and overturned their cooking pots confused them altogether. The Holy Qur'ān thus alludes to the incident: "Then We sent down against them a strong wind and an army which you could not see."¹ The wind accomplished for the Muslims what was impossible for them to do with the strength of their own arms. Finding the very elements of nature against them, the Quraish and their confederates were much overawed. They took it as an evil portent. Losing heart they marched off the same night, so that, to the great joy and thanksgiving of the Muslims, not one of them could be seen there the following morning. Was it anything but the Divine hand at work behind the scene, which frustrated the attempts of overwhelming odds, who intended to crush the handful of the Muslims, and which set at naught the treacherous schemes of the Jews and the hypocrites? Thus ended in utter disappointment and dismay the most powerfully organised expedition against Islam.

CHAPTER XIX
RELATIONS WITH THE JEWS

"Surely deep hatred has already appeared from out of their mouths and what their breasts conceal is greater still" (The Holy Qur'an 3: 117.)

Medīna Jews' hatred of Muslims. The Jews, as already observed, formed a potent element of the population of Medīna. Trade coupled with usury had made them considerably rich. The Aus and the Khazraj generally borrowed money from them. In point of education too, the Jews surpassed them. In almost every respect, they were ahead of their neighbours.

On the arrival of the Prophet at Medīna, the Jews entered into an agreement with the Muslims. But the growing prosperity of Islam kindled the spark of jealousy in their hearts. Keeping secretly in touch with the hypocrites, they made much mischief against the Muslims. They did not spare even the Prophet, whom they would address in insolent and derogatory words. For instance while speaking to him, they would twist the word *rā'inā* which means "listen to us" into *ra'ina* meaning "he is a fool", on account of shortening of the vowel. Likewise the words *Assalām-u-'Alaikum*, *i. e.* peace be with you, would be muttered as *Assām-u-'Alaikum*, *i. e.*, death overtake you. Various ingenious plans were adopted to injure the cause of Islam. Some

would embrace the faith with the set purpose of bringing many more out of the fold.

Banū Qainuqā' ordered to leave Medina. What was only jealousy in the beginning grew in course of time into positive enmity. Insinuations against Muslim ladies in obscene verses were also freely indulged in. They stooped even so low as to molest them in the streets. One such incident in a street of Medina resulted in the murder of a Jew and a Muslim, and ultimately led to actual fighting between the two communities. The Jewish tribe of Banū Qainuqā', with whom the trouble arose, warned the Muslims to bear in mind that they were not like the Quraish; they would give them a good lesson. Thus breaking their compact, they resolved upon fighting out the issue with the Muslims, and betook themselves to fortified strongholds. The Muslims too had to prepare for war, and laid siege to their forts. After a siege of fifteen days, they offered to surrender and to bear whatever penalty the Prophet might choose to impose upon them for their breach of agreement. They were required to quit Medina which they did, and settled in Syria. This came about a month after the battle of Badr.

Banū Nadzīr banished. Another Jewish tribe, the Banū Nadzīr, notwithstanding their agreement with the Muslims, maintained secret negotiations with the Quraish from the very beginning. Before the battle of Badr, the Quraish wrote to them asking them to murder the Prophet. Once they invited the Prophet, and made an attempt on his life;

but the attempt was a failure. Their treachery becoming manifest through acts like this, the Prophet could not safely allow such a dangerous element to remain in the very heart of Medīna. They were consequently offered the alternatives of renewing their agreement with the Muslims as an assurance of their peaceful intentions, or settling elsewhere. The Banū Quraīza, who had been so far not guilty of serious treachery against Islam, willingly renewed the agreement. But the Banū Nadzīr who were bent on mischief, refused to do so. They now became open enemies of Islam. ‘Abdullāh-ibn-Ubayy also promised them help, which confirmed them all the more in their opposition. Islam, it must be borne in mind, was at this time passing through a very critical stage of its career. It was the period of the battle of Uḥud, when the enemies were on all sides up in arms to strike a death-blow at the faith. An external assault was dangerous, but an internal outburst which might come any moment, was still more so. To be forewarned is to be forearmed. This was possible in the case of an external attack, which would allow the Muslims time to prepare themselves to meet the situation. But an unexpected explosion in Medīna itself, would mean a sure blow at the very heart of Islam. The Banū Nadzīr had friendly relations with the enemies of Islam. Their refusal to renew the agreement was therefore tantamount to a declaration of war. Besides, they were guilty of having attempted to take the Prophet's life. In view of all these considerations, the only course left was to treat them as avowed enemies. Siege was therefore laid to their strongholds, which was at

last raised on the condition that the Banū Nadzīr should leave Medīna. Some of them went to Khaibar and settled there. This took place in the fourth year of the Flight.

Conflict with Banū Quraiza The Banū Nadzīr played an important part in connection with the battle of Aḥzāb. Besides rousing the Qurashite tribes they roamed about the desert, visting the haunts of the Bedouins and stirring them against Islam. The Banū Quraiza, whose attitude towards the Muslims had so far been friendly, were also affected. At first, the Banū Quraiza refused to join in a war against Islam. But they were given every assurance that the Muslims stood no chance of survival. They could not possibly withstand the combined force of the vast numbers springing up like mushrooms, on every side, to put an end to Islam. It was, they were told, time that they should make their choice between throwing in their lot with the Muslims, or joining hands with the confederates. The Banū Quraiza were thus prevailed upon to make common cause with the rest of anti-Islamic tribes. Breaking their pact with the Muslims, they entered into an alliance with the confederates promising them help in the ensuing conflict—the battle of Aḥzāb. The new compact, though made secretly, did not remain a dead letter. The Banū Quraiza actually took part in the battle. The Holy Qur'ān refers to this in the following words: "Those of the people of the Book who rendered them (the confederates) help."¹ History too, furnishes testimony to their participation in the battle. They had

planned an attack on Muslim females as well. It was an hour of grave danger for the Muslims. With twenty-four thousand strong on the other side of the ditch, exerting tooth and nail to crush Islam, and with the hypocrites busy mongering mischief within, the treachery of Banū Qurayza added enormously to the difficulties of the Muslims. Hence at the termination of the battle of Aḥzāb it was deemed meet to inflict due punishment on them, which might serve as a preventive against the recurrence of such underhand treachery in future. Siege was laid to their fastnesses. After some resistance they surrendered. This took place in the fifth year of the Hijra.

Their punishment. Sa'd-ibn-Mu'ādh, formerly their ally, was chosen by themselves to determine, as an arbitrator, what punishment they deserved. Had they left the decision to the Prophet, they would most probably have received the same treatment as their sister tribes, the Banū Qainuqā' and the Banū Nadzīr. At worst, they would have been exiled. But Sa'd, the arbitrator of their own choice, viewed their treachery in the hour of peril with great abhorrence. The gravity of their offence, he believed, called for an exemplary punishment, in absence of which solemn agreements would in future command little respect, and be treated as worthless scraps of paper by any of the parties concerned. Hence he came to the conclusion that punishment in no way milder than that prescribed for a vanquished foe in their own Scripture, the Old Testament, was their just desert. This is what the Old Testament lays down on the point :

“And when the Lord, thy God, hath delivered it into thine hands, thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword. But the woman and the little ones and the cattle and all that is in the city, even all the spoil thereof, shalt thou take in to thyself and thou shalt eat the spoils of thy enemies which the Lord thy God has given thee.” (Deut, 20 : 13-14.)

By the verdict of Sa'd, therefore, in accordance with the Mosaic law, the male portion of the Banū Quraiza, numbering three hundred, were sentenced to death and the females and children to captivity, and the property was confiscated. Harsh as the punishment may appear, it was exactly the judgment the Jews used to pass, under the law of their Book, against their fallen foes. Besides, the heinous crime of treachery of which the Banū Quraiza were guilty, would in like circumstances be visited with no lighter punishment even in this age of civilisation. The judge was one of their own choice, and the sentence was in strict conformity with their own sacred law. Again, they were guilty of treachery of a dangerous nature. Is there any sense in finding fault with the Prophet on this account? The objection against the harshness of this punishment is an objection against the Mosaic Law. It is, in fact, an unconscious censure of that law as well as an admission that a more humane law must come to supersede it. A contrast with the Islamic law on this point will bring out into clear relief what a tender, sympathetic and compassionate law Islam came to inaugurate.

Conquest of
1 Khaibar.

The battle of Khaibar comes after the
truce of Hudaibiya in the seventh year

of the Flight, but inasmuch as it has a bearing on the Islamic-Jewish relations, it would not be out of place to treat of it in this connection. When banished from Medīna, the major portion of the Banū Nadzīr, especially their ring-leaders, settled at Khaibar, the stronghold of the Jews in Arabia, at a distance of about 200 miles from Medīna. Here they held independent sway, and had fortified the place strongly. On the arrival of the Banū Nadzīr, the seed of enmity against Islam was sown in their hearts. On the occasion of the battle of Aḥzāb, they roused the Meccans, the tribe of Ghaṭafān and the Bedouin tribes, against Islam, and even enlisted the co-operation of the Banū Quraiza. With the unsuccessful expedition of Aḥzāb, the Muslim power took firm roots in Medīna. The Jewish malice, however, kept growing in bitterness. They held secret negotiations with 'Abdullāh-ibn-Ubayy, the head of the hypocrites, who gave them every assurance that they could yet crush the power of Islam. In the year 6 A. H. the Prophet was debarred by the Meccans from performing the pilgrimage and had to conclude a truce with them on rather humiliating conditions. This deepened the impression of the Jews of Khaibar as to the weakness of the Muslim power, and they began to cherish fresh hopes of bringing about the destruction of Islam. They took to conspiring once more with the tribe of Ghaṭafān, with a view to directing another expedition against Medīna. Intelligence of their designs came to the Prophet, who, after due verification of the report, directed a body of 1600 men to advance on Khaibar. Midway between Khaibar and Ghaṭafān lay a

place Rajī'. On strategical grounds, this was chosen as the base-line. This cut off all intercourse between the two places. No help from the Ghatafān was thus forthcoming. The latter on the contrary, conscious of their guilt, apprehended an attack upon themselves, and felt concerned on their own account. It was thought that the Jews would abandon the idea of resistance, and would surrender. But on advancing on Khaibar, it was found that the Jews had made every preparation to offer the Muslims a hard battle. Fighting commenced; several fortresses were captured by the Muslims. But one fortress called Qamūs, which was very strongly fortified and manned, held out for about twenty days, when at last this too fell before a fierce storm directed by 'Alī. After their surrender, the Jews requested that they might be left in possession of their lands, on the condition that half of the produce would be made over as subsidy. The request was granted and the Jews were allowed to retain possession of the place, though the Prophet knew they would not refrain from mischief-making.

Immediately after the settlement, the leading Jews conspired against the life of the Prophet. Zainab, wife of Ḥārith, a Jewish chief, who had fallen in the action, was instigated to invite the Prophet to dinner and poison him. By Divine Providence, however, the Prophet had hardly lifted a morsel to his mouth, when, suspecting treachery, he withheld his hand. But one of his companions, Bishr-ibn-Barā, who took the food, died of the effect of poison. Treacherous and mischievous as they were,

the generous treatment that the Muslims accorded them had no effect on them. It failed to extinguish the fire of enmity in their hearts. They proved a source of perpetual trouble, ever plotting some kind of treachery or the other to injure the Muslims. Down to the time of 'Umar's Caliphate they continued their mischiefs. Once they threw down 'Umar's own son, 'Abdullāh, from the top of a house. Every attempt at conciliating them having proved futile, they were at last exiled to Syria.

The Prophet, however, dealt with the Jews of Khaibar mercifully. He did all in his power to conciliate them. Their attempt to poison him would have justified the most drastic measures against the whole people. But he was anxious to see them united in a bond of friendship with the Muslims. No punitive measures were adopted against them. Only the immediate perpetrator of the base crime, Zainab, was punished with death, and that too, for the murder of Bishr. The conspirators—and in fact the whole nation was involved in the foul attempt—were all allowed to go free. They all deserved death, but the Prophet hoped that forgiveness might change their hostile attitude.

He took a further step to make friendship with them. Among the captives that had fallen into the hands of the Muslims, was Ṣafīyya, the daughter of their chief. The Prophet liberated her and in order to conciliate the Khaibarites took her in marriage. Fabulous treasures, it is alleged, came into the possession of the Muslims at the con-

quest of Khaibar. All these, however, are mere imaginary tales, the worth of which can be well gauged from the fact that at his marriage ceremony with Şafiyya, the Prophet had not the means to entertain, as is customary, his friends to a feast. The companions were asked to bring their own meals and these constituted the wedding feast. What was placed before the assembly consisted only of dates and ground barley. In this simple manner was celebrated the wedding of a triumphant monarch with a princess.

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CHAPTER XX

THE TRUCE OF HUDAIBIYA

"Surely We have given thee a clear victory, that Allāh may rectify for thee that which has gone before of the faults a tributed to thee and that which remains behind, and complete His favour to thee and guide thee on a right way, and that Allāh might help thee with a mighty help."

(The Holy Qur'an, 48 : 1-3.)

Islam spread
in spite of the
sword.

The battle of Ahzāb established the fact that Islam was supported by the Divine hand. The Quraish did their utmost in two successive battles, Badr and Uhud, but could do little harm to Islam. The various Bedouin tribes too, exerted themselves severally, but failed to shake the firm foothold of Islam. The hypocrites and the Jews in vain sought to undermine Islam from within. At last, the Quraish, the Bedouins, the hypocrites and the Jews, that is the external and internal enemies, all made a combined attempt against Islam, but with the same result. This was the final struggle and never thereafter did the enemy gather courage to assail Medīna. These are historical facts, admitted alike by friend and foe ; yet the cry is raised that Islam owes its propagation to the instrumentality of the sword. But facts recorded on the pages of history, point to just the reverse. The truth is that Islam spread, not by the sword, but in spite of the sword. No other religion has displayed

such mettle. Sword fell on the faith from all sides, but instead of destroying it, it helped as it were to spread it. Three successive attacks were made on Medīna, with a view to extirpating Islam, each more vigorous than the first. But what was the result? Was the power of Islam weakened in any way? On the contrary, each time we notice a considerable rise in the number of Muslims put in the field. At Badr, the Muslim army consisted of barely 300, while a year later, at Uḥud it rose to 700, and lastly at Aḥzāb, to about 2000. A gradual growth is thus visible in the power of Islam, in proportion as the attacks upon it grow in fury. The greater, that is to say, the attempt to crush it down, the more did it flourish. The more it was suppressed, the more it rose. Day by day it went on thriving; no storm could uproot it, no hot wind could blight it. Divine hand was at work to support it.

Prophet sets out on pilgrimage and is opposed.

About a year had elapsed since the battle of Aḥzāb when the Prophet saw in a vision that he, along with his companions, was performing the pilgrimage at the Ka'ba. It was thought that the Quraish, as well as the Bedouins who had done their utmost against Islam, were at last impressed with its inherent strength. Similarly it was thought that they might likewise be impressed with its truth, and would not offer resistance to the Muslims performing the pilgrimage. Besides, the pilgrimage to the Ka'ba was a privilege never denied even to the worst of enemies. There was thus no reason why the Quraish should stand in the way of the Muslims. Consequently in the year 6 A. H., the Pro-

phet with about 1400 of his companions, started on a minor pilgrimage to Mecca.* By way of precaution, lest their motive should be misunderstood, it was strictly forbidden to carry arms. This would lay the Quraishite suspicions at rest, assuring them of the Muslims' peaceful intentions. A sheathed sword was the only arm that was allowed to be carried. A sword was in those days a commonplace thing to be always worn, no matter how peaceful the state. Taking sacrificial animals with them as usual, they set out for Mecca. On approaching the vicinity of the town, they found the Quraish ready to offer them armed resistance. Budail, the chief of the tribe of Khuzā'a, though not a Muslim, but well-disposed towards Islam, brought this intelligence to the Prophet, who sent him back to tell the Quraish that the Muslims had come to perform the pilgrimage and not to fight. The Quraish, it was also proposed, might conclude peace with them for a certain period. Having sent this word to the Quraish, the Muslims halted at Hudaibiya, a day's journey from Mecca.

Failure of Budail communicated the message to negotiations. the Quraish. The wiser and experienced element was in favour of accepting the proposal of peace. They had good reasons to believe that they were unable to do any harm to Islam. They had already done their best more than once in its opposition, but to no purpose. Besides, with the conclusion of peace, they would be in a position to resume their trade

* Pilgrimage is performed only in the month of Dhilhajj, 8th to 10th. A visit to the house attended with some of the ceremonies of pilgrimage proper at any other time is called 'Umra or a minor pilgrimage, lit, a visit. In this case, only an 'Umra was intended.

with Syria, suspended so far in consequence of hostilities with the Muslims, who commanded the route. 'Urwa was sent as a plenipotentiary to discuss terms with the Muslims. In the course of the discussion, he remarked that it was better for the Prophet not to place much reliance in his followers, for they would disappear like anything, should a calamity befall him. Abū Bakr was greatly enraged at this, and treated him rather harshly. The negotiations ended in a fiasco, but he carried with him the impression of the high esteem in which the Prophet was held by his friends. "I have been to the courts of the Kaiser as well as the Chosroes," he told the Quraish, "but have never witnessed a semblance of the devotion Muḥammad commands."

Bai'at-ur-
Ridzwān. Another emissary was sent to the Quraish by the Prophet, but he was maltreated, and the camel on which he rode was killed. An armed Quraish detachment also came out to take the Muslims by surprise, but was itself taken prisoner. The Muslims, however, were not out for fighting, and hence let them all go. At last 'Uthmān was commissioned to negotiate with the Quraish. The Quraish arrested him and kept him in custody. A rumour went forth that 'Uthmān had been murdered. The Muslims had reason to believe that the Quraish were bent upon fighting. It was a critical situation. The Muslims were practically unarmed and much smaller in number. The Quraish had every advantage on their side. But what a firm faith in Divine protection! When all negotiations had failed, and the enemy was bent on bloodshed, it was not for a Muslim to turn his back.

The Prophet called upon his companions to pledge afresh, in view of the inordinately critical nature of the situation, that they would fight to the very last man, in the defence of their faith. Under a certain tree close by, the pledge was cheerfully taken. In the history of Islam this goes by the name of *Bai'at-ur-Ridzwān*. It was an act of extraordinarily dauntless self-sacrifice in the cause of Truth, and as such a red-letter event in the annals of Islam. After the death of the Prophet, the tree, which commemorated this heroic resolve, began to be much visited by the people. But fearing lest credulity should later on invest it with some sort of sanctity, it was cut down at the bidding of 'Umar, the second Caliph. Such was the jealousy of the early Muslims for the principle of the Unity of God. Anything savouring of superstition, no matter of what historical importance or interest, could not be tolerated.

Terms of the Truce. The Muslims' resolve to shed the last drop of their blood in the defence of their faith, brought the Quraish to their senses. Their past experience stood them in good stead. They could now realize what such a resolve on the part of the Muslims meant. Unarmed though they were, and numerically weak besides, the Quraish could foresee what disaster was in store for them, should the worst come to the worst. Thus chastened in spirits, they deputed one Suhail-ibn-'Amr to resume peace negotiations. A truce was drawn up restoring a state of peace between the two parties for a period of ten years. The main clauses of the treaty were as follows :

1. The Muslims shall this year return without per-

forming the pilgrimage.

2. Next year they may come, but shall not stay at Mecca longer than three days.

3. They shall not take with them any of the Muslims already living in Mecca, and, on the other hand, they shall not stand in the way of any one from among themselves, should he wish to remain behind at Mecca.

4. Should any of the Meccans go over to Medina, the Muslims shall hand him over to the Meccans; but if any of the Medinite Muslims should rejoin the Meccans, the latter shall not restore him to the Muslims.

5. The Arab tribes shall be at liberty to enter into alliance with whichever party they chose.

When putting the agreement in writing, 'Alī, who acted as a scribe, began with the words, *Bism-illāh-irrahmān-irrahīm*, i. e., in the name of Allāh, the Beneficent, the Merciful. Suhail objected to the adoption of this form of Muslim opening to the document, insisting that he must have the traditional form that had all along been in vogue in Arabia viz., *Bism-i-kallāhumma*, i. e., in Thy name, O God. To this the Prophet agreed. Further on, he again took exception to the words: "This is an agreement between Muḥammad, the Apostle of Allāh, and the Quraish." "If we were to admit," he remonstrated, "that you are the Apostle of God, why all this bloodshed?" But 'Alī said he would not expunge the words "the Apostle of Allāh," with his own hand. The Prophet, however, attached no importance to such an insignificant detail. He asked to be shown where the words in dispute were. The spot being pointed out to him, he blotted out the words with his own hand, and

dictated the words "Muhammad son of 'Abdullāh" instead.

'Umar re-
monstrates. The terms were extremely distasteful to the Muslims, but out of regard for the Prophet's attitude, they kept quiet. Meanwhile Abū Jandal, the son of Suhail, appeared on the scene. He had embraced Islam at Mecca and the Quraish tortured him on that account. At last, he managed to escape from the hands of his persecutors and was now come to the Muslim camp, expecting, of course, to find a warm welcome there. He showed the scars of his tortures to the Muslims. The Prophet was moved, and tried to secure an exception to the fourth term of the agreement in favour of Abū Jandal. But Suhail was inexorable, so the Prophet had to yield. Abū Jandal's miserable plight extremely moved the Muslims. They could not bear the sight of his being thrust back into the mouth of persecution. 'Umar was too deeply touched for self-control. As a spokesman of the general body of the Muslims, he earnestly remonstrated with the Prophet. "Are you not the true Apostle of Allāh?" he asked. "Is not ours a righteous cause?" On getting a reply in the affirmative, he argued, "Why then should we suffer so much humiliation in the matter of faith?" The Prophet assured him that whatever he was doing was at the bidding of Allāh. "Did you not tell us," rejoined 'Umar, "that we shall perform the pilgrimage?" "But I never told you," replied the Prophet, "that we shall do so this very year." In the same manner 'Umar had argued with Abū Bakr on the question, and he too had given him a similar reply that everything

was done by the Prophet in obedience to the will of Allāh.

In brief, the Muslims felt much troubled on account of Abū Jandal, but they could not do anything in the matter. The Prophet observed that it was a crucial test of the Muslims' word of honour, and that they must respect it at all costs. He also consoled Abū Jandal, telling him that Allāh would surely open him a way out.

A plain vic- On his return to Medīna, the Prophet tory. received the Divine revelation, "Surely We have given thee a clear victory . . ." ¹ What was considered by the Muslims to be an ignominious peace was a real victory in the eyes of God. The Prophet immediately sent for 'Umar to give him the happy news. 'Umar was afraid, for he had spoken rather harshly in discussion with the Holy Prophet concerning the terms of peace and he thought he was perhaps summoned in order to be reprimanded. On arrival, however, his fear changed into joy when he heard the Divine revelation. Did it pertain, he asked the Prophet, to the truce of Ḥudaibiya, and on being told that it did, he also believed with the other Muslims that it was indeed a victory. So far everybody was smarting under the humiliating terms of the treaty, but now the chapter *Al-Fath* (the Victory) was on all lips. Was it in any way an act of ultra-credulity on their part? Their own experience in the past convinced them of the truth of the Divine revelation. The career of Islam so far had been replete with similar events.

Truce brings about triumph of Islam. That the truce of Hudaibiya also turned out to be the triumph of Islam, is borne out by the fact that on the occasion of his advance on Mecca about a year and a half later, the Prophet was accompanied by 10,000 comrades instead of the 1400, which was the number at the time of this truce. How to account for this remarkable rise in the number of Muslims? The fact is that the state of warfare which had so far prevailed between the Muslims and the non-Muslims, had created a wide gulf between them. General malice towards Islam would not permit the Arabs to mix with the Muslims. Hence they had so far no opportunity of coming into contact with the Muslims, and becoming acquainted with their Islamic virtues. It was for the first time since the inception of the Islamic movement that the gulf was bridged over, for a considerable length of time, by the truce of Hudaibiya. This afforded the non-Muslims an occasion to calmly ponder over the inherent virtues of Islam. They came to realize how all those who had been under the Prophet's moral influence, were edified and raised to a higher plane. It is but human that one may not appreciate the ways of those against whom one harbours the slightest feelings of enmity. The Arabs were bent upon the destruction of Islam. They were therefore not well disposed to appreciate the teachings of Islam. Now that the barrier was removed and normal intercourse with the Muslims resumed, they were in a position to carefully study the morals and manners of the Muslims. The false

impressions created by hostility concerning the Prophet all vanished. They came to understand for themselves that neither was he for cutting asunder blood-ties, nor was he a mischief-monger as they had supposed. The nobility of his nature and the beauty of his morals now dawned upon them. They realized that they had been the dupes of misrepresentation, and that the Prophet's character was far above what had been depicted to them. Thus impressed with the sublimity of the Prophet's ideals and the purity of his comrades' lives, a large number of them joined the brotherhood of Islam.

Thus the words of the Divine revelation, which the Prophet had received on his way back from Hudaibiya, found fulfilment: "That Allāh may rectify for thee that which has gone before of the faults attributed to thee and that which remains behind."¹ The faults imputed to him through malice were all removed, and his glorious personality was unveiled once more in all the richness of its beauty. The words "that which remains behind" also contain a promise for the future. Any accusation brought against him at any future time, announce the prophetic words, shall not be allowed to stand, but shall similarly be washed away. One has only to watch the daily changing angle of vision of Europe towards the Prophet to appreciate the truth of this portion of the verse. The ugly caricature of his character that has been so far drawn, either through misconception or misrepresentation, is undergoing a marked change on its own account. Europe is daily awakening to the nobility

and purity of his character. A general recognition of the true sublimity of the Prophet's life is bound to come, sooner or later, as foretold in the Qur'ān. Of course, such an appreciation must come now, as it did before, in the wake of a general state of peace. Europe's greed for territorial aggrandizement having now been satiated, it may be hoped that an era of idealism is about to dawn. The time has come when a closer contact with the Muslim world may disillusion Europe of its wrong notions concerning Islam, when it may come to realize, as did the enemies of Islam thirteen centuries ago, that the fair face of Islam is free from any stigma with which ignorance and prejudice have disfigured it. It may realize, groping as it is for light which it can not find in the Church religion, that its salvation lies in the same Islam which it has all along painted in the darkest colours. Strange are the ways of God and little wonder that the history of Islam should repeat itself. Those bent upon its destruction may fall a victim to its moral force, as it happened at the conclusion of the truce of Hudaibiya. The power of God may once more manifest itself and what appears, to all human calculations, the final overthrow, may turn out to be the real triumph, of Islam.

Prophet's love of peace. That such harsh terms should have been accepted by the Prophet was not without a set Divine purpose. The incident is an eloquent testimony to the fact that warfare was held in abhorrence by him. So far, the Muslims had ever had the upper hand in the various conflicts with the Quraish. Not once were they defeated, notwithstanding the united

might of several tribes. They regarded the terms as derogatory to their faith and insisted on rejecting them. They had pledged to fight to the last man to vindicate the honour of Islam. In spite of this, wherever there is the slightest indication on the part of the enemy towards peace, the Prophet welcomes it with open arms. The Muslims were not defeated, but the terms of the treaty seemed to treat them as the vanquished party; yet the Prophet accepted them. Can such be the attitude of one bent upon domineering over others, as is alleged? Is it not a conclusive testimony to show how peace-loving the Prophet was? The Qur'ān too enjoins the same when it says: "And if they (the enemy) incline towards peace, thou shalt also incline towards it."¹

Sad plight
of Mecca con-
verts.

But what, after all, is the outcome of the truce, which appeared so humiliating even to the Muslims themselves? Does it put a check upon conversions in Mecca? Humanly speaking, it should have done so. The truce is a fresh testimony to the helplessness of the Muslims. So far, the converts could count upon the help of their Muslim brethren at Medīna. But under the terms of the truce, the Muslims were deprived of their right to succour the converts, who were in the grip of their oppressors; more than that if the latter should manage to make good their escape to Medīna, even then the Muslims could not give them shelter. It is a great relief to be in the company of friends in time of distress, even though the friends themselves be in

no better plight. It is still a consolation to be in the same boat with them. But even this last source of solace was denied to the Muslim converts by the truce of Hudaibiya. How, under these circumstances, can one take courage to embrace Islam? At home, the Muslim is put to untold tortures, but now at Medīna too, he fares no better. The example of Abū Jandal is there to damp the spirits of the most enthusiastic. Such being the situation, the progress of Islam should have come, as a matter of course, to a standstill. But is it not remarkable that, on the contrary, Islamic light spreads during this period at a tenfold pace? What is then the one logical conclusion? Only this that the intrinsic worth of Islam outweighs by far the prospects of all kinds of tortures. The charm and beauty of Islam make its lovers forget all pains its acceptance may entail. Rejection at Medīna (any more than persecution at Mecca) could not discourage them. Sufferings and afflictions sank into insignificance before the power and beauty of Truth. Here is another occasion for the critic to ponder over. Should he call this the spreading of Islam by sword, or the spreading of Islam in spite of the enemy's sword?

‘Is settlement. ‘ Utba, another daring convert to Islam, tortured no less ruthlessly by the Quraish, following the example of Abū Jandal, decamped to Medīna. Two envoys of the Quraish followed close upon his heels and demanded his extradition according to the truce of Hudaibiya. Like his predecessor, he was also advised by the Prophet to return to Mecca. “Do you force me back to idolatry,” remonstrated

'Utba in amazement. A trying situation again—'Utba pleading in the name of religion on the one hand, the Quraish insisting on the observance of the treaty on the other. This time, being in Medina, the Prophet's position is far more secure than it was in the case of Abū Jandal at Ḥudaibiya, when the Muslims were but a handful, as well as unarmed. But word once pledged cannot lightly be set aside according to the Prophet's code of honour, even though a Muslim were to turn apostate on that account. " 'Utba," says the Prophet, " we cannot help making you over to the Quraish. Allāh will open a way out for you." The Prophet's regard for his word is marvellous, but 'Utba's love for Islam is no less so. Why on earth should he bother about Islam any longer when the Prophet himself is thrusting him back into the hands of the infidels? But captivated as he is by the charm of Islam, it is not for him to question why. Humbly and implicitly he submits to the Prophet's behest and accompanies the two Meccans back to the place where death is staring him in the face. There is no earthly power to shield him against the wrath of the Quraish. The instinct of self-preservation impels him to work out his own salvation. Come what may, he thought, he must strike a blow to save his life. Seizing upon a favourable opportunity, he kills one of the guards, and the other scampers away for his life. But still Medīna is a forbidden land for him. He must find a resting place elsewhere. So he takes up his sojourn at Ṭā, a place on the seashore—a sort of neutral zone. The rest of the afflicted at Mecca, against whom the

gates of Medīna are equally shut, resort to the same place, which grows, by and by, into a fairly big settlement of Muslim refugees. They were not subject to the terms of the truce of Ḥudaibiya. Their growing strength alarmed the Quraish, who feared lest they should some day obstruct their trade with Syria. Hence they thought it expedient to withdraw the clause that required the extradition of fugitives from Mecca, for they thought the withdrawal would go a long way to weaken the 'Īṣ settlement.

CHAPTER XXI.

INVITATION TO VARIOUS SOVEREIGNS

“ Say : O followers of the Book ! come to an equitable proposition between us and you that we shall not serve any but Allāh, and that we shall not associate aught with Him, and that some of us shall not take others for lords besides Allāh,”

(The Holy Qur'an 3 : 63.)

Message of
Islam carried
beyond Arabia.

That the truce of Ḥudaibiya was indeed a signal triumph of Islam was amply borne out by subsequent events. The numerical strength of the Muslims waxed manifold. Conquerors of fame such as Khālid and 'Amr-ibn-ul-'Ās, who were once the pride of the enemy's ranks, now rallied to the standard of Islam. Peace had thus achieved what no victory on the battle-field, however great, could have accomplished. The Prophet looked upon it as the harbinger of splendid achievements, and adjusted the programme of his activities accordingly. Immediately after his return from Ḥudaibiya he summoned all the Muslims together, and explained to them that Islam had come as a mercy to the whole of mankind. The time had arrived, he told them, that the message of Islam should be carried far and wide, to the sovereigns of the neighbouring kingdoms, the Kaiser of Rome, the Chosroes of Persia, the king of Egypt, the Negus of Abyssinia and certain Arab chiefs, inviting them to Islam. Of these, the despatch addressed to Muqauqis, the king of Egypt, has only recently been

discovered preserved to this day in original. Tradition also says that Muqauqis took care to secure the epistle within a precious casket. Its facsimile has now been published and reads exactly as reported in Ḥadīth. Muqauqis received the messenger with great honour, and also sent some presents to the Prophet though he did not accept the faith. These included a mule on which the Prophet would ride in person, and two maids, of whom one, Mary, was married to the Prophet, and thus raised from the state of a slave-girl to the status of a queen. The other was married to Ḥassān, the poet.

Kaiser's attitude towards Islam. Diḥya Kalbī was sent to the Kaiser with an epistle. It so happened that at this time, Abū Sufyān was also in Syria, having taken his mercantile caravan to that country. The Kaiser summoned him to his court and enquired of him about the Prophet. In reply to the various questions put to him, Abū Sufyān, though yet in deadly hostility to Islam, testified to the righteousness of the Prophet. The Prophet came, he said, of a high family. His followers were daily growing in number. Never in his life-time had an untruth escaped his lips, nor had he ever been guilty of a breach of promise. When a person once embraced his faith, nothing could shake him. His teachings, in a nutshell, were, to worship but one God, not to associate other gods with Him, to say prayers, to lead a life of continence, to speak truth, and to do good to relations, neighbours, and fellow-men at large. The Kaiser was much impressed with the account given by Abū

Sufyān, an opponent of Islam. He had also seen a significant vision about the matter. So he called a conference of the prominent priests of his kingdom, and tried to win them over to his view of Islam, the adoption of which, he tried to persuade them, would promote their welfare. When, however, he found that they all disliked the idea of renouncing their old creed, he pacified their resentment by assuring them that he only wanted to test their constancy to their own faith. Obviously, he could ill-afford to set the whole of the Church against him.

Community of religious principles. This epistle to the Kaiser, as well as the epistles addressed to other sovereigns, contained the Quranic verse quoted at the top of this chapter. It calls upon the people of the Book to accept what is common between their faith and Islam—that they should worship only one God and set up no associate with Him, nor should they deify men like themselves. In fact, the verse invites attention to the principle, which if adopted to-day, will put an end to all religious strifes, welding the various systems into one Universal Religion, and humanity into one Universal Brotherhood. To eliminate all differences, it lays down that whatever is common to all the religions should be accepted by all, as a basis to start with, and on this foundation should be built the superstructure of details which are in harmony with this fundamental truth. In this way, all the religions of the world can meet on a common ground and settle their disputes in an amicable manner. The idea of an eclectic religion which has of late sprung up, is but in accordance with

the same truth which was promulgated over thirteen centuries ago.

The despatch to the Chosroes was carried by 'Abdullāh-ibn-Hudhāfa. It opened with the words: "In the name of Allāh, the Beneficent, the Merciful," followed by the words "from Muḥammad". The Chosroes could not tolerate that anyone else in the world should have his name placed above his own. He was enraged at the word Muḥammad put above his own name. He raved at the messenger, and tore up the letter to pieces. In this fit of anger, he sent orders to the governor of Yemen to arrest the Prophet. Accordingly, the Governor, Bāzān by name, sent two men to Medīna for the purpose. The Arabs had little weight in the eyes of these people. It was a commonplace thing for their soldiers to arrest any of the Arabs. These men, arriving at Medīna, delivered their word to the Prophet, who surprised them with the news that their King, the Chosroes, was himself no more. They went back, and to their surprise, they learnt that the very night the Prophet had uttered these words, the Chosroes was assassinated by his own son. This event led to the conversion of the Governor. The Province of Yemen threw off the yoke of Persia which before long broke up into parts.

The Negus of Abyssinia, when he received the Prophet's epistle, readily accepted Islam at the hands of Ja'far, the Muslim refugee who was still there.

The Mūta campaign. Of the epistles sent to the Arab chiefs, the one addressed to Shuraḥbīl-ibn-ʿAmr of Buṣrā on the Syrian border is of special note. He killed, against all laws of inter-tribal usage, the messenger, Ḥārith-ibn-ʿUmair—an act which was an open declaration of war against Islam, and was taken as such by the Muslims. It would have been unwise to allow them any leisure to gather all their forces to fall upon the Muslims. An army of 3,000 strong was forthwith collected to advance against the enemy. Zaid, the liberated slave of the Prophet, was given the command, which is a typical illustration of the fundamental equality between man and man, which Islam inculcates. The proud men of Quraishite descent and the noble Helpers, all were placed under a freed man. The Prophet in person accompanied the army up to the place called Thanīyyat-ul-Widāʿ. Shuraḥbīl too had in the meantime raised a large army 100,000 strong. The Kaiser was also making preparations for war. The armies met at Mūta, after which the battle is named. Zaid falling in the action, Jaʿfar took up the command. He too fought desperately and was killed, receiving as many as ninety wounds. He was succeeded by ʿAbdullāh-ibn-Rawāḥa, who was also slain. All this succession of command had been pre-arranged by the Prophet himself; such was his habit of thoroughness. After this Khālid was chosen as the commander, who very skilfully saved his small army, which was insignificant as compared with the vast hosts of the enemy. This battle took place in the month of Jumādī, I, in the year 8 A. H.

Prophet's
deep-rooted
conviction.

The circumstances under which all these epistles were issued to the various sovereigns, is a point worth consideration.

Should the Prophet have done so after the subjugation of the whole of Arabia, it could have been regarded as a measure inspired by ambition. But what was the state of things actually obtaining at the time? Twelve months before Medīna had been besieged, and there was little hope of the survival of a single Muslim soul. Even now the Muslims were too weak to venture to go to Mecca to perform such an important religious duty as the pilgrimage. The non-Muslims were still in power, so much so that they had just dictated terms to the Muslims. On all sides in Arabia, Islam was surrounded by enemies, and the sprinkling of Muslims here and there did not count for much. Yet in the face of all these depressing circumstances, the Prophet's faith in the ultimate triumph of Islam was never for a moment shaken. He had full confidence that Islam would prevail in the long run, and could foresee the day when its light would illumine every nook and corner of the world. Despite such weakness, the Prophet invites the mighty potentates of the world to accept the faith. Such was his deep-rooted conviction in the force of Truth. Herein lies a useful lesson for those Muslims of the day who are sceptical as to the success of the propagation of Islam in the West, for they think there is no mighty empire to back it up. Truth does not depend upon force for its maintenance. It is in itself potent enough to hold its own. For the anti-Islamic critic as well, the point is worth

consideration. Is it possible for an impostor to have such a firm faith in his final success? Let those who are inclined to attribute these ambitious despatches to a perverted mentality ponder over the phenomenal success which followed only a few years later. If these facts point out that Muḥammad was neither an impostor nor insane, then there is but one conclusion irresistibly forced upon an unbiassed critic—that he was a Prophet of God. These epistles establish also the fact that from its very inception, the Prophet looked upon Islam as a cosmopolitan religion. In the case of Christianity, universality was not claimed at first. Jesus himself laid no claim to such a position. He clearly said that he had come for the lost sheep of Israel. He even refused the favour of a prayer to a non-Israelite woman. But Muḥammad, peace be on him, on the contrary proclaimed from the very inauguration of his dispensation that it was meant for the whole of mankind. It was not an empty claim. He spared no pains to realize the ideal in his own life-time, inviting the various monarchs to accept the truth of Islam.

These epistles were despatched in the year
 seal. 7 A. H. They all bore the seal of the Prophet, with the words "Muḥammad, the Apostle of Allāh". Certain reports mention also the order in which these words were engraved on the seal. At the top came "Allāh", at the bottom "Muḥammad", and between the two "Apostle". The letter to Muḥauqis, which has now come to light, bears the same impression as has been described in the report.

In the same year, 7 A. H., the Prophet went, as

stipulated in the truce of Ḥudaibiya, on a minor pilgrimage (*'Umra*) to the Ka'ba. And this same year, the remaining Muslim refugees in Abyssinia came over to Medina.

CHAPTER XXII
THE CONQUEST OF MECCA

“ There shall be no reproof
against you this day ; Allāh
may forgive you and He is the
most Merciful of the merciful.”
(The Holy Qur’ān, 12 : 92.)

Quraish con-
travene terms
of truce.

The aggressions of the Quraish reached their climax. The eighth year after the Flight was drawing to a close. The truce of Ḥudaibiya had been in force for about two years. The restoration of an atmosphere of peace had proved marvellously favourable to the growth of Islam. The Quraish could no longer view with a complacent mind the daily growing power of Islam. At last they contravened the truce. The tribe of Khuzā’a, availing itself of the discretion allowed by the truce of Ḥudaibiya, had entered into alliance with the Muslims, while their hereditary enemies, the Banū Bakr, had become the partisans of the Meccans. It so happened that the Banū Bakr, one night, fell upon the Khuzā’a. The Quraish chiefs helped the former. The Khuzā’a sought shelter within the precincts of the *Ḥaram*, where bloodshed was strictly forbidden according to Arab traditions. Even there they were not spared. Many of them were put to the sword. The Quraish not only did not prevent their allies from aggression, but actively helped them to the utter disregard of the terms of the truce of Ḥudaibiya. Consequently a deputation of the Khuzā’a came to Medīna to ask the Prophet to rise in

their defence, as required by the terms of the alliance. The Prophet thereupon sent word to the Quraish telling them to accept either of these three conditions—that they should pay blood-money for those slain from among the Khuzā'a ; or that they should dissociate themselves from the Banū Bakr ; or that they should declare the truce of Hudaibiya as null and void. In reply, the Quraish said they accepted the last one, though, later on, Abū Sufyān tried to gloss over this imprudent step on the part of his people. Abū Sufyān realized that such a glaring breach of agreement was fraught with grave danger, and consequently came to Medīna for a renewal of the truce. The Prophet, however, could see through the trick, for Abū Sufyān turned a deaf ear to all the Muslim demands. Hence the Prophet refused a renewal, and Abū Sufyān had to return to Mecca with his designs frustrated.

Preparations
for attack on
Mecca.

The Prophet accordingly made preparations for an expedition against Mecca, summoning together all the tribes that were in alliance with the Muslims. For twenty-one long years the Quraish had been tyrannizing over the Muslims. Thrice had they attacked Medīna to extirpate Islam and the Muslims. One would have judged from these preparations that the oppressors would now be duly punished for their offences. And it was but natural to expect that the people who had perpetrated cold-blooded crimes against Islam, should meet their deserts. A certain Muslim, Hāṭib, anxious on account of his relations in Mecca, secretly despatched a letter by a messenger to apprise them of the contemplated Muslim

incursion. Had it reached its destination, the Meccans would have also made preparations to oppose the Muslims. But Divine purpose had ordained that this great conquest should be carried out without any bloodshed. The Prophet was informed of Hātib's letter. Men were despatched at once to arrest its bearer, who was overtaken and brought back with the letter. It caused great excitement among the Muslims against Hātib who had attempted to betray his fellow-Muslims. He was arrested and brought up for judgment. But the judgment was to be pronounced by no worldly king or general, who would have ordered the instantaneous death of the culprit. Nor was the expedition an expedition of revenge. It was intended to be an imperishable example of forgiveness—forgiveness shown to deadly enemies. How could Hātib who had been all along a friend, be treated otherwise? His excuse was accepted and he was forgiven.

Ten thousand holy ones. At last, at the head of ten thousand righteous followers, the Prophet set out for Mecca, on the tenth of Ramadzān, 8 A.H., and thus found fulfilment the Divine words announced two thousand years before through the lips of Moses: "He came with ten thousands of holy ones." (Deut. 33, 2.) Post-Mosaic history cannot point to any other event fulfilling these prophetic words. What a marvellous phenomenon! The Muslims count ten thousand strong and are at the same time all "righteous" as foretold. Their object in life was in no way warfare and bloodshed but the establishment of righteousness even though it were at the expense of their own blood. They

encamped at a place Marr-uz-Zahrān, a day's journey from Mecca. The whole body of Muslims was directed to kindle fire in each camp. This might impress the Quraish with the numerical strength of the Muslim force, and thus obviate armed resistance on their part with the consequent bloodshed. The Meccans surrendered without resistance.

Abū Sufyān The foremost of the Quraish brought accepts Islam. before the Prophet was, strange to say, no other than Abū Sufyān, the head of the opposition after Abū Jahl. Time and again he had done his utmost to extirpate Islam. An arch-offender like Abū Sufyān was presented to be pardoned! It appeared simply impossible. But the Prophet's merciful nature made no distinction between friend and foe. Abū Sufyān was granted pardon. A year and a half before, when called upon at the court of the Kaiser to testify to the character of the Prophet, it seemed as though the truth of Islam had already made its way into his heart. Now, his own utter helplessness notwithstanding all his power, the final triumph of Islam in spite of its want of resources, and above all the generous forgiveness of the Prophet—all these considerations convinced him of the inherent force of Islam. The heart which had remained sealed against Islam for twenty long years, now opened to the truth, and Abū Sufyān embraced the faith.

General Impressed with the strength of the amnesty. Muslim force, Abū Sufyān hastened back to inform his people that any resistance would be futile. At the same time he delivered them the

Prophet's word, guaranteeing safety to all those who should enter Abū Sufyān's house, or close the doors of their own houses, or enter the Ka'ba. The critics stigmatizing Islam as a religion of the sword will be disappointed that conversion to Islam formed no part of the conditions of security. At last the Muslim army advanced on the city from various directions. One detachment was under the command of Sa'd-ibn-'Ubāda. The latter, when he passed by Abū Sufyān, shouted: "To-day is the day of fighting. It is not a day of safety for Mecca." This displeased the Prophet, who took the standard from him and entrusted it to his son, Qais, in order to avoid bloodshed.

'Ikrama Khālid was to enter that part of the attacks Khālid. town which was the stronghold of the worst enemies of Islam. It was the people of this part that had participated in the attack on the Khuzā'a. Among these lived 'Ikrama, the son of Abū Jahl. Notwithstanding the proclamation of general security guaranteed to all citizens, these people would not let Khālid pass unmolested, but, on the contrary, met his army with a shower of arrows. Khālid was thus constrained to attack them. The casualties that took place in the skirmish are reported to have been from thirteen to twenty-eight on the side of the enemy and two on that of the Muslims. The Prophet in the meantime had reached a rising ground of the town and was much shocked on seeing the swords of Khālid's men flashing at the further end. Had he not issued strict orders, he exclaimed, that there should be no bloodshed on any account? Khālid was then called upon to account for

this act of seeming disobedience, but the explanation was found quite reasonable.

Ka'ba purified of idols. Then the Prophet proceeded towards the Ka'ba and purified that sacred house of all idols. As he touched each idol with his stick, he recited this verse of the Holy Qur'ān revealed long since: "Say, the truth has come and falsehood has vanished. Verily, falsehood is but evanescent."¹ Never since has an image or an idol found its way into the holy precincts of that house, dedicated to the Oneness of God. Then he turned to the "place of Abraham" and offered his prayers there. 'Uthmān-ibn-Ṭalḥa, the key-bearer of the Ka'ba, was then sent for, the house was opened and entering therein, the Prophet said his prayers there as well. The key was then returned to 'Uthmān with the words that the charge of the sanctuary would ever remain with him and his descendants.

Magnanimity unparalleled in the annals of the world. This done, the Prophet delivered a sermon urging the unity of God and the universal brotherhood of man. Thereafter he addressed a special gathering of the Quraish. They were before him in the capacity of offenders. What tortures had they not inflicted upon the Muslims! It seemed as if the very soil of Mecca was thirsting for the Muslims' blood. What horrible pains the Muslims had been put to, in utter disregard of all moral and traditional laws! The very recollection of the fantastic forms of persecutions sends a shudder into one's heart. Again, their high-handedness had not been merely confined to the soil of Mecca, but they had

pursued the Muslims wherever they fled to take shelter. Repeated attacks had been led against Medīna to crush them. So heinous was the guilt of the Meccans now standing for justice before the Prophet! Malicious, vindictive, destroyers of the fundamental rights of man, oppressors of the innocent, the Meccans deserved the most exemplary punishment under the most humane law. The mildest form of punishment would have been to put the ring-leaders to the sword, and imprison a number of others, to serve as a warning and a lesson for the future. Their power should have been utterly crushed so as to incapacitate them to create any trouble in the future. The most civilized way of dealing with offences of this nature is to mete out exemplary punishment to some of the offending party, whether really guilty or not. And the rest are reduced to a state of abject servility. This has been the treatment ever accorded to the vanquished foe by the victors, and the same is the method of dealing with a subject people to-day, under the most civilized governments. Strong is the instinct of revenge in the nature of man, and it is apt to run riot, particularly when the foe lies at one's sole mercy. Then it transgresses all moral limits. But the Quraish had an implicit faith in the noble and merciful nature of the Prophet. They never expected harsh treatment at his hands. So, when the Prophet asked them what treatment they anticipated, they replied: "Thou art a noble brother, and the son of a noble brother." They were not unfamiliar with the generosity of the Prophet. They were persuaded that the magnanimity, which had distinguished his character during a period of forty years,

before his claim to prophethood, was not in the least changed. But the treatment he accorded to them exceeded even their own expectations. "This day," he said, "there is no reproof against you." What a generosity! To say nothing of punishment, they were exempted even from reproach for their black crimes. Not even a pledge as to their future behaviour was demanded from them. The property of the exiled Refugees, which the Meccans had taken possession of, was not recovered from them. The Refugees were asked to forego all their previous rights. Even at the time of the entry into the town, 'Ikrama, Abū Jahl's son, could not refrain from making mischief and attacked Khālid's detachment. Apprehensive of heavy punishment which he knew he deserved, he fled for his life elsewhere. In a state of great distress, his wife came to the Prophet, and asked for forgiveness on behalf of her husband. Illimitable as the Prophet's mercy was, such an enemy as 'Ikrama was also granted pardon. To Waḥshī, the murderer of Ḥamza, the Prophet's uncle, and to Hinda who had chewed his liver, was also extended this generous clemency. Habbār, who had pelted the Prophet's daughter while on her way from Mecca to Medīna so badly that the injuries led ultimately to her death, was also forgiven. World history fails to produce the like of the Prophet's generous forgiveness of such arch-criminals. An example of such magnanimous forgiveness is not met with in the life of Christ. He had no occasion to exercise the quality of forgiveness, for he never acquired power to deal with his persecutors.

Meccans embrace Islam of their own free-will.

Mecca was conquered, but what was a far greater conquest and was beyond the reach of the Muslims' arms, was accomplished by the general amnesty granted to the denizens of the town. It captivated the hearts of the people. Even enemies of Abū Sufyān's bitterness had been impressed with Islamic morals. This final scene of Islamic magnanimity disarmed all opposition. The Meccans witnessed with their own eyes how all those Divine promises held out to the Muslims, while the latter were yet groaning under the tortures of their enemies, had at last come true. The combined forces of opposition could do little harm to Islam. This furnished a conclusive testimony to the righteousness of the cause, and removed whatever doubt was still lurking in their hearts. To-day, when Islam is once more in the straits, when the enemies are bent upon its extirpation, when all the powers of the world have combined to sweep it off the face of the earth, it seems as though Divine power will once more manifest itself, even as it did in the days of yore, so as to convince the world that human hands are too weak to crush Divine Truth. In brief, all opposition vanished. The Truth of Islam went deep into the Meccans' hearts. They entered the fold in flocks. The Prophet seated himself on a prominent place on the Mount Şafā to receive them into the Muslim brotherhood. Males were followed by females, who also embraced the faith in large numbers. All these conversions were spontaneous. There was not a single instance of conversion by force. There were also some who did not accept Islam, but not the

slightest molestation was caused to them on that account. They still clung to their own idolatrous creed, but the Muslims treated them very kindly. Friendly relations existed between them, so much so, that they fought shoulder to shoulder with the Muslims at the ensuing battle of Hunain. The conquest of Mecca is a conclusive refutation of the charge that Islam was ever propagated at the point of the sword ; for could there be a more favourable opportunity for such conversion ? Not a single instance of compulsion, however, can be pointed out. Here is Muir's confession on the point :

“ Although the city had cheerfully accepted his authority, all its inhabitants had not yet embraced the new religion, nor formally acknowledged his prophetic claim. Perhaps he intended to follow the course he had pursued at Medina, and leave the conversion of the people to be gradually accomplished without compulsion.”

CHAPTER XXIII

THE BATTLE OF HUNAIN

“Certainly Allah helped you on many battle-fields and on the day of Hunain, when your great numbers made you vain, but they availed you nothing, and the earth became strait to you, notwithstanding its spaciousness, then you turned back retreating.”

(The Holy Qur'an, 9 : 25)

Hawāzin contemplate offensive.

Scarcely a month had elapsed since the Prophet had left Medīna, when intelligence was brought to him that the tribe of Hawāzin, occupying the slopes to the east of Mecca, was gathering in great numbers to undertake an offensive against the Muslims. The growth of Islam after the truce of Hudaibiya had already made them restless. Long before the conquest of Mecca, they had been stirring the Bedouin tribes to rise against Islam. Now with the fall of Mecca, they thought they must take the earliest opportunity to strike a blow at Islam, lest it should grow too strong for them. A warlike people as they were, it took them but a few days to bring together a large army. The Prophet on being apprised of these preparations despatched an official to find out if the report was true. On his return, he confirmed the news. The Prophet forthwith set himself to the drawing up of an army to scatter the Hawāzin forces. Ten thousand strong were already there round the Muslim standard; two thousand volunteers came

forward from among the Meccans to swell the number to twelve thousand, at the head of which the Prophet marched towards the valley of Ḥunain, where the Hawāzin had assembled. In addition to man-power, a good deal of equipment was also supplied by the Meccans.

Retreat and rally of Muslim forces. The Hawāzin were skilled in archery. Besides, they had occupied every point of vantage. They had posted the flower of their archery on the various hills. The Muslims had to take up a disadvantageous position. Showers of arrows poured down upon them from all sides, while the main army fell upon them from the front. Khālid was leading the van of the Muslim army. Under his command were placed the Meccan auxiliaries, including the non-Muslims. They were the foremost to face the brunt of the battle, but could not withstand the fierceness of the onslaught. Their retreat caused confusion throughout the Muslim ranks. All fell back in utter disorder. Even the detachments of the Refugees and the Helpers joined the general retreat. The Prophet with 'Abbās and a few others was left entirely exposed to the advancing hosts of the enemy. He saw the Muslim army turn back, but firmly kept to his dangerous post with marvellous equanimity. The enemy was fast sweeping upon him, and he was almost all alone, but that did not cause the faintest ripple on the serenity of his mind. Was he not secure under the omniscient protection of the Mightiest of the mighty? The same unflinching source of solace—unswerving faith in Divine help and implicit conviction in the final triumph of his

cause—sustained him now as usual. Keeping single-handed to the field, with the enemy storm whirling along on to him, he shouted repeatedly at the top of his voice : “I am the Prophet ; there is no untruth in it. I am the son of ‘Abdul Muṭṭalib.’” ‘Abbās also called out with his stentorian voice : “O hosts of Helpers! O the companions of the tree!” “Labbaik,” *i. e.*, “Here we are at thy command,” was the reply from all sides, as the scattered forces rallied to the Prophet. Jumping off their horses and camels, the Muslims fell upon the advancing foe in such a fury that the latter could not keep ground. A portion took to flight, and another offered resistance for some time. But on the fall of their standard-bearer, they also took to their heels.

While marching out towards the field, the commander of the Hawāzin, Mālik, an impetuous young man of thirty, had ordered that females and children should accompany the forces. Their presence, he thought, would keep up their spirits and prevent them, if hard pressed, from turning their backs. However, when the fateful hour came, they left everything—women, children, cattle and all. The booty that fell into the Muslims’ hands consisted of twenty-four thousand sheep, and four thousand ounces of silver. Besides, six thousand of them were taken prisoner. Having taken the booty to a place of security, the Muslim army advanced further. A part of the defeated army took shelter in their stronghold of Auṭās, whither the Prophet despatched a handful of Muslims to scatter them. The main body secured themselves within the walls of Ṭā’if, well-fortified with

Defeated
army takes
shelter in Ṭā’if

battlements. They were skilled in the art of warfare, and well conversant with the use of up-to-date weapons of fighting such as the catapult. They had also stored a year's provisions within the walls and posted strong garrisons all round. The Prophet pushed straightway thither and laid siege to the town. With the help of certain tribes, the Muslim army also made use of the new weapons. The siege dragged on. At last the Prophet conferred with his friends. An experienced Bedouin chief made a significant observation that the fox had entered into its den and could not be caught very quickly; if, however, left alone, it could do little injury. Being assured that the enemy was no longer capable of doing any harm to the Muslims, the Prophet ordered the siege to be raised; for, the protection of Islam from hostile attack was the only object of the whole expedition. While retiring, the Prophet was asked to invoke Divine wrath on the foe. This was the very place where the Prophet had once been pelted with stones. Instead of cursing them, however, the Prophet prayed for them: "O my Lord! grant light to the tribe of Thaqīf and bring them to me," *i. e.* to Islam. The prayer was granted and before long these people voluntarily accepted Islam.

Prophet's foster-sister. On his return from Ṭā'if, the Prophet divided the booty among the Muslim rank and file, setting apart as usual, one-fifth for the national treasury. Among the captives was also his foster-sister, Shaima. She was brought before him, and as soon as he recognised her, he spread his own mantle for her to seat herself upon, and showed her

kindness and consideration. Shaima was not his real sister. But never was even a real sister better honoured. Then he persuaded her to accompany him to Medina, but she said she would rather stay among her own people. So she was sent off with handsome presents.

A deputation of the Thaqif waited upon the Prophet for the purpose of securing the release of the prisoners. The spokesman laid all the troubles of his people before him. What would have been the reply of a most civilized modern conqueror? "I quite realize your difficulties. But now it is too late. You should have thought of it before taking an offensive against us. Had you won the struggle, you would have treated us even worse." Is not this the typical reply with which the entreaties of a vanquished foe are rejected in these days of civilization? But the Prophet's heart was cast in a nobler mould. His mercy knew no bounds. The enemy had as good a claim on the Prophet's extensive mercy as any other human being. The Prophet's heart would melt at the sight of the smallest human misery. How could he bear the sight of the sufferings of thousands? At once he ordered the release of the prisoners that had fallen to his own and his family's share. But, he said, he could not interfere with the rights of other individuals who were entitled to dispose of their shares of the prisoners as they would choose. What a splendid example of the equality of human rights! Surely, those who had been cheerfully sacrificing their wealth, their property, even their lives for him, would not dream of denying him the privilege of setting at large their prisoners. But it was not for the Prophet

who had come to establish human equality to encroach upon the free exercise of others' rights. A king, an over-lord, has no right, in Islam, on an individual's property. But at the same time, his heart was aching within him on account of those woe-stricken people. He was anxious to help them out of their distress. He told them to call on him again at the time of afternoon prayers, and he would commend their request to the Muslim congregation for a sympathetic consideration. Accordingly, they came at the fixed hour, and the release of six thousand prisoners was secured through the intercession of the Prophet. And these people were still idolaters! The event stands unique in the annals of the world.

Kindly dealing with his followers. The booty having been distributed, the Prophet made generous grants to certain Quraishite and Bedouin chiefs, out of the share set apart for the Treasury. This gave rise to suppressed murmurs amongst some of the youngsters among the Helpers. The Prophet, they grumbled, had been partial to his own kinsmen in the distribution of the booty. How ruthlessly an autocrat would have dealt with such insolence, can easily be imagined. But the Prophet sent for the Helpers and spoke to them in a very kindly manner. "I have been told," said he, "that you are dissatisfied at my ostensible partiality towards the Quraish chiefs." Brought up under the influence of the Prophet himself, the Helpers had the moral courage to tell the plain truth. "Yes," they replied, "there are some amongst us who are talking like that." Then the Prophet said: "Is it

not true, that I came in your midst while you were misguided; so Allāh guided you to the right path. You were indigent; Allāh made you prosperous. You were ever at daggers drawn with one another; Allāh created mutual affection in your hearts." The Helpers replied that all that was true. "You could also give me a different reply, and you would be quite justified in doing that," continued the Prophet, "you could say that I came over to you when I was belied and rejected by my own people, and you accepted me. I came to you when I had no one to help me, and you stood by me. I was turned out of my home, and you gave me shelter. O Helpers! did it make you suspicious that I gave away a portion of worldly riches for the purpose of conciliation, thinking that Islam was already an ample reward for you. O Helpers! do you not like that you should take home with you the Apostle of Allāh, while others may drive goats and camels to their homes. By Allāh, Who holds my soul in His hands, if all the people should go one way, while the Helpers take another, I will tread along the path of the Helpers." This spontaneous outburst of the Prophet's heart shows how little weight worldly riches carried with him. The audience were deeply moved, many of them bursting into tears of joy, knowing that they were to be accompanied by the Prophet himself and thus were all the wealthier for it.

CHAPTER XXIV
THE GENERAL SPREAD OF ISLAM IN
ARABIA

" He it is who sent His Apostle
with the guidance and the true
religion that He might make it
prevail over all the religions "
(The Holy Qur'an, 48: 28.)

On his way back from Ṭā'if in the month of Dhī-Qa'd in the year 8 A. H., the Prophet visited Mecca, and having performed *'umra*, or minor pilgrimage, returned to Medīna about the close of the year.

Effect of the fall of Mecca on Arab mind. Mecca was known as *Umm-ul-Qurā*, or the mother of towns, and though it was not the temporal capital of the peninsula, it commanded the spiritual allegiance of the whole of Arabia. During the months of pilgrimage, people flocked in this city, year after year, from every part of the country. Naturally the people of Mecca had a great influence upon the country which looked upon the Quraish as leaders in the matter of faith. Formerly when during the seasons of the pilgrimage the Prophet preached to a tribe, he would invariably meet with the reply that he should first convince his own people. Consequently, when, after the fall of Mecca, the inhabitants of the town joined the Muslim brotherhood in large numbers, it made a marvellous impression on the general populace of Arabia. Besides, they witnessed with their own eyes how the Prophet, single-handed as he was, and discarded on all hands, had at last triumphed

in the teeth of all opposition. The truth became manifest, with the result that people began to join Islam. This is the reason why in the years 9 and 10 A. H. Islam spread all over Arabia. This period of the general acceptance of Islam began with the year 9 A.H., when tribe after tribe declared its adherence. During the same year the Prophet organized the collecting of the poor-rate from all the tribes within the fold of Islam. A separate establishment was organised for this purpose and collectors were sent out to various places. The payment of the poor-rate is obligatory on every Muslim. The tax, being the main item to replenish the *Bait-ul-Māl*, or the Treasury, was controlled by the central authority. Once the tax-collectors visited a certain tribe, and realised a flock of sheep and cattle, which was usurped by a neighbouring non-Muslim tribe. 'Uyaina, a chief of the Muslim tribe, made an attack on them, by way of reprisal, taking fifty prisoners.

Banī Tamīm The Banī Tamīm had rendered assistance to the Prophet in the battle of Hunain. They sent a deputation to Medīna to wait upon the Prophet. A controversy was held here between the speakers and poets of both sides. But the Banī Tamīm had to admit the superiority of the Muslim speaker and poet, whose one theme was now no other than Islam. This made a considerable impression on them, and having already been in close contact with the Muslims, they made up their mind to join Islam. In a word, Islam was spreading rapidly. The only hindrance was the old-standing prejudice. So wherever this disappeared, Islam took its foothold.

Conflict with
Banī Ṭayy, and
Ḥātim Ṭāī's
daughter.

During this period, some mischief-making tendencies were manifested by the Banī Ṭayy. 'Alī, at the head of 200 mounted soldiers, was commissioned to suppress them. Among those who were taken prisoners was also the daughter of Ḥātim Ṭāī, a man famed for his generosity. Her name was Safāna. When the Prophet came to know of it, he sent for her and wished that she should be set free with all respect and honour. But the worthy daughter of an illustrious father did not like to avail herself alone of the privilege. So long as her fellow female prisoners were not liberated, she would rather remain in captivity, she said, than enjoy her freedom. Her request was granted and all the prisoners were set at large. Her brother had run away for his life towards Syria. She went thither in search of him and informed him of the breadth of the Prophet's generosity. He immediately came to the Prophet, accepted Islam, and was restored to the chieftaincy of his tribe.

Ka'b-ibn-
Zuhair and his
poem Burda.

During these days, Ka'b-ibn-Zuhair, a famous poet, who was once a bitter opponent of Islam, came into the fold, and composed the well-known eulogy, called Burda, in praise of the Prophet. The eulogy has immortalized his name.

Deputations
from Arab
tribes.

By this time, Islam had won general popularity throughout Arabia. The news of its final triumph spread far and wide to the distant corners of the country. The people were not altogether unaware of what had so long been passing between the Prophet and the Quraish. They

had been eagerly watching the whole course of the struggle. They knew how the Quraish had tormented him and his followers for their preaching virtue and the Oneness of God, and how after their flight to Medīna, attempts had been made for eight long years to crush them. Those who attended the annual gatherings on the occasions of pilgrimage carried these news to the distant corners of the country. The people were also aware of the Prophet's prophecy that all opposition to Islam would ultimately vanish. Hence deputations began to pour into Medīna from every part. The Prophet received them with great honour, and taught them the principles of Islam with the utmost kindness. With those who embraced the faith, a teacher was sent in order to instruct them in the religion. Thus in the first half of this very year, delegations from far-off places like Yemen, Ḥadzramaut, Bahrain, 'Ummān, the Syrian and Persian borders, called at Medīna. What a perversion of facts! Ignorance and prejudice attribute the spread of Islam to the instrumentality of the sword. While the fact is that the progress of Islam was at a standstill so long as a state of warfare prevailed. As soon as settled conditions of peace were restored, Islam spread by leaps and bounds on all sides. It seemed as though some unseen power was at work in bringing hosts after hosts within the fold of Islam. Never was a military expedition sent to any of the places whence these deputations came. This is a fact which has, by an irony of fate, been to this day intentionally misrepresented. Religious freedom and peace have ever favoured and will ever favour the spread of Islam.

CHAPTER XXV
THE EXPEDITION OF TABŪK

“Had it been a near advantage and a short journey, they would certainly have followed thee, but the tedious journey was too long for them.”

(The Holy Qur’ān 9 : 42.)

Muslim sympathy with Christians.

The rise of Islam in the land of Arabia alarmed the neighbouring Christian Empire. She viewed with a jealous eye this rapid growth of Islam. The sympathies of the Muslims were always ranged on the side of the Jews and the Christians, as opposed to the idolaters and fire-worshippers. At the time when the Persian hosts, sweeping over the Asiatic possessions of the Roman Empire as well as Egypt, were at the very gates of Constantinople and the fateful hour was plain in sight, the Holy Qur’ān prophesied that the Roman Empire would overpower Persia within a period of nine years ; “The Romans are vanquished in a near land and they, after being vanquished, shall overcome within a few years . . . and on that day the believers shall rejoice.”¹ Accordingly when the Muslims won a victory at Eadr, the same year the Roman Empire recovered her lost territory, and pushed right into the boundaries of Persia herself.

Impending danger on the Syrian frontier.

The Roman Empire however could not tolerate the growing power of Islam. A skirmish had once already taken place

at Mūta. Now that the news reached Syria that the whole of Arabia was giving allegiance to Islam, the religious jealousy of the Romans was aroused. They had cherished the hope of converting Arabia to their faith. They thought that an attack upon the country would at least hamper the spread of Islam. Intelligence was received that the Kaiser had assembled a large force to crush the power of Islam, and that all the Christian tribes in Arabia had joined hands with him. The tribe of Ghassān was particularly a source of danger to the peace of Arabia. On the strength of this information, the Prophet directed the despatch of an expedition to the border of Syria. The Holy Qur'ān enjoins fortification of borders as a safeguard against sudden incursions. The Prophet was wide-awake to all dangers, whether spiritual or physical. He, therefore, could not lightly set aside the incessant news as to the vast preparations of the Kaiser for the extirpation of Islam.

Expedition to
the northern
frontier

The best method of self-defence was to keep the enemy outside the boundaries of Arabia, and hence the necessity of sending an expedition to the frontier. The Prophet summoned all the tribes to come to the defence of their motherland. The impending danger was threatening the peace of the whole of Arabia. But there were a number of obstacles that stood in the way. The journey was long and the weather burning hot. The crops were ripe and ready for the sickle; and above all, the fear of facing the well-disciplined and trained forces of the Roman Empire lurked in many hearts. Besides,

such a long journey could not be undertaken on foot. There were many who could not afford to provide themselves with horses or camels, nor could the Prophet afford to make such arrangements for them. At this juncture 'Uthmān offered one thousand camels and ten thousand dīnārs for the expedition. An army of 30,000 strong was equipped, and it marched out of Medīna in the month of Rajab 9 A. H.

Muslim army at Tabūk. Midway between Medīna and Damascus, at a distance of fourteen days' journey from the former, lies the place known as Tabūk. Here encamped the Muslim army, and awaited the news of the enemy. It seems that the present Muslim strength coupled with a recollection of the daring of the three thousand in facing a hundred thousand on a previous occasion at Mūta, damped the spirits of the tribes of Ghassān, Lakhm, Judhām and others. The Kaiser too dropped the idea of an attack. When the Prophet got to the border, he found it quite peaceful. If conversion was to be secured, as alleged in season and out of season, at the point of the sword, could there be a more promising opportunity? Thirty thousand men, well-equipped and daring and devoted, were there at the Prophet's bidding. Before him lay a vast field for the gratification of his proselytizing greed, if he had any. But not a single conversion is reported as an outcome of this stupendous expedition. Even if he had a passion for territorial aggrandizement, could there be a more favourable opportunity? He had undergone the hardships of a long and tedious journey in the trying climate of the Arabian summer. At last

he had got to the very gates of the enemy's country, whom he found unprepared to offer any resistance. Just a dash onward into Syria lying before him, and a large tract of rich land was undoubtedly his. But his heart was as free from passion for territorial conquest as from that for conversion by force. Despite all this expense and trouble, when he felt satisfied after a halt of twenty days that there was no cause for apprehension, he returned in accordance with the Quranic injunction which says, "And fight in the path of Allāh against those who fight against you, but do not transgress."¹ The enemy did not want to fight. How could the Prophet fight with him? Accordingly certain agreements were concluded with a number of petty Christian states, and peace was secured on the border.

¹ 2 : 190.

CHAPTER XXVI
THE HYPOCRITES

"If We pardon a party of you,
We will chastise another party
because they are guilty."

(The Holy Qtr'ān, 9 : 66.)

The hypocrites
in Medina.

Though Emigration to Medīna had given the Prophet a certain amount of freedom, it increased opposition to his cause tenfold. While at Mecca, the malice of the Quraish found vent in tormenting the Muslims, but now it was bent on the latter's destruction. The Bedouin tribes, who had so far been mere spectators of the Muslims' persecutions, were also stirred at the growth of Islam in Medīna. The Jews, being at a distance, were also quiet so far, but now that the Muslims were their next-door neighbours in Medīna, they could not watch the steady growth of Islam without a sting of jealousy and they rose in opposition. Distinct from all these, and of a singular nature, another wave of opposition set in, in the camp, known in Islamic phraseology as that of *the hypocrites*. These were the men who had not the pluck to come out into the open. So they joined the faith with the object of undermining it from within. A certain man, 'Abdullāh ibn-Ubayy, was at their head. Before the immigration of the Prophet, this man wielded immense power and influence in Medīna. The people were thinking of making him their king. But the Prophet's presence eclipsed his personality, and he dwindled into a nonentity. In the beginning he offered some opposition, but beholding

the rapid growth of Islam, he thought hypocrisy would be the best policy. Thus he put on the mask of Islam, and thenceforward till his last breath in the year 9 A. H. he left no stone unturned to bring Islam into trouble. So far as an open enemy is concerned, one can keep on his guard against him, but enemies disguised as friends, are very dangerous and hard to deal with. They lull one into a sense of security by their friendly appearance, and when an opportunity comes they strike a blow all unawares. They also have access to one's inner thoughts which renders them all the more dangerous. They keep in secret contact with one's enemies, apprising them of all his plans and movements. Islam was thus confronted with every conceivable form of opposition and intrigue. Its final triumph is therefore a concrete illustration of the fact that a plant tended by the hand of God Himself will survive the worst fury of storms.

Hypocrites' The malice of 'Abdullāh assumed a
 plans against manifest form on the occasion of the
 Islam. battle of Uḥud. Making sure that the
 Quraish, 3,000 strong, were resolved upon crushing the Muslims, he deserted with his 300 men and returned to Medīna. This, he thought, would not only weaken the Muslims' strength of arms, but also their morale, and the Quraish would be able to crush them all the more easily. He also promised to help the Banī Nadzīr in their mischief against Islam. At the battle of Aḥzāb when an army of 24,000 strong laid siege to Medīna, the hypocrites did not participate in the defence of the town, on the lame excuse that they had to look after their own

houses which were exposed to the enemy's attacks. On the occasion of the expedition against the Banī Muṣṭaliq, 'Abdullāh's malice was once more brought into play. He made a futile attempt to create a split between the Helpers and the Refugees. On the Prophet's return from this expedition, 'Abdullāh and his partisans fabricated a grave accusation against the chastity of 'Ā'isha, the Righteous. On every occasion, they hoped the worst would befall the Muslims. They were ever on the look-out for an opportunity to rise from within, should an enemy from without win the slightest advantage over Islam. At the battle of Tabūk, the excessive heat afforded them ample pretext to refrain from enlisting. Their real motive in staying behind was to stir up mischief at Medīna in the absence of the Muslims. But all their efforts to injure Islam came to nought.

The Prophet's love for enemies. The ethical and the religious history of the world presents perhaps but one instance of acting up to the idealistic saying "Love thy enemy". The Prophet had nothing but the tenderest treatment to mete out to such dangerous enemies as the hypocrites. He never punished them for their offences. When 'Abdullāh's mischief in bringing about a rupture between the Helpers and the Refugees came to light, 'Umar proposed his execution. "I do not like," replied the Prophet, "that people should say that Muḥammad puts his own comrades to death." When, however, the hypocrites erected a mosque in Medīna at the instigation of Abū 'Āmir, with a view to providing a rendezvous for the conspirators-

against Islam, the Prophet ordered it to be burnt down. The mosque was built before the expedition of Tabūk. The Prophet was invited to perform the opening ceremony by saying his prayers therein. He replied that he would see to it on his return from the Tabūk expedition. In the meanwhile he came to know through Divine revelation that it was not a mosque, but in reality a hot-bed for hatching plots for the ruination of Islam.¹ Hence on his return, it was set on fire. ‘Abdullāh died about two months later. Among the Muslims he was known as the “Chief of the hypocrites,” and his deep-rooted enmity to Islam was beyond the shadow of a doubt. But apparently, he used to repeat the Muslim formula of faith, and called himself a Muslim. His son, also named ‘Abdullāh, but a sincere Muslim, came to the Prophet on his father’s death, and asked him on behalf of the deceased for two favours,— firstly, to grant his own shirt for a shroud, and secondly, to perform the funeral service in person. For an arch-enemy such as ‘Abdullāh, such a treatment!—a treatment that should have been reserved for friends. But the Prophet’s heart was too generous to grudge a favour, even to a bitter enemy. He granted both the requests, and gave his shirt to enshroud the deceased. When he made ready for the funeral prayers, ‘Umar tried to dissuade him, emphasising that ‘Abdullāh had been a great enemy of the faith. But the Prophet said he must say prayers over his body. On this ‘Umar further remonstrated, inviting the Prophet’s attention to the Quranic verse which says, “If thou shouldst ask forgive-

¹ 9: 107, 108.

ness for them even seventy times, God will not forgive them.”¹ “Then I would ask forgiveness more than seventy times,” rejoined the Prophet. His boundless generosity shown to the Meccans has already been mentioned, and now towards this greatest internal enemy his treatment was no less generous. What a vast breadth of sympathy! Doubtless he is the one personage in human history who is entitled on the score of facts and deeds to be acclaimed as the “Mercy for Nations”.² His heart was overflowing with tenderness and mercy not only for his friends but equally for the bitterest of his foes.

End of the hypocrites. The fury of the hypocrites' hostility abated with the death of 'Abdullāh-ibn-Ubayy. The righteousness of Islam gradually dawned upon them, as all attempts at its suppression failed one by one. So far they had exerted themselves to their utmost to injure Islam, but all to no avail. Now that their chief had passed away, they began to perceive that the Divine hand was surely at the back of Islam. Many of them, convinced of the truth of the faith, became sincere and devout Muslims. A few who were still left unreclaimed were excluded from the brotherhood, in accordance with the Divine behest. It is particularly noteworthy here that these men were given no punishment whatsoever. Neither were they executed, nor were they exiled. All that was done was to openly warn the Muslims against their mischiefs. No poor-rate was demanded from them.³ This, if any, was the only punishment inflicted upon them. This attitude of the

¹ 9 : 80. ² 21 : 107. ³ 9 : 103.

Prophet throws a flood of light on the real significance of Jihād in Islam. Here is the Quranic injunction concerning Jihād : "O Prophet ! do Jihād against the unbelievers and the hypocrites." ¹ If we interpret it in the light of the Prophet's practical treatment of the hypocrites, we are driven to the conclusion that Jihād means anything but bloodshed for the propagation of religion.

Thus, in the very life-time of the Prophet, the trouble caused by the hypocrites came to an end. Islam attained security from the designs of external as well as internal enemies. Not only was enmity obliterated from all over the country but these enemies themselves were converted into devoted friends. Was it something within human reach to accomplish ? It was done by the hand of Him who had spoken long since : " Before long Allāh will bring about friendly relations between you and those whom you regard as your enemies ; and Allāh is Forgiving and Merciful." ²

¹ 9 : 73. ² 60 : 7

CHAPTER XXVII

THE YEAR OF DEPUTATIONS

“When there comes the help of Allāh and the victory, and thou seest men entering the religion of Allāh in groups, then celebrate the praise of thy Lord and ask His forgiveness; surely He is Oft-returning to mercy.”

(The Holy Qur’ān, 110 : 1—3.)

‘Urwa, the chief of Thaqif, killed for accepting Islam.

Towards the close of the ninth and throughout the tenth year A. H., deputations from the various clans and tribes kept pouring into Medīna. The deputation from Ṭā’if waited upon the Prophet about the end of the 9th year. It has already been noticed that at the battle of Hawāzin, when a portion of the discomfited foe took refuge in Ṭā’if, the Prophet had to lay siege to the town. When, however, he had made sure that they were no longer capable of inflicting any injury on the Muslims, the siege was raised. ‘Urwa, the chief of the Thaqif, was absent on this occasion, having gone to Yemen to qualify himself in the skill of warfare. On his return he made straight for Medīna. He was already acquainted with the merits of Islam and had also seen the Prophet on the occasion of the truce of Ḥudaibiya. Arriving at Medina, he accepted Islam, and his foremost concern thereafter was to see his own people benefitted with the blessings of Islam. The Prophet dissuaded him from going in their midst, for he had had personal

experience of their bitterness. But 'Urwa was over-confident of his influence among his people. He assured the Prophet that he commanded very high respect among them, and therefore he would be quite safe. Reaching Ṭā'if, he summoned all the people together and invited them to accept Islam. Early at dawn he sounded the call to prayer, on which certain hot-headed fellows surrounded his house, and showered arrows upon him till he was slain.

Ṭā'if deputa- 'Urwa's murder led to a skirmish bet-
tion. tween the people of Ṭā'if and the tribe
of Hawāzin who had by now joined the faith. At last, when they saw Islam prevailing on all sides, and opposition seemed useless, they decided to accept the faith. A deputation consisting of six chiefs and about twenty others was formed to call at Medīna. The Prophet did not even demand an explanation regarding the murder of 'Urwa. They showed their willingness to accept Islam, but requested that the idol Lāt should not be destroyed for three years, for the ignorant and the women-folk would not like it. The Prophet rejected the demand. At last they asked for a respite of one month. But how could Islam and idolatry go together? The Prophet sent Mughīra to pull down the idol; for they feared they would come to grief, should they do it with their own hands.

South and East Arabia accept Islam. During this year, a deputation from Banī Tamīm, as already stated, came to the Prophet. Before the expiry of the 9th year, Islam had spread all over the southern and eastern parts of Arabia. The majority of

the chiefs of Yemen, Mahra, 'Ummān, Baḥrain and Yemāma, joined Islam, either through delegations or epistles. The Arabs were by tradition a freedom loving race. A tribe would look upon it as a disgrace to pay any subsidy to another. Hence the payment of the poor-rate stood in the way of some of the tribes. They liked Islam, but they could not reconcile themselves to submit to the humiliation, as they regarded it, of paying a tax even though Divine. The Christians of Mahra and Yemen also joined towards the close of this year. A preacher was sent to Mundhir, the chief of Baḥrain, who accepted Islam without the slightest hesitation. The Christian tribe, Banī Ḥanīfa, also sent a delegation thereabout. Another was received from the tribes of Yemāma. This was the one which included the notorious impostor, Musailma. He thought that mere idle talk of Divine things had made Muḥammad a Prophet; why should he not try the same himself? This led to his claim to prophethood, but finally he fell in a battle during Abū Bakr's caliphate.

The Najrān deputation. A deputation consisting of sixteen persons was also sent by another Christian tribe, the Banī Taghlib. But the most well-known Christian delegation was that from Najrān, consisting of seventy members. Their chiefs were 'Abdul Masīh and 'Abdul Ḥārith, coming of the tribes of Banī Kinda and Banī Ḥārith respectively. These people belonged to the Roman Catholic church. Whereas other delegations were lodged at the houses of the various Muslims this one was allowed to put up at the Prophet's mosque, where they were also allowed to hold their service in

accordance with the ritual of their own faith. They were invited to Islam, but they were desirous of holding a discussion. When, however, they rejected the clear and valid arguments advanced, the Prophet summoned them to what is known as *mubāhala*¹ in Islamic phraseology. But the Christian chiefs had already perceived the righteousness of Islam. They dared not accept the Prophet's challenge to a *mubāhala*, nor did they like to give up their own faith. At last they went away after entering into an agreement with the Prophet.

The Bajila Deputation. In the year 10 A. H. deputations from certain other Yemenite tribes waited on the Prophet, of which that of Bajila was the most noteworthy. This tribe had a temple of its own called the Dhul-ul-Khulāṣa which was regarded as the Ka'ba of Yemen. The idol *Khulāṣa* after which the temple was so called was also demolished.

Wail and Ash'ath. Wail and Ash'ath, two chiefs of Hadzramaut, came with a large following. They were clad in silk garments. The Prophet asked them if they would like to embrace Islam. They had come, they said, with that express object. Then the Prophet told them to put off their silk dress, which was forthwith done, and all were admitted to Islam. It was not merely to teach certain morals that the Prophet had been commissioned. His mission was to uproot

1. See 3:36. A *mubāhala* consists in invoking Divine decision through prayer after argumentation has failed. Both parties pray to God that whichever of them intentionally rejects the truth, may be visited with a heavenly calamity to serve as an awakening to others.

every moral and social evil. He abolished all the long prevailing corruptions, and gave a distinct Islamic tone to the whole fabric of society. At a single stroke he raised a fallen humanity from the depth of ignominy, purified them of all their evil habits, and imbued them with the pure and simple ways of Islamic life. In fact, he infused altogether a new life into them.

In this manner, tribe after tribe, and clan after clan, sent their deputations to the Prophet desiring to be admitted into the Islamic brotherhood. Then they would ask the Prophet to depute a teacher for their instruction in religion, as well as a collector for the realization of the poor-rate.

'Āmir's evil design and his end There were, however, still left some who had not lost hope of striking a blow at Islam. Two of them, 'Āmir and Arbad, decided to assault the Prophet all of a sudden. 'Āmir, according to the plan, was to engage the Prophet in conversation, while Arbad was to strike him dead with his sword. Accordingly, they went out with this intention, and happening to meet the Prophet, 'Āmir began talking to him as pre-arranged, but Arbad could not summon enough courage to fulfil his part. At last, when 'Āmir saw that no such plan could succeed, he asked the Prophet to grant him an interview in private, which to his utter surprise was refused. 'Āmir was the chief of a very mighty tribe. When departing, he threatened the Prophet that he would bring down upon him an overwhelming force of mounted and foot soldiers. The Prophet, thereon, only prayed to God for protection, saying, "O Allāh !

suffice me against 'Āmir-ibn-Ṭufail." And strange to say, this enemy of Islam died of plague on his way back, before he could get to his people.

Whole of Arabia converted in two years. In short, the period of warfare was over and people joined Islam in multitudes, till in the course of some two years, there was one and but one religion—Islam—throughout the vast Arabian Peninsula with a few Jewish and Christian exceptions here and there. The cry of *Allāh-u-Akbar* resounded on all sides. A marvellous phenomenon! There was a time when the Prophet would, on occasions of pilgrimage, go round the various tribes inviting them to Islam, but nobody would listen to him. And now the same tribes are sending in their deputations, and regard it a great honour to be admitted into the fold of Islam. As soon as the state of warfare is over, it takes the Prophet but two brief years, not only to bring the whole of Arabia under the banner of Islam, but at the same time to work a mighty transformation, sweeping away all corruptions, and uplifting the nation to the loftiest heights of spirituality.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE FAREWELL PILGRIMAGE

“ This day have I perfected for you your religion, and completed My favour on you ”

(The Holy Qur’ān, 5 : 3)

The ninth year A. H. was drawing to its close, but Arabia had not altogether been purged of idolatry. There were yet certain people who clung to their ancestral form of religion. Hence the Prophet’s pilgrimages so far had been all of the kind known as *‘Umra* or the minor pilgrimage. By this time, however, Islam had spread far and wide and the idolatrous tribes were comparatively few ; so a party of Muslims, with Abū Bakr at their head, was sent to Mecca, to perform the pilgrimage properly. Soon after, ‘Alī was sent thither to proclaim that thenceforward no polytheist would perform the pilgrimage. This was, in fact, a sort of a prophecy, foretelling the conversion of the whole of Arabia, so that no polytheist would be left to perform the pilgrimage. The entire country, as already observed, joined Islam in the year 10 A. H., when the Prophet in person set out on pilgrimage. And what an impressive spectacle ! As many as 124,000 persons from the various corners of Arabia assembled on this occasion, without having a single polytheist among them. The very spot where the Prophet was, at the beginning of his mission, discarded and rejected, was now the scene of marvellous devotion

to him. To whichever side he turned his eye, he saw hosts of devoted friends. What an inspiring manifestation of Divine Power! How all those assembled there must have been impressed with Divine awe and majesty may well be imagined.

Faith made perfect. But whereas the Prophet saw this remarkable sight of the final triumph of Truth, he was at the same time given to understand that his mission on earth had been fulfilled. His efforts had been crowned with success, such as had never fallen nor will ever fall to the lot of another man. Thus the time had come when he should retire from this earthly life, the grand object of which had been accomplished;—on the one hand, the whole of Arabia had embraced Islam, while on the other, religion itself had attained its highest point of perfection. "This day," the Divine word came to tell him, "have I perfected for you your religion and completed My favour on you."¹ It was thenceforward unnecessary that another messenger should ever arise. All the religious requirements of man had been provided for in the Holy Qur'ân. This would be the one fountain of Divine knowledge at which humanity would drink for all time to come. No doubt, no better occasion could have been chosen to proclaim the momentous and happy news of the perfection of religion. This was the place which had never, in the history of the world, witnessed any temporal struggles or bloodshed. This was the assembly which had met there for the sole object of Divine glorification, cutting asunder all worldly ties for

the time being. This was a congregation where human equality ruled supreme, where no mark of distinction between the king and the peasant was to be noticed, where all met as brethren to do homage to their Lord on high, and where every heart was filled with Divine awe.

Sermon at Minā. The sermon that the Prophet delivered on this occasion was remarkable. He was mounted on a camel, and the people assembled all around him on the field of Minā. The words that fell from his lips were repeated aloud in order to reach the farthest ends of the vast assembly. Every Arabian tribe and clan was represented on this occasion, and thus the message was conveyed throughout the length and breadth of the peninsula. It ran thus :

“O people! lend an attentive ear to my words ; for I know not whether I shall ever hereafter have the opportunity to meet you here.” Obviously the Prophet had perceived the approach of his end from the verse announcing the perfection of religion, which was revealed to him on the 9th of Dhil-Hajj, in the plain of ‘Arafāt. He had been raised, he was well cognizant, in order to bring religious truth to perfection. Evidently, when he was informed that that perfection had been attained, he came to the conclusion that his presence on earth was no longer needed.

Then he proceeded as follows :

“Do you know what day it is to-day? This is the *Yaum-un-Nahr* or the sacred Day of Sacrifice. Do you know which month is this? This is the sacred month. Do you know what place is this? This is the

sacred town. So I apprise you that your lives, your properties and your honour must be as sacred to one another as this sacred day, in this sacred month, in this sacred town. Let those present take this message to those absent. You are about to meet your Lord Who will call you to account for your deeds.

“This day all sums of interest are remitted, including that of ‘Abbās-ibn-‘Abd-ul-Muṭṭalib. This day, the retaliation for all murders committed in the days of ignorance is cancelled, and foremost of all, the murder of Rabī‘-ibn-Hārith is forgiven.

“O people! this day Satan has despaired of re-establishing his power in this land of yours. But should you obey him even in what may seem to you trifling, it will be a matter of pleasure for him. So you must beware of him in the matter of your faith.

“Then, O my people! you have certain rights over your wives, and so have your wives over you . . . They are the trust of God in your hands. So you must treat them with all kindness. . . And as regards your slaves, see that you give them to eat of what you yourselves eat, and clothe them with what you clothe yourselves.

“O people! listen to what I say and take it to heart. You must know that every Muslim is the brother of another Muslim. You are all equal, *i. e.* enjoy equal rights and have similar obligations. You are all members of one common brotherhood. It is forbidden for any of you to take from his brother save what the latter should willingly give. Do not tyrannize over your people, *i. e.* do not usurp their rights.”

Then the Prophet cried at the top of his voice : “O

Lord! I have delivered Thy message," and the valley resounded with the reply from the myriads of human throats with one accord: "Aye that thou hast". No doubt the message was sublime, but the zeal with which it was delivered was no less so. Here is another Sermon on the Mount in the history of the world, grander than the first and more practicable.

CHAPTER XXIX
THE PROPHET'S DEMISE

"And Muḥammad is no more than an Apostle; the apostles before him have already passed away; if then he dies or is killed, will you turn back upon your heels?"

(The Holy Qur'ān, 3 : 143)

Prophet's
last illness.

On his return from the farewell pilgrimage, when he received the happy tidings of the perfection of religion and delivered his final message, the Prophet was every moment looking forward to meet his Lord. About the end of the month of Ṣafar, 11 A. H., he fell ill. He had already ordered the despatch of an army towards the Syrian border, under the command of Usāma, son of Zaid, whose father had been slain in a previous expedition sent towards that part. Notwithstanding his illness, in person did he entrust Usāma with the standard, and men of position such as Abū Bakr and 'Umar were placed under him as ordinary soldiers. By so doing he intended to emphasise, on the very eve of his earthly life, the principle of human equality. The army encamped outside Medīna, but the Prophet's illness growing alarming, its departure was postponed. With the consent of all his wives, it was agreed upon that the Prophet should stay on at 'Ā'isha's house for the period of his illness. Till his last breath 'Ā'isha kept to his bed-side and nursed him. Even in the course of his illness he would go out

to the mosque to lead prayers as usual, but felt too weak to speak. One day much water was poured over his head before he could come out, and he had a bandage round his head. After the prayer, he addressed the congregation, saying that Allâh had offered a servant of His a choice between this earthly life and the life with Him, but he chose the latter. Abū Bakr was quick enough to realize that the Prophet was referring to his approaching end, so tears came into his eyes. Then the Prophet directed that all the doors opening into the courtyard of the mosque should be closed, except that of Abū Bakr. After this, he advised the Refugees to show every kindness to the Helpers.

Abū Bakr appointed Imam. The following day the Prophet grew weaker. When at Bilal's call to prayer, he tried to rise and make ablutions, he found himself unable to do so. So he said that Abū Bakr should be asked to lead the prayers. 'Ā'isha excused her father by saying that he was a man of tender heart, and he would burst into tears in reciting the Qur'ān. Besides his voice was too low. But the Prophet repeated the same direction. Again 'Ā'isha put forward the same excuse on behalf of her father, but the Prophet was persistent, so Abū Bakr, thereafter, led the prayers. One day when he felt a little relief, he moved the curtain of his house aside and stepped into the mosque. The congregational prayer was at that moment going on, beholding which a ripple of joy passed over his face. He saw with his own eyes how devoutly and humbly those whose guidance was entrusted to him, bowed and prostrated before Allâh, even in

his absence. This was, indeed, a matter of no small happiness to him. But his strength failed him, and he had to retrace his steps.

The end. This happened on Monday, and it gave the assembly an impression that he was convalescent. So they all resumed their various pursuits, Abū Bakr departing to visit his family at Sunh. But the Prophet collapsed, and 'Ā'isha supported him. In the meantime, one of her relations entered the room with a green twig in his hand. The Prophet asked for it with a gesture and rubbed his teeth therewith, cleaning his mouth well. Then there came a sudden change over him. His strength failed rapidly. "Lord! blessed companionship on High," were the last words of his earnest prayer in whisper. Having faithfully rendered his obligations towards his earthly companions, he now returned to the loving bosom of companionship on High. It was on Monday, the second of Rabī'ul-Awwal, when he breathed his last, at the age of sixty-three. May the Lord shower His choicest blessings on him!

News of Prophet's death—how received. The news of the Prophet's death spread like wild-fire, and people thronged into the mosque. 'Umar thought the rumour had been given out by some malicious mischief-mongers. Was not the Prophet with them in the mosque but a little while ago? Did he not look convalescent? Under this impression, 'Umar addressed the assembly and insisted that the Prophet was not dead. Whosoever, he continued with his sword drawn, should say that the Prophet was dead, would do so at the peril of his

life. All were attending to 'Umar when Abū Bakr appeared on the scene and made straightway for 'Ā'isha's chamber. Uncovering the Prophet's face, he found that the unhappy news was true. Then kissing the forehead of his departed Master, he exclaimed, " God will not bring death twice upon thee".

Abū Bakr's sermon. Abū Bakr then went out into the mosque and mounting the pulpit, he began to address the assembly. " O people!" he said, " verily, whosoever worshipped Muḥammad, behold ! Muḥammad is indeed dead. But whosoever worshipped Allāh, behold ! Allāh is alive, and will never die." It required no small moral courage to utter these words in the atmosphere of excitement then prevailing. 'Umar was standing there with his sword unsheathed to strike off the head of anybody who should dare say so. But the Muslims, brought up under the influence of the Great Prophet, were devoted heart and soul to the worship of One God. Had it not been for the fact that they were too jealous for the Unity of God, they must have greatly resented the blunt words of Abū Bakr. Then Abū Bakr proceeded to recite the Quranic verse quoted above : " Muḥammad is no more than an Apostle ; apostles before him have already passed away ; if then he dies or is killed, will you turn back upon your heels ?" ¹ The Prophet's mission, the communication of Divine will to mankind, had been fulfilled. His death could, therefore, mean no defect in religion. There was no reason to feel so much grieved. Had not the prophets before him passed away,

one and all? Muḥammad too was mortal and must share the common lot of mankind. Prophets could claim no exception to the law of nature which was applicable to all alike. Had a single one of the foregoing prophets escaped death, there would have been cause for the Muslims to grieve. But all his predecessors had passed away and there was nothing extraordinary in Muḥammad's death. The sermon had a very soothing effect upon the assembly, and this Quranic verse was on the lips of everyone. It brought solace to the wounded hearts of the Muslims in this unbearably sad bereavement. They submitted with a cheerful resignation to the will of Allāh. Prophet or non-prophet, everybody must depart from this earthly abode, sooner or later ; Allāh alone and none but Allāh is Everlasting.

CHAPTER XXX
THE PROPHET'S WARS

"Permission to fight is given to those upon whom war is made because they are oppressed, and Allāh is well able to assist them: Those who have been expelled from their homes without a just cause except that they say, our Lord is Allāh." (The Holy Qur'ān, 22 : 39, 40)

Basic principles of Islam deal a death-blow to intolerance.

In dealing with the different important battles which the Holy Prophet had to fight with the Quraish, I have shown that they were all defensive and three times did the Quraish advance on Medīna to give Islam a crushing blow. The wars with other tribes or those with the Jews and the Christians belong to the same category, and I have shown that the Holy Prophet never sent an expedition for proselytizing or political aggrandizement. But there exists such a misconception on this point that a review of the whole situation in the light of what is said in the Holy Qur'ān seems to be necessary. That the Holy Prophet preached his faith with the sword is a myth, pure and simple. The basic principle of Islam, a faith in all the prophets of the world, is enough to give the lie to this allegation. The great and liberal mind that preached not only love and respect for the founders of all the great religions of the world but much more than that—*faith in them*—could not shrink down to the narrowness of intolerance for those

very religions. Tolerance is not in fact the word that can sufficiently indicate the breadth of the attitude of Islam to other religions. It preaches equal love for all, equal respect for all, equal faith in all.

Compulsion in religion interdicted. Again, intolerance could not be ascribed to a book which excludes compulsion from the sphere of religion altogether.

"There is no compulsion in religion" (2 : 256), it lays down in the clearest words. In fact, the Holy Qur'ān is full of statements showing that belief in this or that religion is a person's own concern and that he is given the choice to adopt one way or another; that if he accepts truth, it is for his own good, and that if he sticks to error, it is to his own detriment. I give below a few of these quotations :

"We have shown him the way, he may be thankful or unthankful" (76 : 3).

"The truth is from thy Lord, so let him who please believe and let him who please disbelieve" (18 : 29).

"Indeed there have come to you clear proofs from your Lord : whoever will therefore see, it is for the good of his own soul, and whoever will disbelieve, it shall be against himself" (6 : 105).

"If you do good, you will do good for your own souls, and if you do evil, it shall be for them." (17 : 7).

Fighting allowed conditionally. The Prophet was allowed to fight indeed, but what was the object? Not to compel the unbelievers to accept

Islam which was against all the broad principles which he had taught. No, it was to establish religious freedom, to stop all religious persecution, to protect the houses of worship of all religions, mosques among them. Here are a few quotations from the Holy Qur'ān :

" And had there not been Allāh's repelling some people by others, there would have been pulled down cloisters and churches and synagogues and mosques in which Allāh's name is much remembered." (22 : 40)

" And fight with them until there is no persecution and religion is only for Allāh " (2 : 193).

"And fight with them until there is no more persecution and all religions are for Allāh " (8 : 39).

The conditions under which the permission to fight was given to the Muslims have already been described. Every student of Islamic history knows that the Holy Prophet and his companions were subjected to the severest persecutions as Islam began to gain ground at Mecca ; over a hundred of them fled to Abyssinia, but persecution grew more relentless still. Ultimately the Muslims had to take refuge in Medīna but they were not left alone even there and the sword was aken up by the enemy to annihilate Islam and the Muslims altogether. The Qur'ān bears express testimony to this : " Permission to fight is given to those upon whom war is made because they are oppressed, and Allāh is well able to assist them ; those who have been expelled from their homes without a just cause except that they say, Our Lord is Allāh," (22 : 39, 40). Later, the express condition was laid down : "And fight in the way of Allāh with those who fight with you, and do not exceed, for Allāh does not love those who exceed the limits " (2 : 190).

Peace to be preferred. The Qur'ān therefore allowed fighting only to save a persecuted community from powerful oppressors, and hence the condition was laid down that fighting was to be stopped as soon as

persecution ceased : "But if they desist, then Allāh is Forgiving, Merciful. And fight with them until there is no persecution." (2 : 192, 193.) If the enemy offered peace, peace was to be accepted, though the enemy's intention may be only to deceive the Muslims : " And if they incline to peace, do thou incline to it and trust in Allāh. He is the Hearing, the Knowing. And if they intend to deceive thee, then surely Allāh is sufficient for thee " (8 : 61, 62). The Prophet made treaties of peace with his enemies ; one such treaty brought about the famous Truce of Hudaibiya, the terms of which were not only disadvantageous but also humiliating to the Muslims. According to the terms of this treaty " if an unbeliever, being converted to Islam, went over to the Muslims, he was to be returned, but if a Muslim went over to the unbelievers, he was not to be given back to the Muslims." This term of the treaty cuts at the root of all allegations of the use of force by the Holy Prophet. It also shows the strong conviction of the Holy Prophet that neither would Muslims go back to unbelief, nor would the new converts to Islam be deterred from embracing Islam because the Prophet gave them no shelter. And these expectations proved true, for while not a single Muslim deserted Islam, a large number came over to Islam, and being refused shelter at Medina formed a colony of their own in neutral territory.

War was It is a mistake to suppose that the con-
 waged on ditions related above were abrogated at
 Muslims. any time. The condition to fight "with
 those who fight with you " remained in force to the

last. The last expedition led by the Holy Prophet was the famous Tabūk expedition, and, as already stated, though the Prophet had marched a very long distance to Tabūk at the head of an army of thirty thousand, yet when he found that the enemy did not fulfil the condition laid down above, he returned, and did not allow his troops to attack the enemy territory. There is not a single instance of an expedition being sent to convert a people by force; nay, there is not a single case in which the Prophet ever asked a man 'to believe on the pain of death. The waging of war on unbelievers to compel them to accept Islam is a myth pure and simple. It was the enemy that waged war on the Muslims to turn them away from their religion, as the Holy Qur'ān so clearly asserts: "And they will not cease fighting with you until they turn you back from your religion, if they can" (2 : 217).

Relations with non-Muslims. It is sometimes asserted that the Qur'ān forbids relations of friendship with the followers of other religions. How could a book which allows a man to have as his wife a woman following another religion (5 : 5), say in the same breath that no friendly relations can be had with the followers of other religions? The loving relation of husband and wife is the friendliest of all relations, and when this is expressly permitted, there is not the least reason to suppose that other friendly relations are forbidden. The fact is, that wherever there is a prohibition against making friends with other people, it relates only to the people who were at war with the Muslims, and this is plainly stated in the Qur'ān:

“ Allāh does not forbid you respecting those who have not made war against you on account of your religion, and have not driven you forth from your homes, that you show them kindness and deal with them justly ; for Allāh loves the doers of justice. Allāh only forbids you respecting those who made war upon you on account of your religion, and drove you forth from your homes and backed up others in your expulsion, that you make friends with them, and whoever makes friends with them, these are the unjust ” (60 : 8, 9)

Another widely prevailing misconception may also be noted here. It is generally thought that the Qur’ān provides a death sentence for those who desert the religion of Islam. Any one who takes the trouble to read the Qur’ān will see that there is not the least ground for such a supposition. The Qur’ān speaks repeatedly of people going back to unbelief after believing, but never once does it say that they should be killed or punished. We give here a few quotations :

“ And whoever of you turns back from his religion, then he dies while an unbeliever, these it is whose deeds shall go for nothing in this world and the hereafter ” (2 : 217)

“ O you who believe ! should one of you turn back from his religion, then God will bring a people whom He shall love and they too shall love Him. ” (5 : 54)

“ Those who disbelieve after their believing, then increase in disbelief, their repentance shall not be accepted, and these are they that go astray. ” (3 : 89)

On the other hand, the Qur’ān speaks of a plan of the Jews to adopt Islam first and then desert it, thus creating the impression that Islam was not a religion worth having (3 : 71). Such a scheme could never have entered their heads while living at Medīna where the government was Muslim, if apostasy according to the Quranic law were punishable with death. The

misconception seems to have arisen from the fact that people who after becoming apostates joined the enemy, were treated as enemies ; or where an apostate took the life of a Muslim he was put to death, not of course for changing his religion but for committing murder.

CHAPTER XXXI

FALSE ALLEGATIONS OF ATROCITIES

"It is due to mercy from Allāh that thou dealest with them gently, and hadst thou been rough, hard-hearted, they would certainly have dispersed from around thee."

(The Holy Qur'ān, 3 : 158.)

Biased criticism. European criticism seems to have lost the sense to deal with the Prophet justly. All rules of that criticism seem to be subject to the one consideration that whatever is unfavourable and damaging to the Prophet's reputation must be accepted as true. As an example of this trend of criticism, I take Mr. Cash's "Expansion of Islam" to which the author has attached an appendix of four pages in which he has collected examples of what he calls "assassinations" carried out at the Prophet's instigation and for which he calls the Prophet "cruel, treacherous and relentless" (p. 29). With one exception Mr. Cash has taken his material from Muir, and though a list of original authorities has been added, not the least attempt has been made to consider them critically before condemning a man who is looked upon as the model of virtue and kindness by 400 millions of men. The cases of alleged "assassinations" are five in all, and the sixth case is that of Banī Quraiza which has already been dealt with in the 19th chapter. The last charge is that of permitting a rape, a charge false on the face of it and unknown even to Muir. A brief

discussion of these cases is given below.

How Muslims bore abuses. The first thing that strikes us here is that five out of the six alleged cases of "assassination" and "massacre" relate to Jews. The Jews were "the people of the Book," and ordinarily the dealings of the Muslims with the people of the Book were much more lenient than their dealings with the Arab idolaters. How was it then that the people of the Book, people whose prophets are frequently mentioned with the utmost respect in the Holy Qur'an—how was it that these very people were chosen for assassination, and such crimes were not perpetrated against the Arab idolaters who had most relentlessly persecuted the Muslims for thirteen years at Mecca, and had now taken up the sword to deal a decisive blow at Medina? Sir William Muir and Mr. Cash assert that all these persons were murdered for no offence other than that of composing verses "which annoyed the Mussalmans". Poetry was not a special vocation of the Jews, and verses abusing Islam and the Muslims were in much greater abundance produced by the idolatrous Arabs than the Jews. In fact, it was the Arab, not the Jew, whose particular vocation was poetry, and satire and abusive poetry were used as weapons to discredit and defame Islam specially by the Arabs. Neither Muir nor Cash has taken the trouble of testing the reliability of the record on whose basis he has dared to condemn the most merciful and truest of men as cruel and treacherous. If the writer had gone to the root of the question, he would have found that the Prophet and the Muslims bore patiently the severest abuses and the annoying

verses of all their opponents, whether Jews or idolaters. Indeed, the Holy Qur'ān had plainly enjoined on them that they should bear all abuses patiently, whether they came from the idolaters or from the Jews and the Christians. Here is a verse belonging to a period when the Muslims had already entered on a state of war with their opponents: "And you shall certainly hear from those who have been given the Book before you, and from those who are polytheists, much abuse, and if you are patient and guard against evil, surely this is one of the affairs which should be determined upon" (3 : 185). This verse occurs in a chapter which contains an account of the battle of Uḥud, fought in the 3rd year of Hijra, and could not therefore have been revealed earlier than that year, and this is just the period to which most of the alleged assassinations relate. How was it possible for the Prophet and his followers to go directly against the plain injunction of the Holy Qur'ān? The Prophet could not go against any Quranic injunction, and the Qur'ān says plainly, and says it at a time when war was going on with both the polytheistic Arabs and the Jews, that the Muslims shall have to bear much abuse, and they must not only bear the abuse patiently but should even guard against doing similar evil, to say nothing of murdering the abusers. How could the Prophet in the face of such a plain injunction order the murder of those who abused him, and how could the Muslims carry out an order which was directly opposed to the Holy Qur'ān? It was simply impossible, and if Ibn Hishām or Wāqidī says that the Prophet ordered the assassination of his abusers,

it is Ibn Hishām or Wāqidī—a frail authority after all—that must be rejected, and not the Qur’ān which is admittedly the most reliable source of information as to the doings of the Prophet. The Qur’ān had allowed fighting against an aggressive enemy, yet it refused to give sanction to the murder of one who abused the Prophet and Islam; nay, it required plainly such abuse to be borne patiently. It is simply inconceivable that the Prophet should order the murder of people for annoying poems and, at the same time and in the same breath, forbid that abuse should be met with otherwise than bearing it patiently.

Let us now take the cases individually. The first case cited by Mr. Cash is that of Asmā of the tribe of Aus. She is said to have been a poetess who wrote some verses stating that the Prophet was an upstart who had slain many of their chiefs, referring to the battle of Badr. It is stated that she was brutally murdered for this abuse by a Muslim named ‘Umair, and that the Prophet not only approved of this murder but also praised ‘Umair for the deed. The authorities quoted are Wāqidī, Ibn Hishām, and Ibn Sa’d. That this is not a reliable record is not only shown by what has been stated above, that the Holy Qur’ān never allowed the murder of an abuser, but also by clear directions repeatedly given by the Holy Prophet that no woman was to be killed even though she took part in actual war with the Muslims. No less an authority than Bukhārī has a chapter on the “Murder of Women during War” (Kitāb-ul-Jihād) in which the following report from

The poetess
Asmā—inter-
diction against
killing women.

Ibn 'Umar is recorded: "A woman was found killed in one of the battles fought by the Holy Prophet, so the Holy Prophet forbade the killing of women and children." If the Prophet forbade the killing of women even when they were actually accompanying the enemy forces, how could he approve or applaud the killing of a woman for simply abusing or composing some annoying verses? Even the companions of the Prophet were so well aware of his strict orders against the killing of women that when Abul-Huqaiq's wife interposed herself between them and Abul-Huqaiq, they had to withhold their raised swords "because they remembered that the Holy Prophet had forbidden the killing of a woman" (Fatḥul-Bārī, ch. Killing of Abul-Huqaiq). In the face of this clear testimony, none but a biased mind can accept as reliable a report which relates that the Holy Prophet had ordered and applauded the killing of a woman simply for the offence that she composed annoying verses. This report is undoubtedly a forgery.

The fact is thus established beyond the shadow of a doubt that the Holy Prophet gave a clear interdiction against the murder of women even in wars. In this connection, a saying of the Holy Prophet has been quoted from the most reliable traditionist of Islam, the Imām Bukhārī. The heading under which Bukhārī quotes this saying is "Murder of Women during Wars," thus showing that the interdiction against the murder of women was to be observed even in wars. Bukhārī is not alone in reporting the incident and the interdiction; it is contained in all the books of the *Sihāh Sitta*

(the six reliable collections) with the exception of only one, and therefore its authenticity is beyond dispute. Moreover, this interdiction is accepted as a basic principle by later jurists. Thus according to Mālik and Auzā'ee, the killing of women and children is not allowed under any circumstances whatsoever, and according to Shāfi'ī and the Kūfis, a woman may be killed only when she is a combatant, while according to one authority, even when a woman is a combatant it is not lawful to kill her intentionally unless she is about to kill or attacks a man with the intention of killing him. ('Aun-ul-Ma'būd, *Commentary on Abū Dāood*, ch. Murder of Women). According to Mālik and Auzā'ee, however, as already stated, a woman should not be killed under any condition, so much so that if a fighting force takes the shelter of women and children or takes shelter in a fort or a boat in which there are also women and children with them, it is not lawful to shoot at or set fire to the fort or the boat (Fathul Bārī, ch. Ahl ud-dār-i-yabīṭun). In the face of these facts it is simply unthinkable that the Prophet should have ordered the assassination of a woman, under *peaceful* conditions, for no other fault than singing certain annoying verses.

Abū Afak. The next incident related by Mr. Cash is that relating to the alleged assassination of Abū Afak, "an aged Jewish proselyte, whose offence was similar to that of Asmā." We have no hesitation in calling this story as baseless a fabrication as that relating to the murder of Asmā. Our reason for doing this is that the interdiction against the murder of women also included two other classes, *viz.*, children

and old men. It is true that the saying of the Prophet as reported in the Bukhārī mentions only women and children, and not aged persons, but there is a ḥadīth in Abu Dāood (ch. Du'ā-ul-Mushrikīn) reported by Anas, son of Mālik, according to which the Holy Prophet said : "Do not kill an aged person, nor a child, nor a minor, nor a woman." That the Prophet expressly forbade the killing of old men appears also from the directions given by Abū Bakr, the first Caliph, to Yazīd, son of Abū Sufyān, when he sent him in command of an army to Syria. In the directions given to him the following relates to our subject : "Do not kill children, nor women, nor old men." (Fat-ḥul-Qadīr, vol. v. p. 202.) It is clear that Abū Bakr could give such directions only on the authority of the Holy Prophet. Hence there was an interdiction against the killing of old men, as there was against the killing of women. And it is impossible, we repeat, that the Holy Prophet should have given such clear injunctions and then himself ordered the killing of "an aged Jewish proselyte," as Abū Afak is said to have been, and for no offence but that he composed some annoying verses.

Only combatants could be killed--Ibn Sunaina.

In fact, as the Hidāya has put it clearly, a person's life, unless he is a murderer, cannot be taken on any ground other than that he is a combatant: "And they should not kill a woman, nor a child, nor an aged person, nor one who does not take part in a war, nor a blind man, because what makes it lawful to take a man's life, according to us, is his being a combatant, and this is not true in their case" (ch. Kaifiyyat-ul-Qitāl).

In fact, this conclusion, which is the basic principle of the Hanifite law, is based on the express words of the Holy Prophet himself. As Abū Dāood reports on the authority of Rabāḥ, son of Rabī': "We were with the Prophet in a certain battle, and he saw the people gather together in one place. So he sent a man to make an inquiry as to why the people had gathered together. The messenger came back and said, 'There is a woman killed'. The Holy Prophet said, '*She was not fighting*'. The reporter says that Khālid was leading at the time. So the Prophet sent a man to Khālid and asked him to tell Khālid that he should not kill a woman nor a hireling" (ch. Qatl-un-Nisā). By remarking that "she was not fighting", the Holy Prophet made it plain that even in battle only such persons could be killed as actually took part in fighting, and along with women he excepted hirelings, because they were only hired for other work and did not take part in actual fighting. It is on this basis that the Hanifite law excepts, along with women, children and old men, all such persons as cannot take part in fighting. And the conclusion is inevitable that according to the Holy Prophet's own injunctions the killing of a person was not lawful unless he took part in fighting, and any report to the effect that a person was killed though he was not a combatant is either untrue or defective, even if it is met with in a reliable collection of traditions. And as for biographies, they cannot be trusted at all in such matters, and the case of Ibn Sunaina's murder must be rejected as untrue. The statement that this murder was due

to the Prophet giving a general order for the slaughter of the Jews is sufficient to discredit this report, for not only would such an order be against the clear injunctions of the Holy Qur'ān, but also because if such an order were given it would not have resulted in the murder of a single Jew.

Ka'b ibn Ashraf. We now come to the genuine cases which are mentioned in collections of Hadīth.

The first of these is the case of Ka'b ibn Ashraf. We propose to discuss it in detail, for this one case would show how the Holy Prophet has been misrepresented. Ka'b's father belonged to the tribe of Tayy, but coming over to Medīna he became an ally of the Jewish tribe of Banī Nadzīr and became so influential that he succeeded in marrying the daughter of a Jewish leader. Ka'b thus stood in a very near relationship to both the Jews and the Arabs. When the Holy Prophet came to Medīna, the Jews made an agreement with him, by the terms of which the Jews and the Muslims were to live as one people, both retaining their own faith, and in the case of an attack on Medīna or an unaggressive war with a third party they bound themselves to help each other. The Prophet was accepted as the final court of appeal in all disputes. When, however, a Meccan army advanced on Medīna in the 2nd year of Hijra, the Muslims had to meet them alone, and notwithstanding that they were less than a third of the Meccan army and very inferior in efficiency and arms, they inflicted a crushing defeat on the invading army at Badr. The Muslim victory only added to the Jewish spite against Islam. Ka'b, who was bound by the

Medīna treaty, now used his poetic gift freely to excite hatred of Islam and the Muslims. Not content with this, he proceeded to Mecca and openly joined hands with the enemies of Islam. He urged upon the Quraish the necessity of attacking Medīna with a strong force at an early date, and swore in the Ka'ba that he would fight against the Muslims when Medīna was invaded. Not only this ; he returned from Mecca with a plan to put an end to the Prophet's life by underhand means. It is only in the true Christian missionary spirit that Muir, in his *Life of Mahomet*, has no place for these facts while he has sufficient room for the minutest details as to how Ka'b was put to death, and he gives vent to his inner feelings when he concludes his description of one of the alleged "assassinations" in the following words :—

"The progress of Islam begins to stand out in unenviable contrast with that of early Christianity. Converts were gained to the faith of Jesus by witnessing the constancy with which its confessors suffered death, they were gained to Islam by the spectacle of the readiness with which its adherents inflicted death. In the one case conversion imperilled the believer's life ; in the other, it was the only means of saving it"

And if Muir conceals the facts which show that from an ally Ka'b had turned into a combatant, Cash, notwithstanding his parading the original authorities, is guilty of the same offence. That there was a war between the Muslims and the non-Muslims at the time of the alleged "assassination", in the third year of the Hijra, is an undeniable fact. The question is whether Ka'b was among the combatants or the non-combatants. If he actually joined hands with the

enemies of Islam and placed himself among those who were fighting with the Muslims, and he was killed by the Muslims, can this be called a case of treachery, cruelty, or butchery? That Ka'b had openly joined the combatants and become their ally is borne out by all historical accounts ; nay, some of them go so far as to say that he had planned to murder the Holy Prophet treacherously. Here are a few authorities :—

“ He went to the Quraish, weeping over their killed (at Badr) and inciting them to fight with the Prophet.” (Zurqānī, vol. ii, p. 10)

(The Prophet said) “ He (Ka'b) has openly assumed enmity to us and speaks evil of us and he has gone over to the polytheists (who were at war with the Muslims) and has made them gather against us for fighting ” (Zurqānī, vol. ii, p. 11.)

“ And according to Kalbī, he united in a league with the Quraish before the curtains of the Ka'ba to fight against the Muslims ” (Zurqānī, vol. ii, p. 11).

“ And he prepared a feast, and conspired with some Jews that he would invite the Prophet, and when he came they should fall on him all of a sudden ” (Zurqānī, vol. ii, p. 12).

Commenting on Bukhārī's report relating to the killing of Ka'b, the author of *Fath-ul-Bārī* relates the reports which we have quoted above from *Zurqānī*, viz. Ka'b's going to Mecca and inciting the Quraish, entering into a league before the curtains of the Ka'ba to fight against the Muslims, the Prophet's declaration that he had assumed open enmity, and his plan to kill the Prophet by inviting him to a feast. Bukhārī himself speaks of the incidents relating to the killing of Ka'b under headings in which the word *ḥarb* (fighting) occurs, thus showing that he was looked upon as a combatant. *Abū Dāood* speaks of the incident under the heading “When the enemy is attacked and he is unprepared,”

showing that Ka'b was dealt with as an enemy at war with the Muslims. And the comment on this is that "Ka'b used to incite people to murder the Muslims"; and discussing the legality of what the party sent out for the punishment of Ka'b did, the same commentator adds : "This is not allowed in the case of an enemy after security has been given to him or peace has been made with him . . . but it is allowed in the case of one who breaks the covenant and helps others in the murder of Muslims." And Ibn Sa'd tells us that when the Jews complained to the Holy Prophet that their leader was killed, "he reminded them of his deeds and how he urged and incited (the Quraish) to fight against them," and adds that "the Prophet then called upon them to make an agreement with him", and this agreement "was afterwards in the possession of 'Alī". All this evidence is too clear to show that Ka'b was put to death for having broken the agreement with the Prophet and joined his enemies who were at war with him, and he was therefore treated as a combatant, while the other Jews who did not go to this length, though they were not less active in speaking evil of the Holy Prophet, still lived at peace with him, and all that they were required to do was to sign an agreement that they would not join hands with those who were at war with the Muslims.

The only question that is worth considering is why Ka'b was put to death by certain Muslims attacking him suddenly and unawares. In the first place, it must be clearly understood that the responsibility as to the manner in which he was put to death does not at all

lie with the Prophet. That the Prophet considered Ka'b as deserving death is quite true, but there is no proof at all that he gave any directions as to the manner in which that sentence was to be carried out. On the other hand according to one report, when the Prophet was asked by Muḥammad ibn Maslamah whether he should kill him, he assumed silence, while according to another he said : " If you are going to do it, be not in a hurry until you have consulted Sa'd ibn Mu'adh" (Zurqānī, vol. ii, p. 12.) At any rate he knew nothing about the details, and it is even doubtful whether the details as given are true, and on this point even Muir has his doubts. But supposing that all these details are true, the Holy Prophet had nothing to do with them. And leaving aside the question of the Prophet's responsibility, there was no other method to which resort could be had under the circumstances. The hostile critic takes it for granted that the conditions under which the Muslims lived at Medīna were very like those under which he lives in the twentieth century. They had to deal with an enemy, and they dealt with him in the only way in which it was possible to proceed under the circumstances as then existing. Ka'b had chosen to enter into a league with an enemy at war with the Muslims, and according to all human and Divine laws he could not but be treated as an enemy at war. And dealing with him as a combatant, the Holy Prophet sent a party against him ; it is definitely called a *sariyya* (lit. *a portion of an army*) in all biographical works, thus showing that the party was sent to fight with him ; but it rested with the leader of the party to

choose the best way in which he could deal a blow at the enemy. And Muḥammad ibn Maslama, the leader, chose a method which was recognized among the Arabs, and which in his opinion was the best and most effective way under the circumstances. If the leader of the party had chosen to attack Ka'b openly, there would have been much more bloodshed, and probably the whole Jewish tribe of Bani Nadzīr would have suffered along with Ka'b. Ka'b had broken his agreement with the Prophet, he had revolted against him, he had entered into a league to fight against the Muslims till they were extirpated, and he had secretly planned to take away the Prophet's life. For every one of these offences he had forfeited his life. A party was sent to execute this decree, and his life was taken in a manner which, if it had the fault of being secret, had also the merit of not involving innocent people along with the culprit, which would surely have been the result in the case of an open attack ; but the Holy Prophet was not in any way responsible for the method of the execution.

Abul Huqaiq. Having discussed the case of Ka'b at length, the case of Abul Huqaiq (Abū Rāfi') need not detain us long. In fact, Muir has admitted his guilt with a suppressed tongue. Thus under the heading "Assassination of Abul Huqaiq, a Jewish Chief," he says :—

"A party of the Bani Nazir, after their exile, settled down among their brethren at Khaibar. Abul Huckleick, their chief, having taken a prominent part in the confederate force which besieged Medina, was now suspected of encouraging certain Bedouin tribes in their depredations. An expedition was therefore undertaken by Ali against the Jews of Khaibar.....As a surer

means of stopping these attacks, Mahomet resolved on ridding himself of their supposed author, the Jewish chief,..... The assassination of Abul Hukeick did not relieve Mahomet of his apprehensions from the Jews of Khaibar; for Oseir, elected in his room, maintained the same relation with the Ghatafan, and was even reported to be designing fresh movements against Medina."

The Banī-Nadzīr, a Jewish tribe, originally lived at Medina, and were in alliance with the Holy Prophet, but being suspected of keeping up correspondence with the Quraish, and one of the Arab tribes in alliance with them having murdered some Muslims treacherously, they were asked to renew the alliance, which they refused, and were ultimately banished from Medina. They settled at Khaibar, a Jewish stronghold, and became a source of immense trouble to the Muslims, constantly inciting the tribes around Medina to commit depredations on the Muslims. Abul Huqaiq, their head, was also a leader in the "Battle of the Allies" in which the Arabian and Jewish tribes had gathered together to give a crushing blow to Islam. Abul Huqaiq and the Jews had thus come out into the field of battle against the Muslims, and even after the allies had to go back in discomfiture, Abul Huqaiq continued to excite and help the Arab tribes living around Medina in their depredations against the Muslims. The Prophet was thus justified in sending an expedition against the Khaibar Jews, but before doing this in the 7th year, he sent a small party to deal with Abul Huqaiq alone in 6 A. H. Undoubtedly the underlying idea was that bloodshed might be avoided as far as possible, and that if the ring-leader was taken away, the mischief might cease. But even Abul Huqaiq's death

did not bring peace to the Muslims, and, accordingly, Khaibar had ultimately to be attacked and conquered. That the party sent against him chose to adopt the method which was successfully adopted against Ka'b, again throws no blame on the Prophet.

Mr. Cash's last charge against the Holy Prophet, *i. e.* having allowed rape of the women of Banī Muṣṭaliq, is a grievous calumny. And the allegation that "all the Tradition Books" mention it is a bold statement. Not a single collection of Ḥadith contains testimony establishing the charge—a charge of which even a hostile writer like Muir is unaware. The only thing that is met with in the collections of Ḥadith is a report from Abū Sa'īd Khudārī that some people in the Muslim army intended contracting temporary marriage relations with some women who were prisoners of war and making use of a birth-control device, but there is not the least evidence that they ever did it. Abū Sa'īd's report, in fact, relates to the legality of 'azl, a birth-control device, and it does not say at all how the women of Banī Muṣṭaliq were treated. It is a fact that before the advent of Islam, temporary marriage relations were allowed. The Holy Qur'ān put an end to them, but all reform was, and ought to have been, gradual. The Qur'ān is explicit on marriage with the prisoners of war, and the verse quoted below is a clear rebuttal of Mr. Cash's unfounded charge :

"And whoever among you has not within his power ample means to marry free believing women, then he may marry of those whom your right hands possess from among your

believing maidens...so marry them with the permission of their masters, and give them their dowries justly, they being chaste, not fornicating, nor receiving paramours ; and when they are taken in marriage, then if they are guilty of indecency, they shall suffer half the punishment which is inflicted upon free women. This is for him among you who fears falling into evil and that you abstain is better for you, and God is Forgiving, Merciful " (4 : 25).

As regards the treatment of the women of Banī Muṣṭaliq in particular, there is the clearest historical evidence in all Ḥadith books that they were all set free without demanding any ransom, because one of them, Juwairiya, was set free and married by the Holy Prophet.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE PROPHET'S MARRIAGES

"O, Prophet! say to thy wives, If you desire this world's life and its ornamature, then come, I will give you a provision and allow you to depart a goodly departure."

(The Holy Qur'an, 33 : 28)

Khadija. The Prophet's first marriage came about at the age of twenty-five. Khadija, his first wife, was then a widow of forty. Excepting his son Ibrāhīm, all the Prophet's children were born of Khadija. She passed away more than three years before the Hijra. At the time of her death, the Prophet was fifty years old. Thus, the two lived together for full twenty-five years. Though it was a common practice in Arabia to have a number of wives, yet to the good old age of fifty, the Prophet had only Khadija for his wife.

'Ā'isha. Khadija's loss weighed heavily upon the Prophet. Seeing this, one of his lady companions suggested that he should marry 'Ā'isha, Abū Bakr's daughter, and then approached Abū Bakr on his behalf. The girl was one possessing exceptional qualities, and both Abū Bakr and the Prophet saw in her the great woman of the future, who was best suited to perform the duties of the wife of a teacher whose words and deeds had to be preserved for the guidance of mankind. But there were two difficulties in the way. The first was that 'Ā'isha was

already betrothed to Jubair and so Abū Bakr could not agree until the matter was settled with Jubair. But Jubair himself wanted now to get rid of the engagement as the gulf between the Muslims and the non-Muslims had by now widened to such a degree that the match was undesirable. The other difficulty was that 'Ā'isha had not yet attained majority. This was solved by the postponement of the consummation of marriage till 'Ā'isha reached the age of majority. And thus the marriage ceremony that was gone through amounted virtually to a betrothal. It was on the ninth of Shawwāl in the tenth year of the Call.

I may here take occasion to remove the popular misconception as to 'Ā'isha's age. That she had not yet attained majority is clear enough, but that she was not so young as six years of age is also true. In the first place, it is clear that she had reached an age when betrothal could have taken place in the ordinary course, and must have been approaching the age of majority. Again, the Iṣāba, speaking of the Prophet's daughter Fāṭima, says that she was about five years older than 'Ā'isha. Further, it is a well-established fact that Fāṭima was born when the Ka'ba was being rebuilt, *i.e.*, five years before the Call. 'Ā'isha was therefore born in the year of the Call or a little before it, and she could not have been less than ten years at the time of her marriage with the Holy Prophet in the tenth year of the Call. This conclusion is borne out not only by the testimony of 'Ā'isha herself who is reported to have related that when the chapter known as "the Moon" (the 54th

chapter) was revealed, she was a girl playing about and that she remembered certain verses then revealed. Now the fifty-fourth chapter could not have been revealed later than the fifth year of the Call, and therefore the report which states her to have been six years old in the tenth year of the Call when her marriage ceremony was gone through cannot be correct, because this would show her to have been born about the time of the revelation of the 54th chapter. All these considerations show her to have been not less than ten years old at the time of her marriage. And as the period between her marriage and its consummation is not less than five years, because the consummation took place in the second year of the Flight, it follows that she could not have been less than fifteen at the time of the consummation of her marriage. The popular account that she was six years at marriage and nine years at the time of consummation is decidedly not correct, because it supposes the period between the marriage and its consummation to be only three years, and this is historically wrong.

Sauda. As stated above, 'Ā'isha being very young at the time of her marriage, and the consummation having been postponed for some years, the Prophet married Sauda, a widow of advanced age, in the same year, *i.e.*, the tenth year of the Call. She had emigrated, along with her husband, to Abyssinia. On their return, her husband died on the way, leaving her in a terrible state of destitution. Small as the Muslim brotherhood then was, where could she look for a respectable shelter? So she offered her hand to the

Prophet, who accepted it.

Hafsa, the daughter of 'Umar, was left a widow at the battle of Badr, her husband, Khunais, having been slain in action. 'Umar approached Abū Bakr and then 'Uthmān to take his daughter in marriage. This shows the dearth of marriageable men among the Muslims at the time. Both of them excused themselves, perhaps for the reason that Hafsa was a bit harsh of temper. At last the Prophet took her in marriage in the year 3 A. H. The same year, 'Abdullāh-ibn-Jaḥsh having fallen on the field of Uḥud, his widow Zainab was also taken in marriage by the Holy Prophet. A year later, on the death of Abū Salma, to his widow Umm Salma was also extended the shelter of the Prophet's household.

Zainab was the daughter of the Prophet's aunt Umaina, daughter of 'Abdul Muṭṭalib. The Prophet proposed to her brother that she should be given in marriage to Zaid, his own liberated slave. Both the brother and the sister were averse to this, for Zaid was only a freed man and as such could not, according to the pre-Islamic notions of respectability, enter into a matrimonial alliance with a woman of high birth such as Zainab was. They desired the Prophet himself to marry her, but yielded under pressure from the Prophet who was anxious to abolish the false distinctions of birth and class. The union, however, was not a happy one. Differences arose and relations were strained to the breaking point. When all attempts at reconciliation had failed, there was only one alternative left—divorce.

Thus as a last resort they were separated. She was thereafter taken into marriage by the Prophet himself, that being the wish of the lady and her relations ; and now that the marriage arranged by him had proved unsuccessful, he was morally bound to meet their desire. This marriage came about in the year 5 A. H.

Juwairiya. The same year, at the battle of Banī Muṣṭaliq, a large number of prisoners, male as well as female, fell into the Muslims' hands. Among them was one Juwairiya, the daughter of an Arab chief, Ḥārith. Coming to the Prophet to ransom his daughter, he embraced Islam along with his two sons. Juwairiya's husband had already died, so Ḥārith consented to her marriage with the Prophet. As a consequence of this marriage, the prisoners of Banī Muṣṭaliq, about a hundred families, were all released by the Muslims. The tribe which was so honoured by the Prophet's relationship, they said, should not remain in captivity.

Umm Ḥabība. Among the emigrants to Abyssinia was also the daughter of Abū Sufyān, Umm Ḥabība. Her husband, 'Ubaidullāh, turned Christian there. On his death, while Umm Ḥabība was yet in Abyssinia, the Prophet married her. She came to Medīna in 7 A. H.

Ṣafīyya, Mary and Maimūna. At the battle of Khaibar in 7 A.H., Ṣafīyya, the daughter of a Jewish chief, was one of the prisoners taken. Her husband had already fallen in action. The Jews had been a ceaseless source of trouble to the Muslims. The Prophet thought a matrimonial alliance with them

might once and for all put a stop to their mischiefs. Thus came Şafiyya among the Prophet's wives. In this very year Mary the Copt, who was sent as a present to the Prophet by Muqauqas, also joined the Prophet's household. She gave birth to a son, named Ibrāhim. The same year another widow, Maimūna, offered her hand to the Prophet, and it was accepted.

Polygamy is met with among the righteous.

Why did the Prophet contract so many marriage relations, is the question which disturbs many a mind. And there are men who do not hesitate to call him a profligate, simply because he resorted to polygamy. The man who brought about the most thorough transformation of a nation within twenty years, who, alone and unaided, swept off vice and immorality from a whole country, where the most strenuous efforts of powerful missionary nations had hopelessly failed, who by his personal example purified the lives of vast numbers of humanity,—could such a man himself be in the grip of sin? An impure man could not consistently preach virtue; how could he take others by the hand, and free them from bondage of sin and inspire his very soldiers and generals with sentiments of virtue? Could a man who himself groped in the dark lead others to light? Whatever may be the views on polygamy of a world itself sunk deep in immoral practices, there is not the least doubt that plurality of wives is met with in the lives of many great religious personages who by a concensus of opinion led lives of transcendant purity. Abraham who is held in reverence by more than half the world up to this day

had more wives than one. Similar was the case with Jacob, Moses and David among the Israelites, and with some of the famous and revered sages of Hindūs. The example of Jesus is quite out of question as according to the Gospels he did not marry, and if his example were followed, the world would come to an end before long. Yet it is true that these great sages were not led away by sensual desires to a polygamous life. Purity in all respects was the outstanding characteristic of their lives, and this fact alone is sufficient to condemn the attempt to defame them on the basis of their resorting to polygamy. What was their object in doing so, it is difficult to say at the present day, as their histories are generally enveloped in darkness, but as the life of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad can be read in the full light of history, we will take his case in detail.

Four periods
of the Prophet's
life.

The life of the Prophet may be divided into four periods so far as his domestic life is concerned. Up to twenty-five, he led a celibate life ; from twenty-five to fifty-four years, he lived in a married state with one wife ; from fifty-four to sixty he contracted several marriages ; and lastly from sixty till his death he did not contract any new marriage.

First period.

The most important period to determine whether the Prophet was a slave to his passions is the period of celibacy. If he had not been a complete master of his passions, he could not have led, up to the age of twenty-five, the exceptionally chaste and pure life, which won him the title of al-Amīn, in a hot country like Arabia where development must

necessarily take place early and passions are generally stronger. His worst enemies could not point to a single blot on his character when challenged later (10:16). Even according to Muir, all authorities agree "in ascribing to the youth of Mahomet a modesty of deportment and purity of manners rare among the people of Mecca." Now youth is the time when passions run riot, and the man who is able to control his passions in youth, and that in celibacy, cannot, possibly, be conceived as falling a prey to lust in his old age. Thus the first period of his life, his celibacy up to twenty-five years of age, is a conclusive proof that he could never fall a prey to his passions. It should be noted in this connection that in the Arab society at the time there was no moral sanction against an immoral life, so that it might be said that he was kept back from an evil course by the moral force of society. No; profligacy was the order of the day; and it was among people who prided on loose sexual relations that the Holy Prophet Muhammad led a life of transcendent purity, and therefore all the more credit is due to his purity of character.

Second period. Take now the next period, the period of a monogamous married life. When twenty-five years of age, he married a widow, Khadija, fifteen years his senior, and led a life of utmost devotion with her till she died, when he was fifty years of age. Now polygamy was the rule in Arabia at the time; and the wife had no cause of complaint, nor did she ever grumble, if the husband brought in a second or a third wife. Marriage with Khadija had enriched him,

though polygamy in Arabia was not limited to the rich ; the poor as well resorted to it. The wife being a help-mate in the real sense of the word, because she helped the husband in earning livelihood, as the woman generally does in the labouring classes, the poor had nothing to lose by resorting to polygamy. The Prophet belonged to the noblest family of the Quraish and if he had chosen to marry another wife, it would have been quite easy for him. But he led a monogamous life of the utmost devotion to his wife during all this while. When Khadija died, he married a very elderly lady named Sauda, whose only recommendation for the honour was that she was the widow of a faithful companion of his who had to fly to Abyssinia from the persecutions of the Quraish. The main part of his life, from twenty-five to fifty-four, was thus an example for his followers that monogamy was the rule in married life.

Third period. Now comes the third period. In the second year of the Flight began the series of battles with the Quraish and the other Arab tribes, which appreciably reduced the number of males, the bread-winners of the family. These battles continued up to the eighth year of the Flight, and it was during this time that the Holy Prophet contracted all the marriages which appear objectionable to the modern mind, but which neither friend nor foe looked upon with disapprobation at the time. And how could they do so, for they saw that it was an act of compassion, and was not due to any indulgence of the passions. Even a Christian writer admits this when he says : " It should be

remembered, however, that most of Muhammad's marriages may be explained, at least, as much by his pity for the forlorn condition of the persons concerned, as by other motives. They were almost all of them widows who were not remarkable either for their beauty or their wealth, but quite the reverse."* And what other motives could there be? Let us look at facts straight in the face. The Prophet had now a young and beautiful wife in 'Ā'isha in his house. None of the other wives whom he married later compared with her either in youth or beauty. Surely then it was not attraction for beauty that led to these marriages. And we have already seen that from his youth till his old age the Prophet remained a complete master of his passions. The man who could live in celibacy up to twenty-five years, and still have the reputation of a spotless character, who upto fifty-four lived with a single wife, and this notwithstanding the fact that polygamy was more the rule than the exception at the time and that a polygamous connection was not in the least objectionable—such a man could not be said to have changed all of a sudden after fifty-five, when old age does generally soothe the passions even of those who cannot control their passions in youth. No other motive than compassion for the ladies who were given this honour can be attached to these marriages. If there had been any less honourable motive, his choice would have fallen on others than widows, and under the Arab custom a man in his position could have plenty of youthful virgins.

*Bosworth Smith.

Circumstances in which the Prophet lived.

I have said that a change for the worse could not come over a man who had led an undoubtedly spotless life until he reached fifty-five. If the beauty of woman could not excite his passions in youth and lead him away from the path of rectitude, how could it lead him away in old age? And what were the circumstances in which he lived at Medīna during these years? It was not a life of ease and luxury that he was leading at the time; it was a life of hardness, because it was at this very time that he had to carry on a life and death struggle with the enemies of Islam. Huge armies came to crush him and the small band of Muslims at Medīna. The whole of Arabia was aflame against him. He was not secure for a minute. Battles had to be fought in quick succession. Expeditions had to be arranged and sent. "Prophet of God! we are tired of being in arms day and night," would his companions say to him; and he had to console them by telling them that time would come when a traveller would be able to go from one end of the country to the other without having any arms. The Jews and the Christians were his enemies along with the idolaters. His best friends were falling sometimes in battles and sometimes by treachery. Is it possible for a man to lead a life of ease and luxury under such circumstances? Even if a man had the mind to lead a life of self-indulgence, which the Prophet according to all available evidence had not, this was not the opportune time for it. Under such circumstances of warfare, with enemies within Medīna and enemies all around it, with the number of the Muslims being

insignificantly small in comparison with the enemy, with news of assaults by overwhelming numbers on all sides, even a profligate's life would be changed, to say nothing of a man of admitted purity of character, which no temptation could shake, turning into a profligate.

How he passed his nights. If the Prophet's days during this period were passed so strenuously, how did he pass the nights? He had a number of lawful wives, but did he spend away his nights in enjoyment with them? There is the clearest evidence on record in the Holy Qur'ān (73 : 1-4, 20) as well as the Ḥadīth that he passed half the night, and sometimes even more than that, in praying to God and in reciting the Holy Qur'ān while standing in prayer. He would stand so long that his feet would get swollen. Could such a man be said to be taking wives for self-indulgence when the minutest details of his life as available to us show conclusively that it was a strenuous life farthest away from indulgence of every kind?

Simplicity of his life. Let us now take another point. Was any change really witnessed in the later phase of the Prophet's life when he became the ruler of a state? "In the shepherd of the desert, in the Syrian trader, in the solitary of Mount Hira, in the reformer in the minority of one, in the exile of Medina, in the acknowledged conqueror, in the equal of the Persian Chosroes and the Greek Heracleus, we can still trace a substantial unity. I doubt whether any other man, whose external conditions changed so much, ever himself changed less to meet them: the accidents are changed, the essence seems to me to be the same in all."

(Bosworth Smith.) From the cradle to the grave, the Prophet passed through a diversity of circumstances—a diversity which can hardly be met with in the life of a single man. Orphanhood is the extreme of helplessness, while kingship is the height of power. From an orphan he climbed to the summit of royal glory, but that did not create the slightest change in his way of living. He lived on exactly the same kind of humble food, wore the same simple dress, and in all particulars led the same life as he led in the state of orphanhood. It is hard to give up the kingly throne and lead the life of a hermit, but it is far harder that one should wield the royal sceptre and at the same time lead a hermit's life, that one should possess power and wealth yet spend it solely to promote the welfare of others, that one should ever have the most alluring attractions before one's eyes yet should never for one moment be captivated by them. When the Prophet actually became the ruler of a state, the furniture of his house was composed of a matting of palm leaves for his bed and an earthen jug for water. Some nights he would go without food. For days no fire would be lit in his house to prepare food, the whole family living on mere dates. There was no lack of means to live a life of ease and comfort. The public treasury was at his disposal. The well-to-do among his followers, who did not shrink from sacrificing their lives for his sake, would have been only too glad to provide him with every comfort of life, should he choose to avail himself of it. But worldly things carried little weight in his estimation. No mundane craving could ever prevail over him, neither

in times of indigence, nor of plenty. Just as he spurned at wealth, power and beauty, which the Quraish offered him when he was yet in a state of utmost helplessness, so did he remain indifferent to them when God granted him all these things out of His grace.

Prophet's wives led a simple life. Not only did he himself live the simplest life of a labourer, but he did not even allow wealth to have any attraction for his wives. Shortly after their immigration into Medina, the condition of the Muslims had changed, and they carried on a prosperous trade. The later conquests went further to add to the comforts of life which the Muslims enjoyed. Quite a human desire crept into the hearts of the Prophet's wives that like other Muslim families they too should avail themselves of their share of comforts. Accordingly they approached the Prophet in a body to prevail upon him to allow them their legitimate share of worldly comforts. Thereupon came the Divine injunction: "O Prophet! say to thy wives, If you desire this world's life and its ornatue, come, I will give you a provision and allow you to depart a goodly departing. And if you desire God and His Apostle and the latter abode, then surely God has prepared for the doers of good among you a mighty reward." (33:28, 29.) Thus they were offered two alternatives. They must have either worldly finery, or remain in the Prophet's household. Should they decide to have the former, they would have plenty of what they wanted, but would forthwith forfeit the honour of being the Prophet's wives. Can this be the reply of a sensual man? Such a man would have done everything to satisfy the whims of the objects of

his affection. Nay, he would himself have desired that his wives should wear the most beautiful dress and live in comfort. No doubt the Prophet cherished great love and regard for his wives. "The best of you," he is reported to have said "is the one who treats his wife best." This illustrates his attitude towards womanhood. He had immense regard for the rights of women and was the champion of their cause. But when his wives came to him with what was apparently quite a legitimate demand to have more of finery and ornaments, they were coldly told that if they would have these things, they were not fit to live in the Prophet's household. Does any one who is the slave of his passions disregard the wishes of his wives in such a matter? This shows beyond the shadow of a doubt how free the Prophet's heart was of all base and sensual thoughts. He is prepared to divorce all his wives rather than yield to what he regards as unworthy of his wives—an inclination towards worldly things. It shows conclusively that the object of his marriages was anything but self-indulgence.

Protection
of women was
the underlying
idea.

Let us consider once more the historical facts which led the Holy Prophet to take a number of wives within the short space of five years from the 3rd year of Hijra to the 7th, while before that he passed nearly thirty years of his life in a monogamous state. This period coincides exactly with the period during which incessant war was carried on between the Muslims and the non-Muslims. The circle of Muslim brotherhood was at the time very narrow. The perpetual state of war created disparity between the male and the female.

elements of the society. Husbands having fallen on the field of battle, their widows had to be provided for. But bread and butter is not the only provision needed in such cases, as is supposed by certain short-sighted statesmen. Sex inclination is implanted in human nature, and the statesman who neglects the sex requirements leads society to moral corruption, ending ultimately in the ruin of the whole nation. A reformer with whom morals are all in all could not content himself with making provision merely for the eating and drinking of the widows. The Prophet was anxious for their chastity to a far greater extent than their physical needs. It became therefore necessary to allow polygamy. This is the reason that he himself took so many women for his wives during the period when war was raging. Nearly all of his wives were widows. Where self-indulgence is the motive, the choice does not fall on widows. Lust must needs have virginity for its gratification. And there was no dearth of virgins. It would have been an enviable privilege for any Muslim to be father-in-law of the Prophet. But the object was a far nobler one—the protection of the widows of his friends. In polygamy alone lay the moral safety of the Muslim society situated as it then was.

Political reasons. Again, certain political reasons also led to some of the marriages. This was the case in the marriage with Juwairiya, a lady belonging to the Banī Muṣṭaliq, and such was also the case in the marriage with Ṣafīyya, the widow of a Jewish chieftain. The Prophet wanted to conciliate both tribes and that was the only motive in these marriages.

Other consi-
derations. The case of the marriage with Zainab may, however, be specially noted here, as calumny has been at work in this case. Zainab was the Prophet's first cousin, being the daughter of his aunt. When she reached the age of majority, she was offered in marriage to the Prophet by her brother. But the Holy Prophet wedded her to Zaid, a slave whom he had himself freed and who was deeply attached to him. The couple could not however pull together and after a time Zaid wanted to divorce her. The Prophet dissuaded him as plainly stated in the Holy Qur'ān (33 : 36, 37). But ultimately a divorce was found necessary. The divorced woman is generally looked down upon in popular estimation, and this was a case in which a freed slave divorced a lady of high birth. By taking such a divorced woman as his wife, the Prophet wanted to remove the false notion that divorce degraded woman. Thus by this act, to which he was morally bound because the lady had been at first offered in marriage to him, he elevated the whole class of divorced women who would otherwise suffer lifelong humiliation in society. If he had any desire of self-gratification or if he had any passion for the lady, he would not have refused her when she was offered to him as a virgin. Refusal of her hand in the first instance, and taking her in marriage when being divorced she was lowered in general estimation, shows conclusively that his motive in this marriage was anything but self-gratification.

Fourth period. We now come to the fourth period. With the conquest of Mecca in the

year 8. A. H., internal warfare, came practically to an end. Disturbances there were, but on the whole peace had been established in the country and normal conditions were restored. And it is from the 8th year of the Flight to the end of his life that we find that the Prophet did not contract any new marriage. What is the evidence of facts then? It is clearly this that the Holy Prophet added to the number of his wives only during the time that he had to live in a state of warfare when the number of males was reduced, so that many women would have been left without protection and without a home if the difficulty had not been solved by permitting a limited polygamy. Before the Prophet had to enter on a defensive warfare, he lived in the company of a single wife, and after war was ended, he contracted no new marriage, and this sets all doubts at rest as to the motives of the Prophet. In all the marriages which he contracted during the war, there was some ulterior moral end in view. There arose situations in his life under which he could not, consistently with the moral and religious mission of his life, help taking more wives than one. In that, he only showed compassion to the weaker sex.

Prophet's natural liking was not for polygamy or war.

Living in a country in which polygamy was the rule, the Prophet had no liking for polygamy. He passed the prime of his life, up to 53 years of age, as the husband of a single wife, thus showing that the union of one man and one woman was the rule under normal conditions. But when abnormal conditions arose, he did not, like a sentimentalist, shirk his duty for the

sake of an idea. He saw that the chastity of woman was at stake if polygamy was not allowed, and for the sake of a higher interest he permitted polygamy as an exception to meet exceptional circumstances. Exactly thus he had to resort to war, though by disposition he was averse to it. Full forty years before the Call, he had been living in a land where sword was freely wielded as a stick elsewhere, where fighting and feuds were the order of the day, where men would fly at each other's throats like wild animals, where there was no chance of survival for one who could not use the sword, yet not once during these forty years did he deal a blow at an enemy. The same was the case with him for fourteen years after the Call. That he was peace-loving by nature is shown by the clear injunctions relating to peace in the Holy Qur'ān : " And if they incline to peace, do thou also incline to it and trust in God . . . And if they intend to deceive thee, then surely God is sufficient for thee" (8 : 61, 62). His acceptance of the truce of Ḥudaibiya, though its conditions were humiliating to the Muslims, who were ready to lay down their lives one and all rather than accept those terms, is also a clear proof of his peace-loving nature. But when duty called him to take the field to save his community, he did not hesitate to take up the sword against an overwhelming majority. He acted as a sagacious general in all fields of battle and behaved like a brave soldier when opportunity demanded. He knew how to disperse an enemy in time before it had gained sufficient strength to deal a severe blow at the Muslims. And once, in the battle of Ḥunain, when his

army was in flight owing to the severe onslaught of the enemy's archers, he was all alone advancing towards the enemy, till his soldiers rallied round him. By disposition he had no inclination for war, yet circumstances arose which dragged him into the field of battle, and he then displayed the wisdom of a general and the bravery of a soldier. So by disposition he was not inclined to polygamy, living a celibate life of unexampled purity upto twenty-five years and a married life of a monogamous husband up to fifty-four, but when duty called him to take more women under his shelter, he did answer the call of duty. It may be added in conclusion that the verse limiting the number of wives to four when a necessity for polygamy arose was in all probability revealed after the Holy Prophet had contracted those marriages, but he was expressly permitted to retain under his shelter all the women whom he had married (33 : 50), and he did not contract any marriages after the revelation of that verse (33 : 52).

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE PROPHET'S MORALS AND MANNERS

“And surely thou conformest to the sublimest morals.”

(The Holy Qur'ān, 68 : 4.)

“Certainly you have in the Apostle of Allāh an excellent exemplar for him who hopes in Allāh and the latter day and remembers Allāh much.”

(The Holy Qur'ān, 33 : 21.)

Prophet, an exemplar. “His morals are the Qur'ān”, are the words in which 'Ā'isha, the Prophet's wife, the most privy to his domestic life, has summed up the whole range of his morals and manners. In other words, his daily life was a true picture of the Quranic teachings. He was an embodiment of all that is enjoined in the Holy Qur'ān. Just as the Book of God is a code of high morals for the development of the manifold faculties of man, similarly the Prophet's life is a practical demonstration of all those morals. Thus a Muslim has a twofold guidance—the Holy Qur'ān in the way of precept, and the Prophet's life as a perfect example.

No work was too low for him. Sincerity was the key-note of the Prophet's character. He loved virtue for its own sake. High morals which formed an attractive feature of his character, were not an acquisition with him, but were ingrained in his very nature. He would do all things with his own hands. If he wanted to give

alms to a beggar, with his own hands would he place it directly in those of the latter. He would assist his wives in their household duties. He would milk his own goats, patch his own clothes, and mend his own shoes. In person would he dust the house, and he would tie his camel and look after it personally. No work was too low for him. He worked like a labourer in the construction of the mosque. Again, when a ditch was being dug to fortify Medīna against the impending incursion of the enemy, he was seen at work among the rank and file. In person would he do shopping, not only for his household, but also for his neighbours and friends. In brief, he never despised any work, however humble, notwithstanding the dignity of his position as Prophet and King. He thus demonstrated through personal example that a man's calling, whether high or low, does not constitute the criterion of his status. It is his righteousness and treatment of others that determine whether he is noble or otherwise. A roadside labourer, a hewer of wood and a drawer of water is as respectable a member of Islamic Brotherhood as a big merchant or a high dignitary.

Simplicity the All his actions and movements were keynote of his character. character. characterised by simplicity and homeliness.

Anything savouring of artificiality was repugnant to his nature. When mounted, he would not mind seating another behind him. A report from Qais says that once the Prophet paid a visit to his father Sa'd. For his return journey, Sa'd offered him his own ass to mount, and directed his son, Qais, to accompany him on foot. The Prophet, however, insisted that Qais

should share the animal's back with him, and should have the front seat, for the owner had a prior claim. He did not like his companions to rise on his arrival. Once he forbade them saying, "Do not rise for me as do the people of 'Ajam (non-Arabs)", and added that he was a humble creature of God, eating as others ate, and sitting as others sat. Again, when a certain man wanted to kiss his hand, he withdrew it remarking that that was the behaviour of the non-Arabs towards their kings. Even if a slave sent him an invitation, he would accept it. He would take his meals in the company of all classes of people, even of slaves. When in a congregation, he would sometimes keep quiet for a long while. If there was really anything to talk about, he would talk, but he did not like chatting for its own sake. He gave himself no preference over others. When walking, people would walk in front of him as well as behind him. When seated among people, there was nothing about him to make him conspicuous. A stranger could not distinguish him from the rest, and had to enquire which of them was the Prophet. Such was the humility of his disposition. When squatted on the floor, he was very particular to see that his knee did not project beyond others. He would never interrupt others talking. He would, in all simplicity, join others in laughing when there was occasion for it. He would talk so slowly that his words could even be counted. He walked so fast that his companions had sometimes to run to keep pace with him.

Food. His habit of living was also marked by simplicity. Whatever was offered to

him, he would cheerfully partake of it. If, however, there was something wrong with it, he would not eat it, but would not find fault with it. Of dates, barley, wheat, meat, and milk, whatever he could conveniently get, he would eat. If some sumptuous food was placed before him, he would partake of it, but as a rule, he would take only one course at a meal. He loved cleanliness. He had a special liking for honey. Of vegetables, he liked vegetable marrow. He disliked things that give a bad smell such as onions. While seated at meals, he would not recline. If, when invited to dinner, some extra men accompanied him, he would not embarrass the host, but would politely drop a hint both for the host and the unconscious intruders, who would readily see it. He would wash his hands before as well as after meals and would clean his mouth.

Dress.

His dress was also simple. He did not mind putting on a patched garment, nor would he discard a handsome one. He did not like the males to wear silk, for he wanted them to look manly. He was very particular about the neatness of his dress. He ordered a seal-ring only when it was needed for sealing his epistles to the various kings. Thereafter he would always wear it.

No attraction
for comforts.

His dwelling consisted of small rooms, made of mud bricks, having a bedstead and a jar of water for its furniture. This is how he lived even when he had conquered Khaibar. On the occasion of his marriage with Şafiyya, he had not the means to entertain his friends to a feast. They were asked to bring their own meals, and the wedding-feast

thus served consisted of ground barley and dates. For days together, no fire was lit in his house. The whole family would have only dates and water for their meals. He looked upon this world only as a temporary abode. "My case," he once observed, "is like that of a mounted wayfarer who pauses at noon under the shade of a tree, just to rest for a while, and then proceed on his way." Worldly things, riches and comforts, had no attraction for him.

Cleanliness. In all his habits, cleanliness was exquisitely blended with simplicity. He would make frequent use of a green twig crushed into a tooth-brush, and cleaned his teeth a number of times daily. He would keep his body very clean, would often wash and comb his beard and hair, and always keep them tidy. He would also make use of perfume.

Love for friends. The Prophet had a deep love for his friends. While shaking hands with them, he would never be the first to withdraw his hand. He met everybody with a smiling face. A report from Jarīr-ibn-'Abdullāh says that he never saw the Prophet but with a smile on his face. Sometimes he would enjoy witticism and innocent jokes with his friends. He would talk freely, never putting an artificial reserve to give himself an air of superiority. Nor would he ever talk big of himself. He would take up his friends' children in his arms like a father. Sometimes they soiled him but not a shadow of displeasure would pass over his face. He disliked backbiting and forbade his visitors to talk ill of any of his friends; for, he said, he would rather think well of them all. He would ever

take the lead in greeting his friends and shaking hands with them. He would sometimes call them by their pet names by way of affection. If someone once befriended him, ever thereafter he valued his friendship. Abū Bakr was his bosom friend. He would remember with tender affection the fidelity of Khadija ever after her death. Zaid, his liberated slave, was so much attached to him that he preferred to stay on in his company rather than go with his father to his native town. He would overlook the shortcomings of others and would not even hint at them. In a general sermon, however, he would touch upon how to remove a particular drawback, without letting anybody feel that he was referring to him. He abhorred falsehood and loathed lies. Of mere offence, however great, he would take no notice. At the battle of Uḥud, when the archers abandoned the position at which he had posted them, with the consequent loss of those near and dear to him and injury to his own person, he did neither court-martial, nor punish them. He did not even rebuke them. To those who fled from the field, he said no more than that they had gone a bit too far.

Generous to
enemies. The Prophet's generosity even towards his enemies stands unique in the annals of the world. 'Abdullhāh-ibn-Ubayy was a sworn enemy of Islam ; his days and nights were spent in plotting mischief against the faith, ever instigating the Meccans and the Jews to crush the Muslims. Yet at his death the Prophet prayed to the Lord to forgive him ; he even granted his own shirt to enshroud his body. The Meccans who had all along subjected him

and his friends to the most barbarous tortures were given general amnesty. What treatment a worldly conqueror would have meted out to them can easily be imagined. But the Prophet's forgiveness was unbounded. Thirteen long years of persecutions and conspiracies were absolutely forgiven and forgotten. Prisoners of war, sometimes numbering as many as 6,000, were generously set at large. A report from 'Ā'isha says that he never avenged any wrong to his own person. There were cases, no doubt, though very few and far between, in which punishment had to be inflicted. But all these were cases of ugly treachery by a people with whom forgiveness had lost its reformatory effect. To let such offenders go at large would have meant countenancing mischief. Punishment was never given where there was the least chance for the success of forgiveness as a deterrent, if not as a reformatory measure. Generosity was extended to the followers of all persuasions—Jews, Christians, idolaters, all alike. He did not confine his charity to his own fold.

Equal justice for all. In the administration of justice, the Prophet was scrupulously even-handed. Muslim and non-Muslim, friend and foe, were all alike in his eyes. Even before he received the Call, his impartiality, his honesty and integrity were of household fame, and people would bring their disputes to him to settle. At Medina, the idolaters and the Jews both accepted him as the arbitrator in all their disputes. Notwithstanding the deep-rooted malice of the Jews against Islam, when a case between a Jew and a Muslim once came up before the Prophet for hearing

he decreed in favour of the former, regardless of the fact that the Muslim, even perhaps the whole of his tribe, might thereby be alienated. And what such a loss meant to Islam in those days of its weakness and hardship is obvious enough. In short, he was the embodiment of the Quranic verse which says: "Let not hatred of a people incite you not to act equitably; act equitably, that is nearer to piety."¹ He warned his own daughter, Fāṭima, that her own deeds alone would avail her on the day of judgment. Again he said: "Should Fāṭima, daughter of Muḥammad, commit theft, I would certainly cut off her hands." On his death-bed, immediately before he breathed his last, he had it publicly announced: "If I owe anything to anybody it may be claimed. If I have offended anybody he may have his revenge."

Humility.

In his dealings with others, he never placed himself on a higher pedestal. He would conduct himself just as a man like others. Once, while he held the position of king at Medina, it so happened that a Jew whom he owed some money, came up to him and addressed him very harshly and rudely in demanding his dues. "You, Banī Hāshim," he tauntingly observed, "never pay back when you once get something out of another person." 'Umar was much enraged at the insolence of the Jew, but the Prophet rebuked him saying: "O 'Umar! it would have been meet for you to have advised both of us—me, the debtor, to repay the debt with gratitude, and him, the creditor, to demand it in a more becoming manner." Then he paid the Jew more than his due, and the latter was so

much impressed with the Prophet's sense of justice and fairplay that he accepted Islam. On another occasion, when he was out in the woods with his friends, the time for preparation of food came. Everybody was allotted a piece of work, he himself going out to pick up some fuel. A spiritual and temporal overlord as he was, he would yet do his share of work like an ordinary man. In his treatment of his servants, he observed the same principle of equality. A report from Anas says that during the ten years that he was in the Prophet's service, he was not once scolded by him. He would never rebuke his servants for their mistakes. He never kept anybody in slavery. As soon as he got a slave, he set him free. Throughout the whole of his life, never did he beat a servant or a woman.

Sympathy for
the poor and
the distressed.

It is recorded that the Prophet never disappointed a beggar. He would not give him a flat refusal. He would wait in the hope that perhaps something might yet come to his hand. He would meet such demands even at the sacrifice of his own comfort. He would feed the hungry, himself going without food. He never kept any money in his possession. While on his death-bed, he sent for whatever there was in his house and distributed it among the poor. Even for the dumb creatures of God, his heart overflowed with mercy. He spoke of a man who drew water from a well to quench the thirst of a dog as having earned paradise with that act of kindness to a helpless creature of God. Once he remarked concerning a certain deceased woman that

she was undergoing punishment for the offence that, while alive, she would fasten her cat and keep it hungry. From his earliest days, he had a deep sympathy for the widows, the orphans and the helpless. "I and one who looks after an orphan," he would often say, "are as close to each other as these fingers," holding up his index finger and middle finger together. The Holy Qur'ān is also full of similar solicitude for the orphans, the weak and the helpless. "Hast thou considered him," it says, "who belies religion? That is the one who treats the orphan with harshness and does not urge others to feed the poor."¹ He himself would calmly bear the greatest calamity, but the slightest pain to another would melt his heart. He would ever stand by the oppressed. He vindicated the rights of women over men, of slaves over their masters, of the ruled over the rulers, and of the subject over the king. He was very fond of children. While walking along, he would pat and stroke those he met on the way. Without fail would he visit the sick to enquire after their health and console them. He would also accompany a funeral.

Hospitality had reached its highest pitch with the Prophet. He would take pains to entertain his guests as best as he could. In person would he wait upon them. When the number of guests was too great for him to accommodate, he would distribute the excess among his companions, who, like their Master, would show them every attention. Sometimes, they would serve all the food to the guests, themselves going to bed without any,

¹ 107 : 1-3.

Gentleness. Never in his life, did abusive language escape the Prophet's lips. He never uttered even a harsh word. He would prevent others also from harsh language. If he wanted to warn others, he would do so in a very mild and affectionate tone. The Jews accosted him with the words, *Assām-u-'alāikum*, i. e. death on you, instead of *Assalām-u-'alāikum*, i. e. peace on you. Hearing this 'Ā'isha could not restrain herself and burst out involuntarily, "May God bring death on you." The Prophet disapproved of this, saying God did not like harsh words.

Faithfulness. His integrity, his righteousness and his sincerity were of universal fame throughout Arabia, so much so that he was known as *al-Amīn*, the Trustworthy. His arch-enemy, Abū Jahl, had to confess that he did not call him a liar, but that he looked upon the message he brought as false. Another, Nadzr-ibn-Harth, bore testimony to his righteousness in the presence of his own comrades: "Muḥammad was a boy amongst you, the most truthful and the most honest. Now that he has grown old and brought you a message, you call him an enchanter. By God! he is not an enchanter." When once he pledged his word, he kept it under the most trying conditions and even at a heavy cost. According to a term in the agreement at Hudaibiya, he bound himself to make over to the Quraish any of the Meccan Muslims who should come to seek shelter at Medīna. He observed the agreement faithfully under circumstances which brought blood to the very eyes of the Muslims, as already related. In respect of chastity and piety, he was

a perfect model. He led a highly pure life as a bachelor till the age of twenty-five, and even the worst of his detractors cannot point to the faintest blot on the clean sheet of his character.

Forgiveness. Forgiveness was another most radiant gem in the Prophet's character. It found its perfect manifestation in him. The Holy Qur'ān enjoined him to "hold fast to forgiveness,"¹ and this was explained to him from on High thus: "Whosoever should cut you off, draw him to yourself. Whosoever should deprive you, give him. Whosoever should do you wrong, pardon him." It did not remain with the Prophet a dead letter or a cheap homily. He lived up to it under the most trying situations. At the battle of Uhud, when he was wounded and fell down, a comrade asked him to invoke Divine wrath on the enemy. "I have not been sent as a curse to mankind, but as an inviter to good and as a mercy. O Lord! grant guidance to my people; for surely they know not." Once a Bedouin felled him, throwing his wrapper round his neck, and when asked why he should not be repaid in the same coin, he pleaded that he (the Prophet) never returned evil for evil. The forgiveness shown at the conquest of Mecca is indeed unparalleled in the history of the world. Every imaginable attempt had been made to uproot Islam, and to take the Prophet's life. But not a word of reproach was said about these deadly crimes. To an enemy like Abū Sufyān who had been doing everything he could

against Islam, and to his wife Hinda who was guilty of the heinous barbarity of mutilating Hamza's corpse, was extended unstinted forgiveness.

Modesty. The Prophet was exceedingly modest.

The companions used to say he was more modest than a virgin. The Holy Qur'ān also bears testimony to the same. He was sometimes greatly hurt through ignorance on the part of others, but he would not utter a word of disapproval, concerning which the Holy Qur'ān says: "Surely, such a thing hurts the Prophet, but he is too modest to tell you so."¹ He would never point out others' delinquencies by name. He would express his dislike in a general way. Once he saw some blot on a man's dress and told others to ask him to wash it off. According to him, modesty was a part of religion. In the matter of religion, however, he would at once point out if anybody was wrong. At the death of his son, Ibrāhīm, there was a complete solar eclipse, which the credulous among the Muslims took as a sign of heavenly mourning. The Prophet did not like this superstitious idea. Forthwith he delivered a sermon, explaining that an eclipse had nothing to do with the birth or death of anyone.

Affection. The Prophet was tender-hearted and affectionate. His heart ached within

him at the corrupt state of his fellow-beings. The Holy Qur'ān testifies to it when it says: "Perhaps thou wouldst kill thyself with grief because they do:

not believe."¹ He took great interest in the welfare of his followers. He would ever pray for them and even portrayed the misfortunes that were to befall them in later days, and gave them consolation under these calamities. If once he received any favour at the hands of anyone, he would ever thereafter remember it. Out of regard for the memory of Khadīja, he would ever send presents to her lady friends. When a deputation from the Negus of Abyssinia called at Medīna, he in person attended to their comfort. His companions offered themselves for every kind of service, but he said he loved to serve them with his own hands, for they had given shelter to his exiled friends. When the daughter of Hātim Ṭā'ī was taken prisoner among others, he said that the daughter of such a generous man should not remain a prisoner and consequently all the prisoners were released for her sake.

Respect for others. He would show consideration both to the old and the young. He would get up on the appearance of his foster-mother and foster-sister, and spread his own mantle for them to sit on. He had equal respect for his own daughter. "Respect your children," was one of his numerous teachings. He enjoined great respect for motherhood. "Paradise lies at the feet of mothers," he would say.

Courage. Humble and meek in the highest degree, he had the courage of the bravest of men. Never for one moment did he harbour any fear of his enemies. Even when plots to take his

life were being hatched in Mecca, he would fearlessly move about, day and night. He told all his companions to emigrate from Mecca, but he himself stayed there in the midst of his enemies almost alone. When the pursuers, following up the track, arrived at the very mouth of the cave, even then fear was unknown to his heart. "Do not be grieved," he consoled his friend. On the field of Uḥud, when the whole of his army fell into a trap, he shouted aloud, regardless of all danger to his own person, to rally the confused soldiers. On another occasion, when the Muslim rank and file took to flight, he advanced alone towards the enemy, calling aloud: "I am the Messenger of the Lord". When one night a raid was suspected, he was the first to reconnoitre the outskirts of Medīna, riding his horse without saddling it. On a certain journey, while resting under a tree all alone, an enemy happened to come upon him. Unsheathing his sword, he shouted at him: "Who can save you now from my hands?" Not daunted in the least, he replied "God". And strange to say, his enemy's sword fell from his hand. Taking up the same sword, the Prophet put him the same question, on which he assumed a tone of abject humility. The Prophet, however, let him go.

Steadfastness. The biographies of the Prophet written by friends and foes, are all one in their admiration for his unflinching fortitude and unswerving steadfastness under the most trying calamities. Despair and despondency were unknown to him. Hemmed in, as he was, on all sides by a gloomy

prospect and opposition, his faith in the ultimate triumph of Truth was never for one moment shaken. The most furious storms of hardships, privations and persecutions failed to move him an inch from his post. He would make the best of all available God-given means, and then leave the rest to His grace. Unexpected turns of fortune could not depress or damp his spirits. After the terrible disaster at Uhud, the very next day he was again up in pursuit of the enemy. In a word, under the most adverse and trying circumstances, his heart was ever aglow with the firm conviction that Truth must triumph in the long run.

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CHAPTER XXXIV
THE PROPHET'S DISTINCTIVE
CHARACTERISTICS AS A REFORMER

“And We have not sent thee
but as a Mercy to all the Nations.”
(The Holy Qur'an, 21 : 107.)

The most successful of prophets. EVER since the dawn of human life, this planet has been visited by prophets and reformers in different ages and at different places. The last of them was the Holy Prophet Muhammad, (may peace and the blessings of God be upon him!). We should like to mention some of the most important points which distinguish his dispensation. First of all comes the amazing success he achieved in his mission, which is admitted on all hands, by friend and foe alike. A single sentence in the Encyclopaedia Britanica, 11th ed., under its article on the “Koran” is sufficient to establish the truth of this statement: “Of all the religious personalities of the world, Muhammad was the most successful.” Never did a reformer find his people sunk so low as the Arabs were at the time of the Prophet's advent. They were equally ignorant of the true principles of religion, and of civic and political life. They had no great art or science to boast of, nor had they any intercourse with the rest of the world. National solidarity was a thing unknown to them, each tribe formed an independent unit and was at daggers drawn with the others. Judaism

had done its level best for their reformation, but to no avail. Christianity had also failed in similar attempts. Hanifism, which had risen in a feeble wave, failed like the preceding movements, and died out without leaving any impress on Arab society. It was for the regeneration of such a lost people that the Holy Prophet was raised. In the course of a few years he swept away the long-standing religious, moral and social corruptions, and metamorphosed, so to speak, the very soil of Arabia. Debased forms of idolatry and superstition were replaced by the purest Unitarianism. The self-same semi-barbarous children of the desert were imbued with a new fervour for the cause of Truth, which carried them far and wide to the distant corners of the world, to deliver the message of the Lord. In respect of Divine worship, they excelled the greatest of ascetics and hermits, without renouncing the world. In the midst of their busy everyday life, no sooner did the call to prayer fall upon their ears, than they would leave off their worldly concerns, and fall prostrate in humble submission before the Lord. Their nights were also mostly spent in Allāh's worship. Thus, despite their being in this world, they were not of this world, and consequently their devotions to God were attended with a living conviction hardly ever experienced by a recluse in his hermitage.

Whereas such was the spiritual elevation to which they had attained, their temporal achievements were no less grand. They won a foremost position among the mighty conquerors of the world. Great empires melted

away like snow before them. They not only conquered vast territories, but also developed a statecraft which preserved their strength for twelve long centuries, notwithstanding the negligence of the later generations. In brief, they had attained to the heights of moral greatness and material prosperity. But hand in hand with their achievements in these two directions they cultivated various branches of science which enlightened the whole of the world, then enshrouded in utter darkness. And what is still more surprising, all this was accomplished within a score of years. It is thus obvious that the Prophet's teachings were all-comprehensive, and were calculated to bring about all-round development of man's faculties. There is no human ailment but they offer a cure for it. Just as the greatest physician is not the one who claims to be so, but the one who cures the most obstinate diseases in the greatest number of cases, similarly the greatest of reformers is not the one who might claim to be so, but the one who should bring about the greatest amount of reformation. And this is the criterion which raises the Holy Prophet above all other reformers in the estimation of thoughtful people.

Universality of message. The second point which marks him out among the great spiritual reformers and prophets of the world relates to the universality of his message. Every prophet had his message confined to a particular people. Every prophet came with light and guidance but for the benefit of a particular nation or country. Purification of human soul was, no doubt,

the mission of each, but the mission was always limited. But the Prophet's message was cosmopolitan, his light universal, and the sphere of his sympathies co-extensive with humanity. "And We have not sent thee but as a mercy for mankind" ¹; "Surely We have sent thee for the whole of mankind" ²; "That he may be a warner to mankind" ³; "Say, O ye people! surely I am a messenger from the Lord towards all of you," ⁴ are a few of the numerous verses of the Holy Qur'an, which speak of the Prophet being commissioned for the uplift of the entire human race. Again, the Book speaks of itself as "a reminder to all the nations." ⁵

There was a time when humanity was partitioned into numerous water-tight compartments, so to speak. Every nation shut up within the confines of its own particular homelands, lived in entire isolation from the others. The means of communication were limited. Under such conditions of life, no great expansion of mental outlook could be expected. The outlook of each was limited to its own immediate environments. Their own part of the race was all-in-all to every people. Thus Divine Wisdom could not but commission separate reformers to each people, adapted to their particular needs and conditions. These various prophets played their specified role—the vivification of a particular nationality. But like the field of their mission, their spiritual force was also limited in its range. The flare kept on for a period of time but grew gradually dimmer and dimmer, till it was ultimately extinguished altogether. Then would arise the

¹ 21 : 107. ² 34 : 28. ³ 25 : 1. ⁴ 7 : 158. ⁵ 12 : 104.

need for another spiritual luminary to illumine the dark age, and hence the succession of reformer after reformer. But whereas Divine Providence thus provided for the spiritual welfare of man by raising prophets from time to time among various peoples, this led to a baneful impression. Each nation, ignorant of similar Divine favours shown to others, began to think that only they were the chosen ones of God. This fostered the mischievous idea of Divine favouritism, with a host of concomitant evils. To correct this sense of racial distinction, to remove prejudices created by geographical, social and other artificial barriers, and to weld humanity into one compact whole, Divine purpose decreed to commission a World-Prophet, with a message for the whole of the human race. And just as his spiritual force knew no bounds, it was likewise to be above all limits of time—it was to maintain its efficacy for all time to come. Consequently when the chain of national prophets came to an end with its last link, Jesus, who was sent, to use his own words, “for the lost sheep of the house of Israel,” the time was ripe for the Sun of spirituality to dawn on the religious horizon to illuminate the whole world. “The Mercy for the Nations”¹ made his appearance and emancipated humanity from the shackles of ignorance, superstition and corruption. The previous prophets resembled so many Divine lamps with light just enough for this or that room, and hence the necessity of different lamps corresponding to the numerous geographical and national spheres. They shed their lustre all around and everything within their

range became radiant. But when the Sun arose from the sands of Arabia, these lamps automatically ceased to be in demand. The light of the sun can not be supplanted by any other light, and is itself sufficient to illumine the world till its end.

Unity of human race. It is self-evident that no kind of progress in any walk of life is possible unless there is a set object, a definite ideal before us to inspire us to self-exertion. Every previous prophet had the good of his particular people at heart, which was the specific mission of his life. If, following their example, the Holy Prophet Muhammad had also the welfare of Arabia as the only goal of his life, he would have defeated the very purpose for which he was raised. He was to remove all these national and geographical prejudices, to lay the foundation of a Universal Religion and weld the multitudinous communities into one homogeneous whole - a Universal Brotherhood of Man. Previous religions strove to unite individuals into communities—in itself a great service—but Islam, the Religion of Nature, came to amalgamate these petty nationalities into one vast Brotherhood. Hence while the numerous prophets before the advent of the Holy Prophet Muhammad addressed themselves to the creation of this or that denomination, to his lot fell the proud privilege of cementing these heterogeneous congeries of human beings into One Fraternity. Thus the third of the Prophet's distinctions consists in the fact that while others came to teach the secret of national unity and progress, he expounded the grand

truth of the fundamental oneness of the whole of the human race and chalked out all the highways and by-ways along which lies the prosperity not of this or that nation, but of the entire human race.

Development of entire human nature. Again, the mission of each one of the preceding prophets was limited to the cultivation of a particular phase of human character. Thus, the life of each presents a model in this or that branch of human morals. But the Prophet Muhammad came to develop human nature in its entirety, and to bring out and cultivate each one of its numerous faculties. In his own life, every phase of human morals found a thorough manifestation. He was, therefore, a perfect Exemplar for humanity. In connection with the Mosaic dispensation, prophet after prophet makes his appearance, but each one serves as a model in a particular line. But the Holy Prophet Muhammad, all by himself, combines in his person, in a much higher degree, the collective virtues of all the Israelite prophets,—the manliness of Moses, the tender-heartedness of Aaron, the generalship of Joshua, the patience of Job, the daring of David, the grandeur of Solomon, the simplicity of John and the humility of Jesus. The first link of the Israelite chain of prophets, Moses, was the embodiment of power and glory and the last, Jesus, that of humility and meekness, but the Holy Prophet gave expression to both of these phases in his own person. Thus every spiritual luminary sent forth but one ray, a beam of light in one particular direction, but the Prophet Muhammad was the centre from

which went forth rays of light in every direction, and this is the fourth characteristic.

Greatness in all directions Fifthly, while the achievements of every great man are limited to a definite sphere, those of the Prophet cover the whole field of human conditions. If, for instance, greatness consists in the reformation of a degraded people, who can have a greater claim to greatness than the one who uplifted a nation, sunk low as the Arabs were, and made them the torch-bearers of civilization and learning? If greatness lies in unifying the discordant elements of society into a harmonious whole, who can have a better title to the distinction than the one who welded together a people like the Arabs, rent into warring tribes with blood-feuds extending over generations? Like the sands of their desert, the Arabs lay scattered when the Prophet appeared, and he cemented them into a solid whole, endowed with the strength of withstanding the attacks of the most powerful empires of the age. If greatness consists in establishing the kingdom of God on earth, even then the Prophet stands unrivalled. He wiped idolatry and polytheism off the face of Arabia and illumined it with Divine light. If it lies in displaying high morals, who can be a match for one admitted by friend and foe as *al-Amin*, the Trustworthy? If in conquest is to be found the greatness of a man, surely history cannot point to the like of the Prophet, who rose from a helpless orphan to a mighty conqueror and king, who founded a great empire that has withstood all these thirteen centuries the united

world-attempts at its destruction. If the living driving-force that a leader commands is the criterion of greatness, the Prophet's name even to-day exerts a magic charm over four hundred million souls spread all over the world, whom it binds together in a strong cord of fraternity, irrespective of caste, colour or clime.

Not a product of environments. The sixth distinguishing feature of the Prophet lies in the fact that he was not the product of his environments. As a matter of course, it is the prevailing state of society that gives birth to its own great man. For instance, whenever there is a general yearning among a people after metaphysical truth, a philosopher is bound to arise. If there is a passion for conquest, the birth of a conqueror is inevitable. Likewise moral teachers, poets, sculptors, eminent men in various branches of human activity spring up from the very atmosphere of the society in which there is a general demand for the particular accomplishment. Such leaders of men only embody in themselves the very spirit that permeates the age. In other words, they arise, in the ordinary course of evolution. But the Prophet stood for what was in diametrical opposition to the then state of Arab society. He had to carry on his mission in the very teeth of the prevailing notions. Idolatry and polytheism were the order of the day; but even as early as the age of sixteen, the Prophet had an abhorrence of idols. Superstition was keeping out the light of reason, and society was consequently enshrouded in thick layers of ignorance. Could such an atmosphere give birth to a philosophic mind such as the Prophet had? All over Arabia, individuals

took pride in revolting against their tribes while the latter in their turn abhorred the idea of a central authority. Under such circumstances, the appearance of one who should uphold the principle of harmony and unity could not be expected in the ordinary course of events. Drinking, gambling, adultery were their common pastimes. Infanticide was also in vogue among them, and women were treated as chattels. Such conditions could not of themselves create a moral tower and an emancipator of woman. The fact is that the same Divine hand that prepares a pure gem in the darkest depths of the deep, had created and fostered this Light under its direct influence, to penetrate such thick clouds of all-round corruption and illumine every spot on the earth.

Basis of a Universal peace. The last and the greatest distinction the Prophet enjoys is the fact that he laid the foundation of a universal peace. He not only taught how one individual could live at peace with another, but also how different families and tribes of the human race could live in peace and harmony with each other, and to crown all, what nobody in the world had even attempted, how peace could be brought about among the contending religions of the world. The greatest of mankind as he admittedly was, he yet looked upon himself just as an ordinary member of mankind in general: "Surely I am a man like yourselves."¹ Man and woman, master and servant, king and subject all have their mutual rights. This equality of man with

man not only formed a topic for lip-sermons, but was scrupulously carried out in the every-day life. In the daily prayers, five times a day, the king and the peasant stand shoulder to shoulder, before their common Lord on High. A slave must enjoy the same civic rights as a man of high birth, to demonstrate which Zaid, a liberated slave of the Prophet, was put in authority over the proud Quraish. As regards tribal and national equality, he taught that the variety of tribes and nationalities was not meant to give one any preference over another. They were simply a means of identification. Nationality, it was taught, was no criterion of greatness: "Surely the most honourable among you is the one who is the most virtuous."¹ But above all he brought about a reconciliation between the conflicting religions of the world, by laying it down as a fundamental principle of faith for a Muslim to believe in all the Prophets of the world, to whichever people they were sent, as much as in himself. He taught, and never before him had the truth found expression through any prophet, that there is not a nation on the face of the earth but has had a Divine Messenger of its own. Profession of faith in all the religious reformers, raised from time to time, is in fact the only principle, that can form a common meeting ground for the various religious systems of the world. Again, he taught his followers to refrain from speaking ill of even the obviously false deities of others: "Do not abuse those whom they take up as gods besides Allāh."² This is another practical step towards creating a spirit of inter-religious goodwill and amity.

¹ 49 : 13. ² 6 : 109.

And a yet more definite method of settling all religious differences was thus pointed out: "Come to an equitable proposition between us and you."¹ In other words, taking what is common to all the religions as a basis, we should proceed to raise a superstructure thereon. Thus we would be able to build up a Common Religion.

In brief, the Prophet spared no pains, to establish, on the one hand, the Unity and Glory of the Lord, and on the other, the Universal Brotherhood of Man under the Universal Providence of One God. May Allāh shower His choicest blessings on him!

¹ 3 : 60.

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