

# **ECCE HOMO.....ARABICUS**

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The ISLAMIC REVIEW—the monthly organ of the Working cult—leads off its 1917 volume with what it calls “OUR PROPHET’S BIRTHDAY NUMBER” (1). This number from end to end consists of panegyrics on the Founder of Islam from the pens of various persons, not all of them (apparently) within the Islamic fold, but all of them of one mind in attributing every excellence to Mohammed, and disclaiming for him every fault above a negligible magnitude. The Mohammedan writers further claim for him the position of perfect human exemplar and final ethical standard.

We have meditated for some time on this remarkable number, and the following article represents some of our meditations.

First, we wish to protest with all our might against the way in which our Moslem friends practically force us into a position in which we appear to be that poor thing, the *advocatus diaboli*. If the question were nothing more than the estimating of the character of a great historic personage, a great reformer, enthusiast, statesman, what you will, then we could let it go at that, and with the ringers ring the changes on his greatness and his merits, mentioning manifest blots without any particular emphasis, as things appertaining to his times and environment. Nay, we have often enough done so. For, prate our detractors as they will, we believe and dare to assert that the sketches or biographies of Mohammed which have shown most seriousness, most sympathetic insight, and most concern for *all* aspects of the subject-matter, are some by Christian missionaries or missionary supporters. The secular Christian writers are too worldly, often too scornful: they miss the mark by trying to treat secularly of what was fundamentally religious. On the other

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(1) Vol. V No. 1.

hand, the works of modern Mohammedans and Islamophiles are incorrigible in their glozing over of plain but uncongenial facts, and they invariably topple over into fulsomeness. But is Muir wanting in either religious sympathy or truth? Who has convicted him of untruth, or even of inaccuracy? He simply reproduces the sources as they stand, and the grounds of his verdicts are stated with perfect clearness and candour.

This being so, we greatly resent being exhibited as mere detractors, or being forced into appearing as such. For two things do seem often to force us, against our will, into apparently taking that position: namely, the downright untruthfulness of things like this "Prophet's Birthday Number"—untruthfulness in the way of concealment and evasion; and, secondly, the fact that *so much more* is claimed for Mohammed than the right to be called a great and good man. No, he must be the *best*; the perfect fruit of humanity; the man par excellence; the blameless exemplar! And, per contra, the figure of Jesus in the Gospels must (in the politer productions of the Islamic press) be held up to many a delicate insinuation of inferiority (1), to a patronising hardly concealing its real total want of sympathy; or (in the writers of the lewder sort) to the grossest forms of self-damnatory attack. In short *Ecce Homo* is to be transferred from the Nazarene to the Arabian.

Obviously those who make these claims and set up these comparisons render silence impossible, and, unfortunately, make the work of Mohammed-criticism, for mere truth's sake, inevitable. But when there is no option, then the work is not that of an *advocatus diaboli*, but an *advocatus Dei*. This reckless tampering with ethical values must be prevented at any cost. And the criticisms thus wrung from us, based directly as they are on facts taken straight from the Arabic authorities, must not and shall not be cried down as "bigotry", nor yet deprecated because such criticism offends the dangerous element of the Moslem public. The latter plea, by the way, would be particularly cowardly if it came from the protected serenity of a mosque-precinct in *England*.

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(1) See B. N. (i.e. "Birthday Number") pp. 9, 14-16, etc.

The view we shall substantiate is, we submit, that "Our Prophet's Birthday Number" gives us a Mohammed-cum-lavender-water: that the true Mohammed was really an Arabian of the seventh-century, with (it may be) all the virtues of his time, and some in which he was beyond his time; also with many of the violences and sins of his time and environment: and that *therefore* the claims made for him (but not by him) to be humanity's beau-ideal and consummate example for ever is a pernicious one, and in the name of the God of Truth must be rejected and resisted—*wa lâ mu'âkhadha fî dhâlik*.

The comments on the life of the Founder of Islam which we think are demanded by truth and right shall not be our own. They are drawn straight from the records of the Moslem chroniclers themselves. Further, they will not be vague generalities, still less vulgar abuse: they will consist of the citation of specific instances drawn from the said chronicles, and these (we are told in the editorial to the number under examination) are reliable: "the record of the acts and sayings of the Prophet Mohammed himself is exceptionally complete, faithful, and correct" (p. 3). So be it. We hope that after this we shall have no attempt to get rid of embarrassing incidents by means of an absolutely arbitrary "criticism". We do not want to hear now from these people that a traditionalist like al-Bukhârî, an historian like Ibn Hishâm, or a favourite biographer like al-Ḥalabî are "*incomplete, unfaithful or incorrect*". As a matter of fact, the incidents in question are just the sort which a criticism of al-Bukhârî, Ibn Hishâm, and al-Ḥalabî—and needless to say such a criticism is inevitable—would leave untouched; for they occur in what might be called the prosaic parts of the biography; they are the incidents which were the most complete, sharply defined and easily remembered; and therefore likely to be most faithfully recorded and handed down,—the ordinary historic stuff which, in the life of any man, is least likely to be intentionally or unintentionally twisted. And, besides, what would it boot to meet us with a feeble, arbitrary, subjective criticism of the sources of these three books? Two (al-Bukhârî and al-Ḥalabî) are among the two most popular

and universal in the *Dār al Islām*. The incidents recorded therein have been accepted by the general mind of billions of Mohammedans for over a thousand years,—inoulding their thoughts and ideals into a public opinion that is absolutely perdurable and permanent. For a millenium the universal conscience of Islam has approved of the things chronicled in these books; has found in them nothing to censure but on the contrary everything to esteem and admire. From the viewpoint therefore of "Mohammed as Moral Ideal" these incidents are all of equal importance, and for a Mohammedan to raise at this time of day the question of the historical actuality of this or that incident is to commit an absolute irrelevance. Apart from all which, as already said, the question cannot be raised by Mohammedans in virtue of any genuine critical apparatus possessed by them. The fact is that it only can be and only is raised *a priori*, by those who, when they find themselves among Christians and in a Christian atmosphere, jib at many things in the *sīra* which have not caused, and which do not cause, so much as one qualm in a truly Mohammedan environment. Such 'historical' scruples are therefore simply a convincing tribute to the moral and spiritual superiority of the Catholic-Christian ideal, and to the serious and felt defectiveness of the Catholic-Islamic one. We welcome them as a sign that truth will surely conquer; and we pass on. (1)

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#### MOHAMMED AND THE "MORALS OF WAR".

For special pleading and assumed superiority it would be hard to beat the following :

"If God had to come as the 'ideal representative and guide of humanity', as it is said he did in the person of Jesus, we could have been more benefited if God had appeared as a king or a

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(1) Some of the writers in this number are a little unfortunate when they begin to handle modern critical apparatus. Thus Mr. S. Khuda Bukhsh quotes "Bosworth, Smith," and others. Does he give us the *whols* considered verdict of these (two) gentlemen? He also refers prejudiced Christians to "the monumental work of Caetini (*sic*) in Italian." It is obvious he has never read a line of "Caetini". No more weighty and severe judgments could be imagined than some which Caetani has passed on several scenes in the life of Mohammed, although his standpoint is purely historic and objective.

statesman. He could have left better rules for the guidance of Christian kings and statesmen in Europe, and the world would have been saved this terrible conflagration with which it has been thrown under ambition and self-assertiveness. Christendom wanted a God in the person of a general and an emperor rather than in a 'Prince of peace', to guide Christian nations in their recent slaughter of humanity. He could have taught then *the morals of war* (1). Perhaps His precepts and action in this respect might have proved a better check in this war and all that has created in Europe a long and sombre procession of cruelty and suffering and a most deplorable and tragic spectacle of bloodshed and distress."

As if the spirit of Christianity had not been steadily evolving an international code of decency and practicable humaneness in war, the deliberate scrapping of which by some is just what is raising up the whole world in its defence! As if "rules for guidance" can ever avail where spirit and principle have been denied! As if either rules or principle stopped a single Ottoman conqueror in Hungary, or a Maḥmoud or Timur in India, from committing slaughters and atrocities! As if, from the days of the fathers of Islam until now, either Koran or Sunna had ever eliminated the "ambition and self-assertiveness" which have caused the countless wars between Mohammedans from the days of 'Uthmān down to those of Muḥaj Hāfiz! As if Mohammed himself, at all times and on every occasion, taught by his example the highest "morals of war"! But to proceed.

#### "HAGUE CONVENTIONS" OF THE SEVENTH CENTURY.

The passage before us, and others in the number, appears to censure Prussian methods. But is there not a real analogy between the way in which Prussia has washed out the old European-Christian conventions and codes, and the resolute way in which Mohammed ignored and destroyed some of the most sacred conventions which embodied the public conscience of Arabia at that time, and represented the best and noblest to which the Arabs had been hitherto able to rise?

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(1) Italics ours.



For example, one of the holiest articles of "international" i.e. inter-tribal morality in Arabia was that in all wars and raids the date-palms should be spared. At the raid on the Banī Naḍīr, however, in A. H. 4, Mohammed "had the date-palms of the Naḍīrites"---their pride, glory, and chief means of sustenance---"burned or cut down." The narrative is from Ibn Ishāq, the oldest biographer of Mohammed (1), who continues: "Then they cried, O Mohammed, have you not punished forbidden acts of destructiveness, and censured whoever commits such? How then can you have these date-palms cut down and burnt?" (2)

No answer is reported! What answer could there have been---except "military necessity"! (3)

This was not the only time where the consciences of his own followers caused outspoken disapproval of something for which Mohammed gave permission (*rakhhāṣ*, see Muslim vol. ii, p. 220). But it was of no avail. Muslim (*loc. cit.*) tells us what happened on one such occasion. "He got so angry that his anger was visible on his face"! and the scruples were dashed aside by the assertion that he was the most god-fearing of them all.

A still holier law than the one prohibiting the destruction of date-palms,---the one, in fact, which made social life possible in Arabia at that time,---was the Truce of God which forbade all fighting during the four "sacred months". Only an anarchist or an outlaw ever dreamed of infringing this law. Yet in one of the earliest raids launched from al Madīna on the Quraishites this law was flagrantly broken. The story can be found in any of the biographies in the chapter about the raid on the Kināna in the sacred month of Rajab. But a most interesting addition to it has been discovered in the traditions collected by Ahmed

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(1) Ibn Hishām, *sub loco*; see Wüstenfeld's edition p. 653

(2) A writer in the Birthday Number (on page 25) makes his boast of Abu Bakr's humanity as a warrior in explicitly commanding his men "to cut down no palms"! Sometimes the disciple is greater than his master, then.

(3) The subsequent indemnification for the act in a Koran utterance is the reverse of impressive.

b. Hanbal. From this it appears that Sa'd b. Waqqas was the original leader. Sa'd's own account will be found translated in Margoliouth's *Life*, page 243 (1). Not all the details are clear,—in fact, to leave some of them obscure was necessary. Also, the whole incident has formed the subject of controversy, and much sophistry. But no obscurity and no sophism can explain away the following facts: (1) Mohammed sent Sa'd out on a warlike operation during Rajab. (2) The recently Islamised Junaiha were scandalised. (3) Sa'd and his party themselves believed that they were out to fight *during that month*,—not to wait till the next. (4) When nevertheless they returned empty-handed the Prophet went "red with rage". (5) He immediately appointed the unscrupulous 'Abdallah b. Jahsh, who left *with sealed orders*, the text of which contained definite instructions to attack a party who were going without escort under cover of the sacred month, though the precise command to do so *in that month* was wanting (*lite a scripta manet!*) (6) This was done, and blood was shed, during the truce (7) The act was, finally, expressly *justified* by Mohammed, in the name of Allah and the scandal which it created (2) was thus silenced.

The manifest desire of some apologists to show that Mohammed did *not* order the Truce to be violated is valuable as showing their opinion of such an act. Unfortunately, for them, the facts are against them, and him.

#### RAPES BY MOSLEM TROOPS.

So much for the violation of conventions deemed sacred by the conscience of that time. But there were also violations of laws of humanity itself. We have heard with shuddering of the wholesale rapes during the present campaign: what will the public think, and what will Woking say, when it is known

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(1) Translated from the Musnad of Ahmed ibn Hanbal i 178.

(2) Arnold (*Preaching of Islam* p. 30) asserts Mohammed "disapproved of the act," on the return of the triumphant 'Abdallah. If so, on the face of the above, the disapproval was manifest hypocrisy. And the point remains, Mohammed did sanction the violation of the Sacred Truce. Arnold suppresses entirely this cardinal fact that Mohammed finally condoned the act and sanctioned the practice. He also suppresses most of the facts of the case mentioned above.

that troops composed of the first Mohammedan saints and martyrs and commanded by Mohammed in person, committed rape on the field on at least one occasion and under peculiarly shocking circumstances? The occasion was after the overthrow of the Banī Muṣṭaliq at the wells of Marāsi<sup>6</sup>, when many of the two hundred captured women of the tribe (expressly said to be free women and not slaves, *kara'im al 'Arab Ḥalabī* ii 296) were raped by Mohammed's men with his full consent (1)! There can be no doubt about the facts; they are narrated by all the most reputed of the Traditionalists, and by at least two of the historians (2): so much so that a certain point in the Shari'a itself is settled by reference to the incident (3). The violated wives had actually still to be bought back by their husbands. We refrain from translating the passage in full, for the simple reason that it is really unprintable. The prejudiced Muir and other Christian historians (until "Caetani"!) have . . . kept silent on the incident! Let not their generosity however be now represented as a silent verdict on their part that the incident is spurious. The authority is far too strong, as we saw. And who would have invented such things? And even supposing the incident is spurious, it was and is accepted by Islam as absolute truth,---except of course when Christians are in the neighbourhood.

Nor was this an isolated incident. The very fact that on at least two occasions, Khaybar (4) and Ḥunain (5), Mohammed had to regulate what might be done with women taken on the field shows this sufficiently. It was at Ḥunain that he definitely enacted, against the scruples of some of his followers, that capture on the field *ipso facto* dissolved previous (heathen) marriages (see Koran iv 22); and that married wives (not merely

(1) The fact that means were recommended by the Prophet (in at least one case not successfully) to prevent conception only increases one's sense of disgust.

(2) Ḥalabī ii 296,7; Wāqidī (kitāb 'el Maghāzī, translated by Wellhausen page 179). In the hadīth anthology, *Mishkat al Masabih*, the tradition is marked as *muttafaq 'alaih*, i. e. found in all the great collections.

(3) Ḥalabī *loc. cit.*

(4) Hishām p. 759. Wāqidī (ed. Wellhausen) p. 282.

(5) Muslim in *Mishkat al Masabih*, *Kitāb an nikah*, v. i. 9; Wāqidī p. 366-

virgins and slave-girls), their husbands being living and most likely present, might be passed to the immediate (1) use of their conquerors, provided that certain precautions were taken against pregnancy. Are we to add these prescriptions to the universal "morals of war"?

#### DEPORTATION, AND AN EXECUTION-EN-MASSE

Again, wholesale deportations of defenceless people have lately excited the indignation of humanity. But this deporting was done without scruple and on a large scale in the wars conducted from the City of Mohammed. We must not judge the practice and conditions of that time from the standpoint of the present day? But we thought that the whole point of the "Birthday Number" was to show that "Our Prophet's" example and practice was to *standardise* morality, (and especially "the morals of war") for *all* time?

The wealthy, prosperous Jewish tribe of the Qainuqā' had to purchase dear life itself by submitting to this wholesale deportation. They went off in the direction of Syria, where they vanish from history. For ought we know, or any Moslem cared, they may have perished as the deported Armenians have. Their goods were confiscated. It is utterly impossible to assert that the special occasion justified such fearful severity, for the whole matter was occasioned by a private brawl. The real cause was the impossibility of winning over that Jewish tribe to the new order of things. (2)

The plea of the apologists is that Mohammed was the *de facto* ruler of Madīna and that he, in agreeing with the

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(1) This is perfectly clear both from the wording of the tradition from Muslim and from the analogy of the Banī Muṣṭaliq affair. The three-months limit (*ʿidda*) was only in case conception were not artificially prevented, and did not hinder immediate violation. Indeed Wāqidī makes this point explicit (*op. cit.* p. 366); but it is unmistakable even without this.

(2) Whether the account of al-Bukhārī or of Ibn Hishām is considered, it is utterly impossible to say that anything in them justifies the sequel. Moreover it is to be remembered that in no single one of these cases of alleged offence is it possible *audire alteram partem*.

patrons of these Jewish tribes, had virtually agreed with the tribes, so that their opposition was treachery. We only remark (a) the "Kitāb" of A.H. was a rescript not an agreement; (b) one of the tribes definitely denied the existence of any agreement with Mohammed (*lā a'qda bainanā wa'baina Muhammadin wala'ahd*) and the two Sa'ds did not in reply appeal to the kitāb (Hishām p. 675); and (c) the Qainuqā' had admittedly not got further than foolish boastings and taunts (Hishām p. 545). Does the perfect human ethic approve of the designed slaughter of the manhood of a tribe for *this*?

As a matter of fact, these Qainuqā' only owed their escape from *wholesale massacre* to the pertinacity of the temporiser 'Abdallah ibn Ubayy, not to the humanity of Mohammed. It is explicitly stated by Tabarī that "they came down for the judgment of the Prophet: then they were bound, he being determined on their slaughter" (1). Then 'Abdallah intervened. But for this, their "700 warriors" would have shared the horrible fate that ultimately overtook the men of the Banī Quraiza (2). As it was, 'Abdallah's desperate persistence "made the Prophet wroth, so that his countenance became quite dark". He was furious at being obliged to spare those hundreds of human lives.

In just the same way the Banī Naḍir were expelled from their country and nearly the whole of their goods were plundered. The excuses for this proceeding, indeed for the whole campaign against them, were of the flimsiest and will not stand a moment's analysis. For example, the charge of treachery, which ostensibly occasioned and justified the original attack was tacitly dropped. It is not so much as mentioned in the Koran (Surah 58).

This bad business of deportation was later given up, because it was found to be bad economics, and the "more

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(1) Vol. i, 1360 "*wahuwa yuridu qatlahum*"

(2) Ibn Hishām p. 546 makes this perfectly clear.

profitable practice of constituting the subject-tribe as tribute-paying *dhimmi*s was instituted." Thus the tribe of Khaybar was not deported but made tributary (1).

A darker fate overtook the Banī Quraiza, the fate that the 'Qainuqā' only just avoided. These people had certainly waged actual war with the Mohammedans and had helped to put Madina in great danger. But then, they had seen the fate of the Qainuqā' and the Banī Naḍir! At any rate their punishment was horrible, and that though they capitulated in the apparently satisfactory hope that their lives would be spared. It is perfectly clear, however, that this time Mohammed had decided that no meddling 'Abdallah should stop the blood from flowing (2), though with unworthy want of candour he employed a transparent device, by which the fatal decision should appear not to be his but that of the umpire who was agreed on between him and the Jews themselves. Between 800 and 900 men were beheaded over a trench in a single night! The women and children were treated as booty. "Our Prophet's Birthday Number" would have us adopt this also, we presume, as a sample of the perfect ethics of war, and as an element in the human beau-ideal.

The umpire who gave the fatal decision (Sa'd) was extravagantly praised by Mohammed (3). Yet his action was wholly and admittedly due to his lust for personal vengeance on a tribe which had occasioned him a painful wound. In the

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(1) Nevertheless, the Caliph Omar later hustled away the remnant of these poor people out of the peninsula.

(2) The warning of Abu Lubāba (Hishām p. 686) makes this perfectly clear. It is to be feared that this story also proves that Abu Lubāba had been sent to mislead the garrison into surrendering in order to save their lives, the destruction of which had nevertheless been settled on. They asked him if they should surrender, and he answered 'yes': but with a significant gesture of hand to the throat signifying that their fate would certainly be butchery (Ibn Hishām p. 688). The narrative goes on to say that an instant after Abu Lubāba "felt he had betrayed God and the Apostle." It is obvious he had been instructed to encourage them to surrender, and equally obvious that their tragic fate had nevertheless been decided on. It is another proof that the arbitration of Sa'd was a mere subterfuge.

(3) Musnad of ibn Ḥanbal vi 55, iii 207.

agony of its treatment he cried out,—"O God, let not my soul go forth ere thou has cooled my eye from the Banī Quraiza" (1). This was the arbiter to whose word the fate of that tribe was given over. His sentiments were well-known to Mohammed, who appointed him. It is perfectly clear from that that their slaughter had been decreed.

What makes it clearer still is the assertion of another biographer (2) that Mohammed had refused to treat with the Banī Quraiza at all until they had "come down to receive the judgment of the Apostle of God." Accordingly "they came down"; in other words put themselves in his power. And only then was the arbitration of Sa'd proposed and accepted,—but not accepted until it had been forced on him by Mohammed; for Sa'd first declined, and tried to make Mohammed take the responsibility, but was told "*qad amarak Allāhu an taḥkuma fihim*" "Allah has commanded you to give sentence in their case" (3).

From every point of view therefore the evidence is simply crushing that Mohammed was the ultimate author of this massacre. His own thin attempt to conceal this fact, and the neo-Moslems' attempts to shift the responsibility on to Sa'd, merely prove that neither his conscience nor theirs have been at rest over the dark affair.

The milder fate of the Khaybarites has already been mentioned. Yet the campaign against them was marked by two very shocking individual incidents.

(1) One of the surrendered Jews, Kināna, was believed to have a certain treasure which he had refrained from handing over. He denied its existence, but Mohammed asked him whether he might kill him if it was found. He assented. A

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(1) *ib.* iii 350.

(2) *Sira Nabawiyya* on the margin of al-Ḥalabī ii p. 150.

(3) *ib.* ii p. 154.

renegade then revealed the cache where part of it was hidden, and then, at Mohammed's bidding, the wretch *was tortured* "till he should give up the whole." He was plied with fire-brands thrust on to his breast, till he was near death, when Mohammed gave him over to Ibn Maslama who slew him for his brother Maḥmūd (1). All this, be it observed, after the entire surrender of the tribe had taken place; and over a question of booty, pure and simple. Such was another piece of "frightfulness" to which the first saints of Islam were introduced by their leader. Are we to adopt these methods also as an article in "the ethics of war", and also weave the action into our ideal for a perfect human character?

(2) The wife of the man thus tortured to death, the beautiful Ṣafiyya (whose father and brother had also perished at the hands of Mohammed) became nevertheless within a few days his wedded wife! That she was willing to do this thing, (as she was), merely arouses astonished disgust towards *her* (2). But it has nothing to do with the verdict which the incident calls for. The thing took place because Mohammed conceived a passion for the woman. It is high time that the ignorant or hypocritical statements of neo-Mohammedan writers, to the effect that *all* Mohammed's marriage and demi-marriage connections were made for humanitarian or political (etc., etc.) reasons, and that the women in question were elderly or otherwise unattractive, should be put a stop to. These statements are becoming stereotyped among apologist writers both of the west and the east. But they are *false*; and they are made either ignorantly or falsely. To take the present case only---and from it the cases of Raiḥāna and Zainab may also be

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(1) Hishām p. 763, 4.

(2) The historians represent that her husband had ill-used her. She is certainly made out as having showed no love for him alive or dead. See Hishām p. 763.



judged (1): the records make the matter perfectly plain. The woman's beauty was well-known, and it made an instant impression. When it was announced "Oh Apostle of God, there has fallen to the lot of Dahya a beautiful damsel", the Apostle of God immediately (we are told) "purchased her;" (2) The marriage was hastened on with a speed that set at defiance even the decent (and sacred) law of the 'idda (3): and, finally, there were several special circumstances that showed the extreme complacency of the bridegroom,—which as usual occasioned tears in the hareem. In view of these facts, and of the case of Juwairiyya (see footnote), the remarks of Mr. S.H. Leeder in B.N. p. 31 reach the very nadir of ineptitude and soft untruth.

#### UNPROVOKED ATTACKS.

"Mohammed was compelled to wage wars, but never a sword was drawn but as a last resort to defend human life and secure safety to it." Thus Mr. Sadr ud Din in the "Birthday Number", p. 23.

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(1) In the case of Juwairiyya, the old historians state with the utmost freedom that the prophet was smitten with her beauty the moment he set eyes on her. See Ḥalabī ii p. 291, 292, where the jealous 'A'ishā tells the story: "Juwairiyya was a lovely woman (ḥilwā) whom men no sooner saw than they became smitten with her. . . She came in, and by Allah I no sooner set eyes on her than I was vexed at her coming in, and knew that the Apostle of God would see in her just what I saw." The meaning is obvious, and is made explicit by the following: "I felt certain that if once the Apostle of God saw her he would admire her" ('for she knew', adds the historian, 'the influence of beauty on him'). "Well, then, she spoke to him, and he said to her, 'Better still, I will pay the ransom and marry thee myself'." See also Hishām p. 729. The marriage was consummated that very day,—the day, by the way, when Juwairiyya's fellow tribes-women were being raped by the bridegroom's comrades at the wells of Marāsī<sup>6</sup> (see above). We hope we shall now hear no more of the neo-Moslem pretence mentioned above.

(2) Musnad of Ibn Ḥanbal, iii p. 123.

(3) That is, that before marrying a widow a man must wait at least three months, to make sure she is not with child by her first husband. When, in the "Reproach of Islam", I erroneously stated that Raihana—again a celebrated beauty who also had just lost her husband at Mohammed's hands—was taken to his embraces *immediately* after his execution, I was severely taken to task by a well-known neo-Moslem apologist of Cairo for gross ignorance. Did I not know that the law of the 'idda would itself have made such a thing impossible? I keenly regretted the slip. But this gentleman did not see fit to mention this case of Safiyya! Was this disingenuousness? Or was my gross ignorance balanced by his?—See also above, where it shows that, given certain circumstances, the law of the 'idda was irrelevant.

Is this in the least true? The biographers (1) make it perfectly clear that the earliest object of the very first warlike raids planned by Mohammed was *to cut off and capture Makkan caravans*. There is not the least hint in these accounts of anything else, nor of the existence of any necessity for instituting defensive operations. Ibn Sa'd, for instance, leads off his account of the Wars of the Prophet (*al maghāzi*) with the words *kharaga Ḥamza ya'iarid li'ir quraish*, "Ḥamza went out to intercept the caravan of the Quraish which had come from Syria making for Makka (2)." Ibn Iṣḥāq is equally explicit. According to him (3) the first expedition was so militarily and strategically planned that it had in view not merely the Quraish but the perfectly neutral Banī Damra, the position of whose territory vis-a-vis of Makka was strategically important. The document promulgated by Mohammed shortly after his arrival in Madīna makes clear in its 20th article that he regarded himself and all his people as in a state of de facto hostility with the Quraish of Makka (4). The sending of cutting-out expeditions followed as a matter of course: and the swords of cutting-out expeditions do not usually abide in their sheaths. And so blood inevitably flowed. Later on, as success grew, the object of the Holy War became the right to worship at the Ka'ba in the way of Islam. And finally, of course, it became the conquest of Arabia (and later the whole world) for Islam. There is not the smallest piece of concrete evidence that the Makkans meditated hostilities on the Moslems after having once relieved Makka of their uncongenial presence. With the fullest knowledge of *all* the Arabic *sources* (5) Caetani in a note on this subject (vol. i. p. 423) is crushingly conclusive: "Qui (i. e. in the first expedition) abbiamo vera e propria aggressione meditata: nessuna attenuante per necessita di difese: i Qurays non si davano alcun pensiero di molestare il Profeta in Medina."

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(1) e. g. Hishām pp. 415-6, Wāqidi p. 33; Tab. i. p. 1265.

(2) *op. cit.* i. p. 2 and so twice on p. 3.

(3) Hishām p. 415.

(4) Caetani vol. i, pp. 358-9 and *reff.*

(5) For some of them see previous note.

Compare these plain facts now with the windy remark of Mr. Sadr ad Din quoted above. The Neo-Moslems do not tell the truth: that is the trouble. (1)

So much for the earliest raids; in which, it is especially recorded (Ibn Sa'd i 3), the first arrow shot was shot by a Moslem (Sa'd ibn Waqqāṣ), and the first blood shed was shed by a Moslem (in the raid in the Sacred Month, see above). After this point it became unprofitable to pursue the enquiry as to who was provoker and who provoked. When the whole of a history is written up by the conquerors it is easy to show the conquered as invariably in the wrong. Imagine the history of the invasion of Serbia written by Austrian historians A. D. 2050, all Serbians having disappeared or been absorbed! Nevertheless, it is often possible to see that there was *no* provocation or that the provocation was itself provoked, so indifferent are the Moslem historians to *casus belli* in such cases, trained as they were to think that the whole world was *Dār ul Ḥarb*, and that the non-Islamism of any state was the one real and sufficient *casus belli*. We have seen that a mere private brawl occasioned the expatriation, which almost included the decimation, of the Banī Qainuqā'; and that the Banī Naḍir also were attacked for reasons which, even as stated, will not bear a moment's examination. But in other cases, one act of violence became the cause, and even the justification, of the next. For the weak are always, and of necessity, in the wrong.

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(1) Arnold (*Preaching of Islam*, p. 30) is equally untrustworthy. To facts he opposes theories. It is extraordinary, and a real pity, how this useful book is spoiled by its being a *brief*. We have had an example of this already in his treatment of the fight in the sacred month. Here is another example. Take the crucial point of the object of the first expedition against the Quraish, Arnold:— "We find mention of several reconnoitring parties that went out in small numbers to watch the movements of the Quraish" (p. 30). Now the historians:— (on the first raid, not accompanied by Mohammed) "to intercept the camels of the Quraish", Ibn Sa'd i p. 3, Hal. ii, p. 134;— (on the first expedition accompanied by Mohammed himself, "to intercept the camels of the Quraish", Ibn Sa'd i, p. 4) Another grossly misleading remark is found in a footnote to p. 30, where the raid of the Quraishite Kurz (see Muir p. 207) is brought in with the sole point of showing that the Quraish practised the first hostilities. Now in the first place there is not the smallest proof that this marauder had been sent by the Quraish: and what shall we say, further, when we learn that his raid, such as it was, took place *after Mohammed or his officers had already some four times taken the field!* (Hisbām p. 423, Tabari I, pp. 1269).

Take for instance the affair of Khaybar. Caetani, to whom Mr. S. Khuda Bukhsh would have us appeal, states roundly and very strongly that this attack was utterly unmotived, and that it is an instance of the most purely arbitrary aggression (1). This is morally true; but it would be more accurate to say that it is an instance where an aggression was a natural and inevitable result of previous ones. Consider the following train of circumstances.

(1) The Banī Naḍir are attacked and exiled, as we have seen, without cause.

(2) A party of them, under a declared rebel Abu Rāfi', settle among their kindred, the tribe of Khaybar, a somewhat distant settlement in the opposite direction from Makka. Note that the departing Naḍirites had not been discouraged from settling there or elsewhere. They were perfectly free in this matter.

(3) The presence of Abu Rāfi' now "justifies" an expedition under 'Ali (without notice) against the tribe of Khaybar, with no result.

(4) The sudden assassination of Abu Rāfi' is next procured by Mohammed. The assassin was 'Abdallah ibn Unais.

(5) It is related by Wāqidi that the immigrant Naḍirites now begin to engineer from Khaybar a league with the Quraish for the subversion of Islam. Supposing it true, it is rather naive in Wāqidi not to give the smallest suggestion that an unprovoked campaign, and the assassination of a guest in the bosom of the host-tribe, might justifiably have something to do with the hostility of the Khaybarites! But up to this time it is only the exiled Naḍirites who are as a matter of fact mentioned in this connection. The awakening of the Khaybarites came after the Quraiza massacre.

(6) Wāqidi reports, (2) though here again not a single other historian or biographer bears him out, that the appalling news of the Banī Quraiza massacre reached Khaybar where an indescribable consternation was created. At a meeting of these Banī Naḍirites and the Khaybarites it was then proposed "*as it is certain that Mohammed will next attack Khaybar, to anticipate him.*" This was agreed to. (3)

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(1) *Annali* II pp 9,10; We commend this passage to the notice of Mr. Bukhsh and his friends, but to spare their feelings refrain from translating it.

(2) Ed. Wellhausen, p. 190

(3) Ed. Wellhausen p. 224. Considering that Wāqidi mentions that a few months later the head of the tribe wanted peace with Mohammed, nothing important having happened in the meantime, one need not take these unsupported assertions of Khaybarite plotting very seriously.

(7) The successor of Abu Rāfi', Usair, is also suspected and his assassination is determined on, but it is not found to be feasible. Nevertheless he and his followers are subsequently destroyed, while unarmed and under safe-conduct, under most dubious circumstances (see below), and by the almost professional assassin 'Abdallah ibn Unais.

(8) No more is reported from Khaybar. But the Khaybarites are next attacked suddenly and in fullest strength, six months later. They are totally despoiled: their rich possessions are divided among the conquerors.

We think that a candid examination of the above train of circumstances, which are here brought together for the first time, will show clearly how hopeless was the position of a tribe like Khaybar, which originally, no doubt, simply wanted to be left in peace. To the very end of the chapter no semblance of a negotiation was carried on with the Khaybarites themselves. The blow fell, when it fell, like lightning, a surprise attack without either declaration of war or even remonstrance. Yet "never" a sword was drawn but "*as a last resort*", etc., etc., (Mr. Sadr ud Din); and we are to see in all this an example of "the morals of war"—and we presume of diplomacy also! The fact is that the theory "I will destroy you because I fear, or pretend to fear, you will attack me", with which also we have been familiarised of late, is a ruinously dangerous one in the hands of anyone who from the beginning determines to be on top. And, observe, when the *weaker* begins to think of acting on the same theory (if Wāqidi's account is to be trusted), his action is to be considered a piece of unqualified aggression, and the counterstroke becomes an act of merest defence! So impossible is it for the weaker under such circumstances ever to be right, or the stronger ever to be wrong. It is further to be noticed that the Khaybarites had not the smallest doubt as to Mohammed's principles and practice in these matters. And their plot, if there was a plot, was simply the result of the despair engendered by the knowledge. Not even Wāqidi asserts that there had been any previous ill-will. (1)

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(1) A remarkable tradition is recorded by Muslim. (ii p. 237) "The Prophet gave the standard to 'Ali and said, 'Forward! and do not look back until Allah gives you the victory.' 'Ali went forward a few steps and halted, and without looking back shouted out 'O Apostle of Allah, to what end am I to fight the folk?' He replied, 'Fight them so that they may witness that there is no god save Allah and that Mohammed is Allah's Apostle. If they do this they have redeemed their lives from you: or else they must buy their lives with the price of them.'"

It were unprofitable to follow out any further the justifiability or unjustifiability of the many campaigns of the period, or to study them from the viewpoint of "the morals of war". But just to show how far the Moslems had got by this time from all pretence of waiting for provocation, we might mention the expeditions against the Christians of Duma, and against Midyan, both in the far north of Arabia, distant many days journey. The authorities do not so much as trouble to mention the causes of offence. In fact there were none. In the case of the latter raid (1), totally unprovoked as we have said, many women and children were captured and brought away to Makka, where they were all sold into slavery. (The Mohammedan saints were going to have sold the mothers and their children separately, but here the prophet intervened.) Now, we ask, in what single respect was this proceeding distinguishable from a vulgar slave-raid? Are we to work it also into our "morals of war"? And where is now the man who "never drew a sword but as a last resort to *defend human life and secure safety to it*"? What would have been the comment of the husbands of these Midyanite women on this bland remark? We wish Woking could have heard it.

#### GOVERNMENT BY ASSASSINATION.

Kipling somewhere wisely remarks, of a certain Ameer, that, like other heads of states, he governs not as he would, but as he can. By some such axiom the various atrocities connected with the government of Mohammed are usually justified. It is represented that there was no settled government in Arabia, no constitution, no intertribal code, no legislature and no judicature. A man who became powerful enough in any given district was ruler *de facto* and therefore *de jure*, and it was henceforth the business of those about him to be subject, or take the consequences. Hostility, even on the part of those who had never desired his rule, was high-treason, and might be punished in any way whatsoever.

In other words, Mohammed was a son of his time and by his time must his actions be justified. Agreed. This fact, as we said at the very outset, might and would make us excuse and justify an ordinary man, the story of whose life is being told relatively to his times; and were Mohammedans consistent in taking this line, there would be the less to be said. But how would this be consistent with the position of the Birthday Number, that the Prophet's life is all beautiful, not

(1) Hal. III, 206.

relatively but absolutely; that it is a *human* ideal for all time and times; and that from it we may construct our ethics, not only of war, but the true ethic itself?

It is, therefore, just when we are asked to invest this Makkan with a perfect human light, that his government by assassination appears hideous. His use of this method for governmental purposes (1) is clear enough--indeed the fact is not denied. But....*government by assassination!* When it comes to giving the method its name, one is permitted to regret that the human ideal for all time lived in Arabia.

We pass over the first of the series,---the assassination of the sleeping woman (2) with a baby at her breast, and the Prophet's brutally contemptuous remark about the matter when he enthusiastically commended the assassin. We pass over also the assassination of the bridegroom, called by treachery, unarmed, from the presence of his bride. And we pass by a largish number of other "executions".

It is understood that legal procedure as conducted in Arabia was necessarily deficient, and that justice, disencumbered of bandage and scales, had to yield to one and the same man the exceptional facilities of being accuser, crown-counsel, judge, and (through his followers) executioner, at one and the same time. The method certainly made for *despatch*. But is it permissible to whisper another word to the Woking enthusiasts, — *Justice?*

But even so, there are some things that make one catch one's breath. What is to be thought, for example, of the "execution" of Usair (see above) with all his thirty men, all unarmed, riding to Madina *under safe-conduct*, each behind a Mohammedan *ambassador*? These ambassadors had come under the white flag and under the white flag they were riding away. Their leader, an approved assassin, had already "executed" the former chief of the tribe, Ibn Rāfi' yet he had

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(1) It will be noticed that in deference to Moslems we drop the notion of personal animosity. Let these assassinations be "executions" conceived and executed with passionless, judicial sternness.

(2) She was a poetess and a satirist, and she had satirised Mohammed. We do not forget that modern researches (see Goldziher's *Abhandlungen*) have made it clearer that these hijā' poets had uncanny power in those days, and that their satires were much more to be dreaded by governments than those of Mr. Punch. So, let her satire be high-treason. Still...! This by the way was the man who "made the woman sex almost sacred" (B. N.p. 32.) Mohammed's contempt for 'the female sex' is notoriously proved from the traditions.

the impudence to say that the slaughter of this whole unarmed band was committed because he felt Usair feeling stealthily for his (‘Abdallah’s) sword as he rode behind him through the night. Now this is really rather too thin; for (1) Wāqidi and Ibn Sa’d (1) state explicitly that Mohammed had just offered the man peace and the secure headship of the tribe, and that the man himself wanted peace; (2) supposing he had overmastered ‘Abdallah, how about the other thirty armed Moslems? and (3) to crown all, Wāqidi tells us that ‘Abdallah, himself said to his son, “I was mending my bow when I came and found that my comrades had been ordered out against Usair. The Prophet said ‘May I never see Usair.’ He meant that I should kill him.” (2)

Wāqidi merely makes explicit what is clearly writ between every two lines of this unhallowed story. And, in fact, the popular biography of Ḥalabī (III pp 207, 208) makes it absolutely patent that Mohammed was designing Usair’s death from the start. Government by assassination! and if thirty others have to fall, as well as the assumed offender, and that under the white flag, what of it? As the prophet remarked, they were well rid—by Allah of course—“of an unrighteous people.” (3)

Well, it may have been good enough for Arabia in the Seventh Century. But we were talking, we thought, of humanity for all time?

And even the Arabian stomach occasionally turned queasy when even its low records were further lowered by the innovators. Many years after the event, the death of Ka’b was being discussed in Madina, and a converted Naḍirite Jew-Moslem, named Benjamin, roundly asserted that Ka’b had been *treacherously assassinated*. The assassin (Mohammed b. Muslima, then a very old man) was present and was furious, and shouted, “Dost thou ascribe to the Apostle of God a treachery?; for only at his direct order did we compass his death.” And he threatened the speaker so that he would assassinate *him*, and very nearly accomplished his threat too. This attitude of the original hero of the piece is what we should expect; it is the attitude of Benjamin that gives food for thought. Many must have had similar scruples which were never expressed, or which if expressed have not broken their way through into tradition. The saints were not slow to follow

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(1) Ḥalabī I 67.

(2) *op. cit.* pp. 239, 240

(3) Close of Ibn Hishām’s narrative p 980 f.



the leader's lead. One of them, finding his *sister* by the sea shore, killed--we suppose we must say "executed"--her on the spot for satire against the prophet. Islam, at that time at any rate, completely obliterated natural ties. There was sometimes, in fact, a bloodthirsty competition to show sincerity by the assassination of father (1), relative (2), or friend (3).

But the word "executed" would have to be stretched to an impossible tenuity to cover the following instance. After the assassination of Ka'b (see above)--in fact the next day--Mohammed gave the astounding order to kill all Jews wherever found (4)! (It must be remembered that these were still early days. Badr had only just been fought and only the first of the Jewish tribes, al Quainuqā', had offended and paid the penalty.) Accordingly one of the Mohammedans slew a Jewish trader, actually a man with whom he had most friendly commercial dealings, which had been highly profitable to him. The motive of the deed was purely mercenary--to get his benefactor's goods. A blacker murder in short, (for God's sake let us occasionally call a thing by its real name,) was never committed. It was too much for the brother of the murderer (not being yet a Moslem). He cried shame on his brother saying: "You enemy of God, have you murdered a man from whose goods most of the fat in your carcass came?" (5) It is needless to say the act was never disclaimed or even criticised, by Mohammed. It was in fact directly due to his own fatal proscription. Let Working appeal to the universal conscience of humanity as to whose instinct was the sounder, the unconverted brother's, or the Moslem assassin's. The heavens would fall--we say, the very heavens would fall--if the verdict were to be given to the latter.

#### FORGIVENESS OF ENEMIES

*"Love your enemy" did not pass beyond the domain of dream in Christianity, but Mohammed — peace be on him — has shown us how love for the enemy may be shown in practice."*

The Birthday Number rings the changes upon this theme. It is one of the great discoveries of Neo-Islam that poor Sayyidna 'Isa was all very well in his way (see the whole of p.22), but he never had the chance to show real forgiveness, i.e. in an hour of actual triumph. This Mohammed actually did. Such is the theme.

(1) As in the case of the son of 'Abdallah ibn Ubayy, Hishām p. 727

(2) As here. (3) See the following incident.

(4) Hishām p. 553

(5) *loc. cit.* When he heard that his brother would have had as little hesitation in killing him, he is said to have exclaimed, "By Allah, such a religion is a wonderful religion," and incontinently embraced Islam. We wonder what is thought of *this* argument for Islamizing.

We are far from asserting that Mohammed was a radically inhumane or radically vindictive man, though he once punished some of his enemies by cutting off their hands and feet, blinding them, and then impaling the sightless trunks till life ebbed. But this was an isolated and exceptional incident, and the men were themselves murderers and mutilators, and were being punished in kind. (1)

So far from Mohammed's being specially cruel or specially vindictive the contrary is the case, *if we confine ourselves still to Arabia*. He was magnanimous, and also had with his magnanimity that coolness of head which showed him clearly where and when magnanimity paid; especially at the capture of Makka, when the tide had clearly turned, and where to have ruined his winning cause by acts of vindictiveness would have been the absurdest of blunders. And other conquerors have been as clear-sighted, and, let us gladly add, as magnanimous. But the challenge of the Birthday Number cannot be allowed to pass so tamely. We have seen Mohammed's intense vindictiveness in regard to one special type of offence, satire; we have seen the assassinations that followed this with every circumstance of horror, over which, to do him justice, and to put it mildly, no crocodile's tears were shed, for the deaths caused him the keenest pleasure. If in the shades Abu Lahab has access to the Birthday Number, these parts of it must amuse him considerably. The ferocious vindictiveness of the prophet in his case could not even be kept out of the Koran. Another uncle, Abu Jahl, with others of the slain at Badr, were pitched into a pit, to the accompaniment of opprobrious remarks from the prophet. One Nawfal was among the prisoners hacked down after Badr, and Mohammed's keen relish thereof is specially commented on. (2) The look which he fastened on al Nadr was so black that a bystander whispered that death was in it. The implacable and angry pitilessness shown after the surrender of the Banī Quraiza (see the case of Thābit, and Mohammed's comment on the judgment of Sa'd) we have already seen: also the soulless spirit of unmercifulness in which the sentence of mercy for the Qainuqā' was extorted from him. But "*Mohammed was the last of the race, and all those Divine moral attributes which were still undeveloped in men found their proper Epiphany in him. Forgiveness being one of them had its own occasion as well as its use. It found no occasion in the life-time of Jesus; and if others had it, they did not utilize it. But Mohammed*

(1) Still the very Sura which, after this horrible incident, humanely forbade punishment by torture or crucifixion, commanded that robbers, both male and female, should have their hands cut off, and their feet to follow, one after the other, if the crime were repeated. Are we, by the way, to work this also into our ideal penal code?

(2) Muir p. 227 note.

had the rare occasion, and did not fail to use it. His enemies, when utterly fallen, entreated him to treat them as a noble-minded person would do. The appeal was most opportune, and made to the right man, and was readily accepted." (B.N. p. 23.) We have seen the very considerable qualification which such extravagant words need. And what shall we say to the following as a commentary upon them? When 'Uqba was ordered out to be executed after Badr he asked why he should be treated with such special rigour? "Because of your enmity to Allah and his prophet," answered Mohammed. And then a gleam of human pathos suddenly illuminates the gloomy record, as the condemned man cried out, "Who will look after the children Mohammed?" To which the reply was, "Hell!"—and he was cut down (1). Another historian adds that the prophet went on: "Wretch that thou wast, and persecutor . . . I give thanks to the Lord that he hath slain thee, and comforted mine eyes thereby."—The "Epiphany of the Divine moral attributes" had something to learn from the Sermon on the Mount, after all—nay, he had something to learn even from the despised heathen Quraish, who, according to the Birthday Number, "deserved every imaginable punishment to be devised of human ingenuity"! (p. 22). For when al-Nadr (see above) was led out to execution—though his ransom would have been accepted by his captor—he said to Mus'ab, "Had the Quraish made thee a prisoner, they would never have put thee to death"; to which came a reply, somewhat unfortunate in this connection, "I am not as thou art: Islam has broken the pacts." And at this precise moment the command to strike off his head was interposed by Mohammed, who had been watching what had passed. And it was instantly done by 'Ali. (2)

The plain fact is that Mohammed though above the men of his time and place in many things, was, to put it mildly on their own level in others. It is not to later lavender-watering traditions produced by humaner Syrians and Persians, still less to milk-and-watery idealisations like this Birthday Number, that one must look, but to records which are evidently contemporary. What the real attitude of this Arabian was in this matter of vengeance and forgiveness is admirably shown up—with naive unconsciousness moreover—by the contemporary poet Ka'b b. Zuhair, an Arab of the Arabs. That attitude thoroughly appealed to Ka'b, but we do not see why it should arouse the enthusiasm of the mild gentlemen responsible for the Birthday Number. It was expressed by the said poet in his famous poem, the *Bānat Su'ād*. We should premise that he also had been dabbling in the perilous game

(1) *Hishām* p. 458

(2) *Waqidi* p. 68

of satire, and that it was represented to him that the fate of the other Ka'ab and sundry male and female members of the satirical profession would inevitably be his. He therefore made his submission in the following words :

Slanderers worked their way to Su'ad and repeated other "Thou art dead man, O K'ab !"

And every friend in whom I hoped said to me "I will not meddle with thee, I have no time for thee" (1) :

Until I pledged my troth to the *Man of Vengeances* whose word is law.

Verily when it was said to me 'Thou art being charged and asked after', he was more terrible to me than a lion of the forest."

There is a good deal of Araby, but precious little of Woking, in all this.

### SLAUGHTER OF PRISONERS

The Birthday Number writers do not specially say that the slaughter of prisoners is barbarous under any circumstances, but it is to be imagined that they would say so in no unmeasured terms, especially if they had come across any such incident in "Christian" wars. But such deeds occurred after some of Mohammed's battles. After Badr, especially, the greatest vindictiveness and bloodthirstiness were manifested. Many prisoners were slaughtered in cold blood, at least two of them at the personal instance of Mohammed who had a special grudge against them. The most famous Companions (except Abu Bakr) were then the most truculent. One of them was for burning the prisoners alive *en masse!* (2) The Prophet checked these excesses. But the very words in which he did so, the very limits set up, show clearly that defenceless prisoners might always be slaughtered in cold blood if they could not get anyone to redeem them. (3)

The Sura produced after the event (viii 68) explicitly commands the slaughter of prisoners on occasions when it is advisable to make an impression by "frightfulness": on such occasions the sin would be to grow rich by accepting ransoms! And there is a whole series of traditions (quoted by Muir, *Life* p. 231) which make out that the "leniency" shown at Badr was a sin, that Mohammed had been against that sin, that humane Abu Bakr was the chief offender, and that had that sin been punished, only the whole-hoggers who had urged the slaughter of *all* the prisoners ('Umar and Sa'd) would have escaped!

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(1) To which the commentator: "They washed their hands of him in their despair for his life and their fear of the Prophet's anger.

(2) Musnad I 383.

(3) Loc: cit. *la yanfalitanna ahadun minkum illa bi'dd'in aw dar-bati 'ung*: "Let not one escape you except he pay a ransom, or else have his head struck off."

The same Sura however gives signs that Mohammed already saw that the Badr policy was not for universal application. And as Islam developed, the terrible Badrian alternative was modified. For one thing, as we have already seen, the practice of selling war-captives became common (Are we, by the way, to regulate our practice by this also when the Governments turn their attention to the prisoners after the present war?): and, as the Birthday Number says, the Koran itself recommended the ransoming of war-captives as a form of charity suitable for rich Moslems. But the Badr alternative is always there in the background, and on suitable occasions may always be brought into the foreground. The prisoner of war is *mubâh damuhu*: his life is essentially forfeit. Are we to ask the coming Hague convention of the new world to adopt this into its code of ethics for international war?

#### FORCED CONVERSIONS

The subject of the "execution" of prisoners of war leads insensibly to forced conversions, about which some nonsense has been written by Christians, and a good deal more by Moslem apologists. It is quite true that some Christian writers have written as if the whole Moslem propaganda might be depicted exclusively by a Moslem standing over a non-Moslem with the sword in one hand and the Koran in the other. In regard to Christians and Jews this idea was in any case absurd and false, for the law from the beginning—or at any rate since Khaybar—has been that Christians and Jews (Peoples of the Book) have been free to reject Islam and hold to their own faith on condition of becoming tributary <sup>(1)</sup> *Zimmiyyun*. And most of the best-known wars of Islam have been against peoples of a Book; for even the Persians were from the first included practically under the term. In consequence of which, the plea to regard Islam as an exceptionally tolerant religion has lately gained more and more recognition, and in some respects perfectly rightly so.

But not in all. It seems to be forgotten, and we may be sure that the Birthday Number does not remind us of it, that the Arabian heathen had by law no benefit whatever of protection without Islamising. For *them* and for "apostates" the law from the beginning was Islam or death. And it was at the beginning that that law was most rigorously carried

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(1) The Armenian horrors, in which the alternative of Islam or death was many a time horribly presented, were justly represented by Moslems as contrary to the law of Islam. We suspect however that very many Moslems justified these in their hearts on the score of the sezimmi's loss of rights through rebellion—an excuse which can be stretched to fit almost any case.

out. Moslems are very naive, and what has prevented them from seeing that this fact is constitutive of forced conversion is their idea that the deliberate preference of "conversion" to death is not a forced conversion! (It is notorious that neither Mohammed nor any who came after ever troubled about motives for profession; and so every conversion is a conversion *wis salām*.) They forget that the very real alternative was death. True, most preferred to escape death; but that proves, not disproves, our point. What of those who refused?

Sura IX is of course the *locus classicus* for the above facts. After the pilgrimage of A.H. 9 there was to be no quarter for heathen (in the peninsula at least.) It was to be for them Islam or death. And the alternative was enforced. And note that the text makes the alternative most explicit. "*When the sacred months are past (viz, the time of grace allowed at the Pilgrimage of A.H. 9), kill the polytheists wherever ye find them . . . but if they repent and perform the prayer and bring the alms, let them go their way*". None of these conformists, then, were instances of "forced conversion"! They all, of course, "repented"! No, it will not do. How about their almost unanimous apostacy (*ridda*) the moment the terrible Quraishite passed from the scene?

We shall not go into the question whether these proscriptions referred only to contemporary Arabs or to pagans all down the centuries <sup>(1)</sup>, for our theme is Mohammed. And it would seem to be a sufficient answer to the following challenge to have shown that by the command of the Prophet many thousands were as a plain matter of fact converted by force. The challenge is this:

"If the sword was drawn to force these to conversion, why were the prisoners released at the end of each war and allowed to go to their home without being converted to Islam? Can any person refer to a single conversion which was secured through compulsion?" (B.N. 24).

Most assuredly any person can. We should have thought that a Ka'b preferring Islam to the continual menace of the assassin's sword would have been a sufficient instance for most people. But here the apologists are to some extent helped by the incurable naivete of the Arab mind, which saw in such

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(1) We suspect that the fact that the first great campaigns were against People, of a Book—for the expression was stretched to embrace even the Persians—mitigated the rigour of Sura ix. The Arabs were from the first sensitive to humanising and civilising influences. It was noted as noteworthy that when India was reached the polytheists got the benefit of the tribute privilege, whereby they kept their heads and their polytheism. Still, when Timur "turned Northern India into a shambles," we imagine he was able to make out a fairly good case for himself.

arguments real signs that so lusty a religion was from Allah -- or at any rate was to be subscribed to : in practice the two things came to the same thing : only Allah knoweth the hearts.

But the matter cannot be so lightly dismissed.

Does Woking know, or merely conceal the fact, that any one of those "executed" hundreds of the *Bani Quraiza* Jews could have bought life by "conversion"? One, Jabal, *did* so. (1) Was his case, or was it not, a conversion which was secured through compulsion? And the remaining hundreds? Is it not a fact that they only escaped "conversion" by resisting the "compulsion", and paying for their constancy with their lives?

Similarly the picket captured in the Marāsi' expedition. He was first questioned, but refused to make any reply. Mohammed then offered him Islam. He refused. The Prophet then ordered 'Umar to cut off his head, which that cheerful headsman most readily did. (2) If that man had preferred to Islamise and save his neck, it would not have been, it seems, a forced conversion!

It may be objected that in this instance the man was a spy, and a spy's life was forfeit, and that the offering Islam to him was a gratuitous mercy. And somewhat similarly the *Bani Quraiza*. But this is beside the mark. Our subject is enforced conversion; and if the "conversion" of a man at the sword's point, whatever be the circumstances, is not to be called a forced conversion, then words have lost their meaning.

But all doubts are dispelled by the following incident. (3) Another spy was captured at *Khaybar*, but on this occasion the man was induced to talk, and his life was secured to him on Mohammed's express word. In consideration of this promise, Mohammed (remarks the historian) refrained from ordering 'Umar to cut his head off. (4) Latter on however "He had him brought before him in *Khaybar* and offered him Islam, with the remark that if on the third time of asking he did not accept it the rope should only depart from his neck after swinging" (5) (i. e. he should hang). That worked." No doubt it did. We waive enquiry into the honourableness or the morality of the threat (6) after what had occurred at the outset. The point is that here we have the clearest possible example of a forced conversion, -- Islam or the halter.

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(1) *Iṣāba* I 453, (2) *Ḥalabī* II p. 294. (3) *Wāqidi*, pp. 266. 7.

(4) 'Umar seems to have been a sort of voluntary headsman to the court, being devoted to the argument of the sword at all times (see his conduct after *Badr*). Later responsibility seems greatly to have elevated and enlarged his character.

(5) *Lam yakhruḡ il hablu min 'unḡika illa su'udan*, *Wāqidi*, p. 267.

(6) The incident of *Abu Lubāba*, sent by Mohammed to parley with the *Bani Quraiza*, offers a similar instance of doubtful good-faith.

Then we have Mohammed's words to 'Ali before Khaybar <sup>(1)</sup> "Fight them till they witness that there is no God except Allah and that Mohammed is the apostle of Allah : for if they do this, then they will have kept their blood and goods from you, --but only at the price of the same, and their reckoning is on God." We are asked to believe that a "witness" under these conditions was not a forced witness !

And "Apostates" ? Whether their apostacy was from honest conviction, or motived, or whether it was due to the fact that their original Islamising was a hypocritical farce as it obviously often was, matters not. The alternative for them was to be, Islam or death. If they chose Islam, would this or would it not, be a forced conversion ?

And what comment is needed by the following candid narrative from Ibn Hishām? After the acts of frightfulness against the Jews which we have already mentioned, numbers of Jews "*pretended to have embraced Islam. They adopted it in order to escape being killed.*" <sup>(2)</sup>

Let the facts speak for themselves.

#### CONCLUSION.

We must now bring this investigation to a close. And in closing it we would emphatically repeat what was said at the outset, namely that when and if admirers of Mohammed are content to regard him historically as a great Arabian, who had a real and strange sense of prophetic call, and through this and his immense natural genius, singular gifts, and many virtues, accomplished a stupendous life-work, then we join with the admirers. Who with a grain of historic sense and appreciation would not? The worst enemies of Mohammed are not his opponents, but his friends, who will have it that the character of this Arabian giant is the very type of perfected humanity ; that all his actions apart from trifles were perfect; that no great wrong can be attributed to him ; that his moral splendour throws that of Jesus completely in the shade ; and that his example and precept make the best foundation not only for codes of conduct but for national and international law ! Worst offenders of all are the Neo-Moslems who have assumed the task of dishing up the Biography to suit the taste of the Christian West ; omitting here, explaining away there; challenging this ( against the sources ) and glozing that. It is

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[1] Muslim II 287.

[2] *Zaharu bil 'islam wa ttahadhuhu hannatan min al qatl.*



not our business to estimate the sincerity of these men, nor of their Christian supporters. Some of these latter have been inspired to their self-appointed task through the indignation of an honest reaction against former exaggerations, or misrepresentations, or under-estimations ; and some are merely officious and mealy-mouthed. We have nothing to do with that. All we know is that these men one and all, are doing a disservice both to truth and to their idol. For they as little give the world the whole truth as did the old-time wholesale obloquist ; and they simply force those who see in these assertions a gross offence against fact, and a definite attack on the perfection and universality of the Man Christ Jesus, to rise up and show *from the sources* that the real Mohammed, the Mohammed of the sources and of the Agreement of Islam, the only Mohammed who counts, because the Mohammed of thirteen dead centuries and three hundred million living Moslems, will not fit the role in virtue of which the human race is invited to travel from Bethlehem to Mekka, from the Mount of the Beatitudes to the Mount of 'Arafat.

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### EDITIONS QUOTED.

The following are the editions quoted in the article :—

**Tabari**, the Leyden (1st edition.)

**Ibn Hisham**, Wustenfeld's edition (Leipzig.)

**Halabi**, Cairo 1820.

**Sira Nabawiyya**, on the margin of Halabi.

**Waqidi**, Wellhausen's translation.

**Ibn Sa'ad**, ed. Sachan (Leyden.)

## APPENDIX.

*Note on page 15.*

That it was Mohammed who took the offensive from Medina is quite frankly stated by the author of the *Sira Nabawiyya*. The mealy-mouthedness of these moderns would have seemed unintelligible, or perhaps somewhat contemptible, to *him*. He says: "The first thing which the Prophet set about was to intercept the caravans of the Quraish *so as to capture their goods, in order that that might be an occasion for the opening of hostilities, and in order that the hearts of his companions might be inured to hostilities little by little; and in order that they might profit from what should accrue to them from the spoils which they carried off from those caravans, and thus get relief.*" (1) *Quid plura?* The author of this *sira* merely brings out clearly what is written in not very invisible ink over all these early proceedings.

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(1) *Lil yakun dhālik sababan li iftitāh il qitāl wa li taqwā gulubu aṣḥābihi ʿala l qitāli shai'an fa shai'an, etc. vol. I, p. 417.*