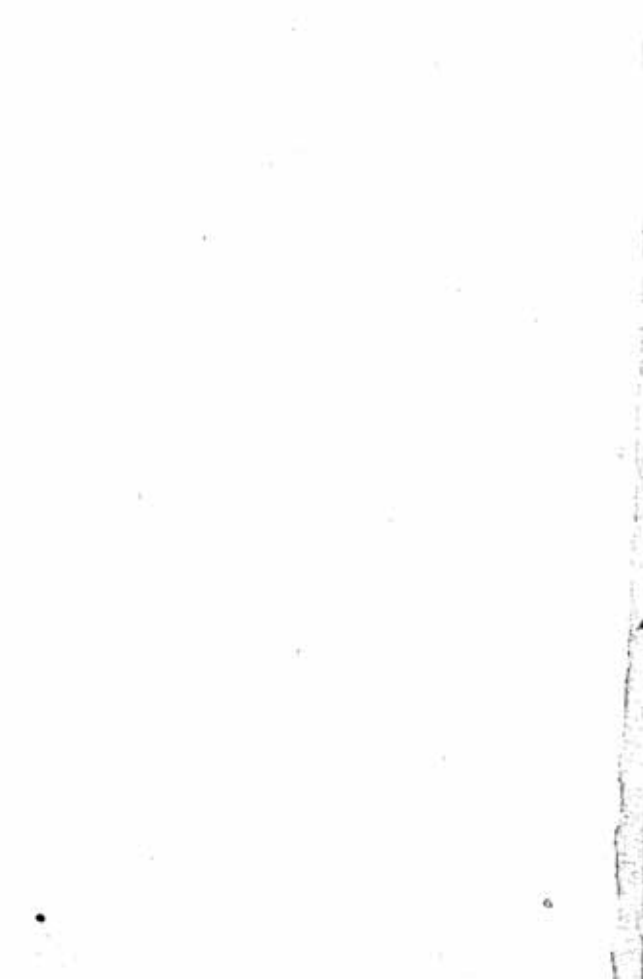


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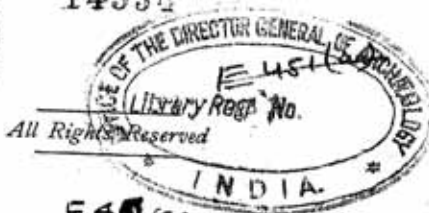
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A SHORT-LIFE OF THE FOUNDER OF ISLAM

BY

F. K. KHAN DURRANI

14534



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To
· RAZIA SULTAN
&
MAHMOOD AKRAM,

for whom this book was primarily
written.





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THE GREAT PROPHET

CHAPTER I

THE LAND OF HIS BIRTH

There are, more or less, 400,000,000 Musalmans in the world. You meet with them almost everywhere, in all countries. The whole of North Africa, from the Red Sea to the Atlantic Ocean down to the equator, is Muslim, and they are spreading fast beyond the equator. There are large colonies of them in East and South Africa. The countries of Middle and Western Asia, namely, Turkistan, Afghanistan, Persia, Mesopotamia, Turkey, Syria, Palestine and Arabia are also all Muslim, except for small Christian populations in Armenia, Syria and Palestine and a still smaller population of the Jews in the last-named country. Turkey in Europe, once a vast territory but now reduced to very narrow limits, is entirely Muslim. Out of every three persons in Jugoslavia one is a Musalman and the small kingdom of Albania on the

shores of the Adriatic is a Muslim kingdom. There are also Muslims in Bulgaria and Rumania. There are several thousands of them in Poland, while in Russia their numbers are very large. There are forty million Muslims in China, about fifty millions in the Malay Archipelago, eighty millions in India and considerable numbers of them in Tibet, Ceylon, Philippines and other islands of the Pacific Ocean. There are colonies of Muslims in Germany, England, France, the U. S. A. and in cities of Central and Southern America, while there are thousands of them living in the British and Dutch West Indies.

These four hundred million Muslims belong to all races and all nations—white, black, brown and yellow. There are among them Arabs, Turks, Persians, Afghans, Aryans, Tibetans, Chinese, Russians, Poles, Germans, English, French, Negroes and men of many other races. But though they live in different countries, belong to different races and speak different languages, they all belong to one brotherhood, because they all believe in one religion—Islam. They believe that there is but One God, Who is the Lord of the whole

universe, of this world, of the stars and planets that we see above us and of the worlds beyond, which we do not see; Who is the Lord of all the peoples and in Whose sight all are equal. They also believe that Muhammad, the Holy Founder of Islam (may peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him), was the last Messenger of God on earth.

Muhammad was the most perfect man that ever lived. Born an orphan, he became a mighty king, but lived a poor and humble man to the day of his death. He had deep sympathies with his fellow men and he served them with a selfless love. His heart was full of mercy and compassion for the poor and the suffering. The orphans and the widows were his special care. His life was the purest and his morals the highest thinkable. He taught noble truths, taught things which no one ever knew before and he spent his life, his energies and all he possessed in the service of his fellow men. His character was most beautiful and his nature the most lovable. His people loved him for his great virtues. They were devoted to him body and soul and they sacrificed their all for his sake.

His followers love him to this day with a greater love than they have for anybody else. Indeed, no man has been ever so loved as the Holy Prophet Muhammad has been by his followers, and it is the love of him that binds all these four hundred million peoples of different races and countries into one vast brotherhood.

This then is Islam, the religion taught by the Great Prophet, that we should believe in only One God Who is the Lord equally of the white man as of the black man, that we should pray to Him alone and look upon all men as our equals and brothers, that we should love them and serve them as we serve our own kith and kin and that we should love Muhammad who taught us these things and try to walk in his footsteps and follow his example in all things. Without love of Muhammad no man may call himself a Muslim. Peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him !

All Muslims say their prayers in the same language, Arabic, and wherever they may be, East, West, North or South, they turn their faces towards Mecca, when they say their prayers. In Mecca is a great mosque, which

is called the Kaaba ; it is the centre of the Muslim world and it is towards this centre that they turn their faces in prayer. Every year, thousands upon thousands of Muslims from all over the world gather in Mecca to perform their pilgrimage which is called *Hajj*. Mecca is sacred to Islam because of the central mosque of Kaaba. The Holy Prophet was born in this city and here he spent the first fifty-three years of his life.

Ten days' journey by camel-ride from Mecca towards the north is the other sacred city of Islam. It is called Medina. The Prophet spent the last ten years of his life in this city. Here he died and here stands his green-domed tomb. Medina was formerly called Yasrib. When the Holy Prophet came to live here, they began to call it *Medina-tun-Nabi* or ' the City of the Prophet ', and by and by it came to be called simply Medina. After performing the *Hajj* ceremony at Mecca, the pilgrims visit Medina before they return to their own countries.

Mecca is the principal town of Arabia. Arabia is situated in the south-western corner of Asia. It is surrounded on three sides by

water, by the Red Sea in the west, by the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea in the east and by the Indian Ocean in the south, where it is separated from Africa by a narrow neck of water called the Strait of Bab-ul-Mandab. It is bounded on the north-east by Mesopotamia and on the north-west by Palestine, Syria and the Sinai Peninsula, while direct in the north lies the Syrian Desert.

This huge Peninsula is 1,500 miles long and 800 miles wide. But it is a very poor country. Most of it is covered with sandy deserts and bare granite rocks, and there is not one river in the whole country.

Along the eastern coast there are only three small tracts fit for habitation, namely, Bahrain, Oman and Masqat. Beyond them is desert waste. The hill country of Hazramaut in the south has many fertile valleys, where plentiful crops are raised of wheat, corn and other food grains. Towards the east of Hazramaut is the land of Mahra, which is known for its special breed of dromedaries called *Mahri*.

West of Hazramaut, in the south-western corner of Arabia lies the rich country of

Yemen. This is the most fertile tract in the whole of Arabia. There is plenty of water and the climate is mild. Beside abundant food grains, the date palm, grapes and spices of many kinds are grown here in large quantities. Mocha, from where comes the world's best coffee, is situated in Yemen. Yemen was very famous in ancient times for its produce, especially for its spices, and the Romans called it *Arabia Felix* or Araby the Blessed. The name 'Yemen' also meant originally the same thing.

Extending towards the north from Yemen is the province of Asir. It is also a very rich country and is the seat of the ancient kingdom of Saba. The famous Queen of Sheba, who visited the court of Solomon, is said to have been a ruler of this kingdom.

North of Hazramaut, east of Asir and west of Masqat and Oman is situated a vast sea of sand, which covers nearly one-fourth of the entire area of Arabia. It is called *Roba-ul-Khali* or the Empty Quarter. As far as the eye can see, there is nothing but sand and sand and again sand, whose dazzling whiteness in the mid-day sun is blinding to the eye. Not



MAP OF ARABIA.

a blade of grass grows in it. No man had ever dared to go into this desert, until in February of this year an Englishman, Mr. Thomas by name, succeeded in crossing it, perhaps for the first time in the world's history. He found in it a small lake, but its water was unfit for drinking.

In the north of this sandy wastelies Nejd, the heart of Arabia and the beloved home of the Beduins. The southern province of Nejd, called al-Yamama, is a very fertile valley and large quantities of wheat and dates are grown in it. North and east of Nejd extends another desert called the Nufood. When the rains fall, its fine red sand is covered with green grass and luxurious pastures. It is the home of the world's fastest camels. Between the Nufood and the Syrian Desert on the north rises Mount Shammar. Locked up between its offshoots lie many fertile valleys. They produce the best wheat, prettiest maids and noblest houses.

Between Nejd and Nufood on the east, Asir on the south and the Red Sea on the west lies the province of Hijaz. It is the birth-place and cradle of Islam and the holiest cities

of Islam, Mecca and Medina, are situated in this province. It is with Hijaz that we are mainly concerned in this book. The province consists of two parts. The narrow strip of flat sandy country called the Tihama runs almost the whole length of the Red Sea. It is nowhere more than thirty miles wide. The Hijaz proper consists of a double range of hills called the *Jabal-us-Sirat* which runs in two parallel chains from Syria to Yemen. This series of dark and frowning hills is bare and barren and supports no vegetation. But the hills are not continuous. They are broken in several places and enclose between them some of the richest valleys of Arabia. Among the more famous of these valleys are Medina, Khaibar, Taima and Fadak. Mecca, forty miles from the coast, is also situated in a valley; but the ground is hard and rocky and is unfit for cultivation. The hill-city of Taif, about seventy miles south-east of Mecca, is famous for its fruits. Its grapes are large and delicious, and peaches, pomegranates, apples, almonds, figs, apricots and quinces are excellent and abundant. Situated at a high altitude, its climate is cool and wealthy citizens of

Mecca spend the hot summer months in Taif.

The camel is the most useful animal in Arabia. They eat its flesh and make clothes of its hair. The camel can live without water for several days, and in the vast waterless deserts of Arabia, where for days and days one meets with no water, it is very useful for travelling and carrying merchandise. For this reason, it is called the Ship of the Desert. Its broad, flat and padded feet are well suited to walk on sands with comfort.

The Arab is very fond of his horse. They love their horses like their own children. For lightness, speed and beauty of form, the Arab horse is famous all over the world. The goodness of a horse depends upon the care with which it is brought up and upon the goodness of its father and mother. And their goodness would depend upon the goodness of their parents and so on for generations and generations. In fact, the price of a horse depends upon its pedigree. In modern times, the people who breed horses for races keep the pedigrees of their animals very carefully. They keep written records as to who were the

parents of their horses and who were the parents of their parents, and so on, for many generations. This custom of keeping the pedigrees of horses started with the ancient Arabs. They were very critical about this matter, because the safety of a warrior and the fate of armies engaged in battle often depend upon the quality of their horses.

CHAPTER II

THE PEOPLE

There are very few towns in Arabia. But in the days of the Holy Prophet they were fewer still and the settled population was small. Most of them were nomads who wandered from pasture to pasture with their herds of goats and camels. They are called Beduins and lived in the same manner then as they do now. Their herds gave them milk and meat and from their hair they made their tents and rough, home-spun clothes. The settled population in villages and towns lived upon agriculture. They grew wheat, corn, barley and date-palms. Dates are plentiful in Arabia and

a principal article of the food of her people. Besides valleys, there are oases where they plant big gardens of date-palms. An oasis is a place in a desert where there is a spring of fresh water. People make wells there, plant gardens and build their villages. In big deserts where there is no water and no trees to be seen and there is nothing but sand and sand as far as the eye can reach, such oases are havens of rest, where the weary traveller stops to refresh himself and his horse or camel with cool, clean water, rests for a while in the shade of its groves and heartens himself for his further journey.

The people of Mecca were merchants. Arabs are born merchants and in ancient times Arab sailors were very bold. They sailed to the ports on the western coast of India, to Ceylon and the Malaya islands and brought merchandise from those parts to the ports of Hazramaut. These ports have now vanished. But their ruins are there to show that the Indian trade was large and profitable. From the ports of Hazramaut the camel-drivers took up the burden and strings upon strings of camels, laden with the wares of India and

the Far East as well as with the produce and manufactures of Yemen, wended their way over the passes of the *Jabal-us-Sirat* on to Syria. In Syria, at Damascus, Bostra, Jerusalem and other towns, they sold their goods, purchased the goods of other countries which they themselves wanted, and again laden with costly stuffs they returned to Arabia and sold their goods in Mecca and the cities of Yemen. And so it went on year after year and century after century. This trade was mostly in the hands of the people of Mecca.

The Arabs were one people and spoke the same language. But they were not a united nation. They were divided into a number of tribes and clans and each tribe lived its own separate and independent life. They had had powerful kingdoms in ancient times and conquered great countries. But those times were passed; the kingdoms had perished and the Arabs just before the rise of Islam were despised by all their neighbours.

About the middle of the third century A. D. an Arab kingdom was established at Hira in Mesopotamia, not far from the western banks of the Euphrates. Towards the close

of the fifth century another Arab kingdom was established in southern Syria. It was called the Ghassanide kingdom. By and by, both the kingdoms became Christian and Christianity went on spreading, though very slowly, among the tribes of northern Arabia. The king of Hira was a vassal of the emperor of Persia, while the Ghassanide king stood under the overlordship of the Roman emperor of Byzantium (Constantinople). As the Roman emperor and the Persian emperor were always at war with each other, the kings of Hira and Ghassan also fought among themselves on behalf of their overlords, and thus weakened their own kingdoms, until both perished. The kingdom of Hira was annexed by Persia in 604 A.D. and the kingdom of the Ghassanides was put to an end by the Roman emperor in 613 A.D.

The ancient kingdom of Yemen also came to a bad end. The throne was usurped in 523 A.D. by a ferocious Jew of the name of Zu Nuwas. In Yemen there is a fertile district called Najran. Its inhabitants had become Christians, and the bigoted Zu Nuwas wanted to make them Jews. He persecuted them and

twenty thousand Christians, men, women and children, were slain or burnt alive by him. When the Christian emperor of Constantinople heard of this cruel massacre, he asked the king of Abyssinia, who was also a Christian, to go and punish Zu Nuwas. The king of Abyssinia sent an army to Yemen and took possession of the country, while Zu Nuwas drowned himself in the Red Sea.

The first Abyssinian viceroy of Yemen died after a short time and was succeeded by Abraha.* This man built a splendid cathedral at Sanaa, the capital of Yemen, and desired that it should outshine the Kaaba and all Arabs should make their pilgrimage to his cathedral. Two Arabs of Mecca defiled the cathedral by throwing filth in it. Abraha then swore that he would destroy the Kaaba and led a powerful army against Mecca.

The Meccans were too weak to face Abraha's army. They left the city and took refuge in the surrounding hills, and Abraha prepared to attack the city. But a dreadful

*Abraha is the Abyssinian form of the Hebrew name Abraham. Its Arabic form is Ibrahim. Hebrew, Arabic and Abyssinian are sister languages.

plague broke out in his army and he was obliged to return to Yemen. They lost their way, and the whole army perished from the plague and want of water. Abraha, who managed to reach Sanaa, died there of the same disease.

This event took place in 571 A.D., and two months after it, our Holy Prophet Muhammad was born. After Abraha, his two sons became the viceroys of Yemen one after the other. But the people hated the Abyssinians and invited the emperor of Persia to drive them out and take possession of the country. And so it happened. A Persian army came and drove out the Abyssinians and Yemen became a part of the Persian empire.

The rest of the country was divided among different tribes. There was no government in the country. The Sheikh or chief of each tribe was their judge and leader in war. The tribes were always at war with one another. They robbed and plundered at will. They did not think it was wrong to rob others. In fact, they looked upon robbery as a very honourable profession, and neither thieves nor cut-throats were ashamed of their evil deeds.

They did not believe that their deeds were evil at all. Everybody did it and they all thought it was right. The only wrong was to rob a man of one's own tribe. If anyone did it, he was sure to be punished by his fellow tribesmen. But if a fellow committed robbery on another tribe, he was welcomed home with joy. They congratulated him on his good luck, admired his valour, praised him and patted him and were quite willing to share his spoils. These plundering raids of one tribe upon another were very frequent.

There being no government, each tribe depended upon its own strength for the safety of its life and property. The Arab was a born warrior and he was extremely loyal to his tribe. It was the duty of the tribe to protect its members from their enemies. The spirit of revenge was very strong in them. If an Arab was killed by a member of another tribe, his whole tribe was bound to avenge the murder and they would know no rest until the revenge was taken. For revenge it was not necessary to kill the man who had committed the murder. Any man of the murderer's tribe could be killed. If the murdered man was a

slave, a slave of the other tribe would be killed. If he was a free man, a free man would be killed. Honour would thus be satisfied, vengeance taken and both sides would become equal.

Sometimes these blood-feuds developed into dreadful wars which continued for generations after generations. Whole tribes were wiped out in these bloody wars. Sometimes these murder disputes were settled by payment of price, called blood-money—Arabic, *dait*—by the murderer's family to that of the victim. The price was ten camels. But it was considered shameful to accept blood-money. They preferred to shed blood. Eye for an eye, life for a life—that was the rule. They believed that the murdered man's soul turned into a bird which hovered over his grave and cried for blood to quench its thirst, until vengeance was taken.

Of course, these savage warriors were chivalrous. They never killed women. To hurt a woman is a coward's business and the Arabs were no cowards.

If a man killed a member of his own tribe, he became an outlaw and could be killed by

anybody. If a man found himself too weak to protect himself, or his property was seized by an enemy and he was not strong enough to recover it, he would place himself under the protection of another tribe. Any member of the tribe could give the protection and the whole tribe became bound to help him. The tribe would protect him from his enemies and recover his property, even if they had to go to war for that purpose. The Arabs never broke their word and their sense of honour required that they should give protection to the man who asked for it.

For four months during the year, three months around the Hajj time and one other month, peace prevailed throughout the country. No fighting was done during these sacred months. No blood was shed. Everybody laid down his arms and men went about the country in peace. For the remaining eight months, robberies, plundering raids and warfare were continuous, and nobody's life was safe.

You will have understood from the above that in ancient Arabia no man could live by himself alone. He would be killed by anybody without fear if he tried to do so. Every one

had to live under the protection of a tribe, and it was the fear of the tribe's vengeance that kept people from killing or hurting one another and men's lives were made safe. Every one knew that if he killed a person, the victim's tribe would take fearful vengeance. They would kill him, they would kill his children and brothers, and battles would be fought, in which much blood would be shed. It was the fear of these awful consequences that kept peace among neighbours.

And the tribes were true to their duty towards their men. It did not matter whether a man was right or wrong,—in fact, they did not care for right or wrong and had no idea of it,—but they would stand by their men in all cases. If any tribe left any of its men alone to face his enemies and did not help him, that tribe would be despised and looked upon with contempt throughout the country and every Arab would cry shame upon it. Songs would be sung in every town and village and in every Beduin camp, that such and such a tribe had proved false and failed to do its duty. The men of that tribe would not be able to show their faces anywhere after

that. In a savage country, where there is no government and no law, such a tribal system goes a long way to protect the lives and properties of men, and so it worked in ancient Arabia.

The Arabs loved poetry and every tribe had a number of poets. They sang of their loves and hatreds, and wrote poems in the praise of their tribes and their deeds of valour on the battle-field. Every poet tried to make out as if his own tribe was the noblest and bravest in Arabia and its chief the most generous man alive. Some of them wrote wonderful poems and their works still live. But the poets also made much mischief in the land. Sometimes they wrote lampoons and filthy satire upon other tribes and their chiefs. Their victims became the laughing stock of the people. These satires led sometimes to dreadful wars and bloodshed.

CHAPTER III. THEIR RELIGION.

There were many religions in Arabia. The Arab tribes who had settled in Syria and Mesopotamia had become Christians. There were Christians in Najran, and there were men here and there among the northern tribes who had embraced Christianity. There were Jews in Yemen and Medina, and the rich valleys of Khaibar, Taima and Fadak, almost in a straight line towards the north of Medina, were occupied entirely by the Jews. The rest of the people were all heathens.

The people of Yemen worshipped the sun. Some tribes worshipped the moon, while some others worshipped the stars. But most of them worshipped idols. Almost every tribe had its own separate idol. In Mecca, the people kept idols in their house-doors and bowed to them on entering and leaving the house. But there were some more famous idols, whose temples were visited by many neighbouring tribes. At Dumat-ul-Jandal, in the north of Hijaz, was the temple of Wadd.

The idol was an image of a man, cut out of stone and covered with two mantles. It carried on its shoulders a sword and a bow, a quiver full of arrows on its back and in its hand a javelin with a small flag attached near the spear-head.

The goddess Manat had her temple at Qudaïd on the sea-coast, half-way between Mecca and Medina. It was especially sacred to the people of Yasrib (Medina). This idol also carried two swords. The goddess al-Lat was at Taïf and was worshipped by the tribe of Bani Saqif who lived in that city. The idol was in the form of a square-cut rock. It was a very famous idol and was honoured far and wide. Under the rock was a deep hole which they called *Ghabghab*. The rich offerings which came to the temple were stored in this hole and formed a big treasure.

Just as famous was the goddess al-Uzza, whose temple was situated in the valley of Nakhla, not far from Mecca. It was specially sacred to the Quraish, the tribe that lived in Mecca. There were other temples in Hazramaut and Yemen, which were visited by local

tribes. In the sacred months, when fighting was forbidden throughout the country, people gathered at these temples, held fairs for a week or ten days and did their buying and selling.

But the most sacred spot in Arabia was the Kaaba in Mecca. The Kaaba is the small cubicle which stands in the middle of the sacred mosque at Mecca. It is so called because it is cubical in shape, its length, width and height being all equal. The room is empty inside and is covered with a black silk cover. A new cover is put on every year and is sent by the Government of Egypt. In one corner of its outer wall is set the famous Black Stone (*Hajr-i-Aswad*). One of the Hajj ceremonies consists in making seven rounds around the Kaaba. The rounds are started from before this stone and counted from it.

Europeans have very funny notions about this stone. They think, the Musalmans worship this stone. This is foolish, because the Musalmans worship no idols. They do not even worship any man as the Christians do. They worship God alone. Even the heathen Arabs did not worship it.

The origin of this stone is unknown. Some say, it is a meteor which fell near Mecca and was stuck in a corner of one of the four walls of the Kaaba as a curiosity. Others say that when Abraham, who was the ancestor of the Jews as well as of the Arabs, came to Mecca and repaired the house, he put the stone in the wall for counting the rounds and that the Arabs held it sacred in the memory of their ancestor. Abraham was a very God-fearing and righteous man. He too was a great prophet, and our Holy Prophet Muhammad (may peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him!) kissed the stone in his memory. And because the Prophet kissed it, therefore, every Musalman who goes to perform the Hajj ceremony kisses it. In other words, the Musalmans kiss the kiss of their Prophet and not the stone itself, for a stone is a stone and can do no good and no harm to anybody.

There was only one idol in the Kaaba. It was called Hubal. Seven arrows were placed in its hands. These were used for taking auguries. There were two other idols, Isaf and Naila, in Mecca. They were two straight

stones stuck in the earth. Animals were sacrificed in their name and their blood was thrown on the stones. These practices were forbidden by Islam.

To go back to our subject. The Kaaba was the most sacred spot and the oldest temple in Arabia. Its origin was unknown. Nobody knew when it was built and who built it. For, as the Holy Quran says, Abraham only repaired it. In the Hajj season, Arab tribes from all over Arabia came to perform the pilgrimage. After the ceremonies were over, they held a fair for twenty days on the plain of Okaz, not far from Mecca. Here all the tribes did their buying and selling and vast quantities of merchandise were sold. Here the tribal disputes were settled, blood-moneys were paid, and friendships and alliances were formed. And here gathered all the famous poets and orators of Arabia. The poets recited their poems before the assembled hosts and orators delivered their mighty orations. The Arabs put high value upon poetry and the art of speech-making, and those whose poems or speeches won praise in the fair of Okaz became at once famous

throughout the country. It was a truly national fair. For once the Arabs forgot their feuds and spent the days in good fellowship.

These pilgrimages were a source of enormous profit to the Quraish. The fair of Okaz brought all Arabia to their door and their trade flourished. The entertainment of the pilgrims and supplying them with food and drink were in their hands. The Quraish had also invented other ways of making profit out of the pilgrimage. For example, they had made it a rule that the pilgrims should buy clothes from them alone to wear when they made their rounds about the Kaaba. If any pilgrim was too poor to buy, he must go naked. As the Arabs were generally very poor, most of them went naked about the Kaaba. Still, there was enough trade in cloth, which made the Quraish rich. This custom of going naked round the Kaaba was forbidden when the Holy Prophet became the master of Mecca. Being in possession of the Kaaba, the Quraish were respected throughout Arabia. Due to the sacredness of the Kaaba, all warfare was forbidden for a

few miles around it. It was forbidden and is forbidden to this day to kill even wild animals or birds in its neighbourhood. The city of Mecca was, therefore, secure from all attacks. The Kaaba was, in fact, the sole source of the wealth of the Quraish. They were secure from the attacks of enemies and were respected by all.

No doubt, the Arabs believed in Allah, the One Lord of heaven and the earth. But they did not worship Him. They worshipped the idols and thought, their idols did everything for them, brought them rain and riches and carried their prayers to God.

But, in truth, the Arabs cared little for religion. They cared rather for their pleasures and their profit. They thought that what their fathers and grandfathers did was good for them also. They were altogether a savage people. They had no mercy in their nature. They massacred their enemies without pity and sometimes burnt them alive. They were so shameless as to marry their own step-mothers. They could marry any number of wives they liked. The sons inherited their step-mothers and either married them them-

selves or sold them to others. Sometimes they buried their baby daughters alive. They had no mercy for the poor and the weak and robbed widows and helpless orphans and friendless travellers without pity. They drank and gambled and delighted in their wickedness without shame. They regarded women as mere chattels. They were a cruel and heartless people and their vices were many, some of them very shameful.

Of course, those savage Arabs of ancient Arabia had their virtues. Their loyalty towards their tribes and their willingness to help a man against his enemies have already been mentioned. Another great virtue was their hospitality. Any man who entered the tent of an Arab was sure of a hearty welcome. He was given the best food in the house and treated with great honour. The Arabs were a brave people, strong and manly and fearless in war. Mounted upon his camel or his horse and equipped with his trusty sword, the Arab went forth like a lion of the desert and was afraid of none.

But their bravery was of little use to them. Their disunity, their constant warfare

and mutual bloodshed, their ignorance and savage ways, their vices and sins and evil doings kept them weak and had made them contemptible in the sight of all the world.

It was among this ignorant, barbarous and vicious folk that our Holy Prophet was born to teach them morals and manners, to make them better men, to unite them into one nation and make them a mighty people.

CHAPTER IV.

BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD.

We will begin this chapter with a short account of the family, in which our Holy Prophet was born.

Abraham, the prophet of whom I spoke in the last chapter, had two sons, Ishmael (Arabic, *Ismail*) and Isaac (Arabic, *Is-haq*). The Jews are descended from Isaac, while the Quraish of Mecca and many other tribes of central and northern Arabia were descended from Ishmael.

Ishmael and his descendants settled at

Mecca and continued to live there for many centuries. At last, they were driven out by another Arab tribe, called Bani Jurhum, whose chiefs called themselves kings. The Jurhumites were turned out by another southern tribe, called Bani Khuzaa, early in the third century of the Christian era. The Bani Khuzaa were in their turn driven out in about 440 A. D. by the Quraish who thus became the masters of Mecca again. The Khuzaa settled down in the south of Mecca, and we shall hear of them again.

Qusai, the head of the Quraish at the time, was a very wise and powerful chief. He was their leader in war and judge in peace time. The flag of the tribe remained in his house. He built a council house called the Dar-un-Nadwa, where the heads of families held their councils under his presidentship. Qusai was the first chief of Mecca to arrange that all poor pilgrims and travellers should be given food and drink for three days at the expense of the people of Mecca. Large cisterns were made of leather and filled with water from the wells of Mecca for the purpose. For providing food he levied a tax upon the people.

He also levied a tax for making covers for the Kaaba.

Qusai had two sons. On his death the elder son became the leader of the tribe. On the latter's death quarrels arose between his and his brother's sons, and they divided the honours between themselves. One obtained the flag and leadership in war; another obtained the right of presiding over the council; others obtained other rights, but Hashim, a son of the younger son of Qusai, obtained the valuable right of providing food and drink to the pilgrims.

Hashim was a wise chief and became very famous in his day. He was rich and spent his wealth in a very generous manner. There was once a severe famine in Mecca and the people suffered much from want of food. Hashim went to Syria, purchased large stocks of foodstuffs and distributed cooked food to the inhabitants of Mecca. This act of princely generosity made him famous throughout Arabia and everybody respected him. He made treaties with the Roman and Persian emperors as well as with the king of Abyssinia, so that the caravans of the Quraish

could go to those countries for trade without hindrance. He also made treaties with Arab tribes. The result of these treaties was that although the tribes were always fighting among themselves and plundering one another's goods, they never attacked the caravans of the Quraish.

In the last year of his life Hashim went to Medina and there he met a beautiful lady, Salma by name. She was from a high family and belonged to the tribe of Khazraj, of whom we shall have much to say later on. Hashim married her and lived with her for some time and then went on to Syria for trade. There he died and in his absence his wife Salma bore him a son. This son was Abdul Muttalib, the grandfather of our Prophet.

On coming to manhood, Abdul Muttalib became the chief of Mecca.

Near the Kaaba there is a well called the Zamzam. People who go to the Hajj pilgrimage every year take home with them the water of this well, filled in small tins. As the water comes from the sacred soil of Mecca, Musalmans of distant countries drink it with pleasure as a gift from the Holy City. This

well is very ancient and nobody knows who built it. But the Jurhumite king, before he fled from Mecca, filled it up with earth, so that it was lost altogether. Three hundred years later, in the time of Abdul Muttalib, nobody knew where the well was situated. But Abdul Muttalib discovered the site and dug the well. The possession of this well added much to the dignity of Abdul Muttalib. The people abandoned other wells and all came to draw water from the Zamzam.

A cousin of Abdul Muttalib, who was also a wealthy man and the head of his family, became very jealous of his power and position and wanted to make a quarrel. To make his party strong Abdul Muttalib made a permanent alliance with the tribe of Bani Khuzaa. We must remember this alliance, because it played an important part in the early history of Islam.

In Arabia, the power of a chief depended upon the number of sons he had, and Abdul Muttalib, early in life, had made a vow that if he had ten sons who grew up to manhood in his lifetime, he would sacrifice one of them to God. His wish was fulfilled. He had ten

sons who all grew up and he decided to sacrifice one of them. Lots were cast and the lot fell upon his youngest and favourite son Abdullah.

Abdullah was a young man of twenty-four years. As his father took him out to slay him before the idols, his sisters wept and begged their father to spare the boy. The leading citizens of Mecca also said, he must not do it. It was an evil thing to kill a young man and they would not allow it. As according to the custom of the tribes the price of a man's life was sometimes paid in camels, they asked him to do the same in this case. Lots were, therefore, cast between ten camels and Abdullah. But the lot again fell upon Abdullah. Abdul Muttalib added ten more camels and again cast the lots. But the result was the same. The old chief went on casting lots, adding ten more camels each time, until the number of camels reached one hundred. This time the lot fell upon the camels and the life of Abdullah was saved. This Abdullah became the father of our Holy Prophet Muhammad. Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him !

Some little while after this event, Abdulla

was married to Lady Amina. She belonged to a high family. Her parents were dead and she had been brought up by her uncle. She was the mother of our Holy Prophet.

A few months after the wedding, Abdullah went to Syria for trade. On his way back, he fell sick and was left behind by the caravan at Medina. He died after a short illness and was buried there.

Three months after his death, our Holy Prophet was born at Mecca on April 20, 571 A. D. He was thus an orphan even before his birth. Peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him !

Abdul Muttalib was sitting in the Kaaba when the news of the birth of Abdullah's son reached him. He was overjoyed at the birth of his grandson and hurried home to see him. The leading men of his tribe also went with him. Abdul Muttalib took the child in his arms, carried him to the Kaaba and prayed for him. He gave him the name of MUHAMMAD. His mother called him AHMAD, and our Holy Prophet is known by both these names. Both the names mean "the Praised One". And our Holy Prophet deserves every praise. No

man has been so loved and praised as he has been. Peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him !

It was not the custom for ladies of high families in Mecca to nurse their babies. Also, the climate of Mecca was not good for small children. Therefore, they were sent away to be brought up among the Beduin tribes that lived near Mecca. The free open air of the desert made the children healthy and strong and they learnt the pure Arabic speech, for the language of the Beduins, who do not mix with non-Arabs, is purer than that of the townspeople. Our Prophet was nursed by his mother for two or three days, and for some days by a woman named Suwaiba, a slave of his uncle Abu Lahab. It was in the character of our Holy Prophet never to forget a kindness. If anybody ever did any kindness to him, however small, he always remembered it with gratitude. When he grew up and became wealthy and powerful, he rewarded Suwaiba for having nursed him for these few days. He and his wife Khadija always spoke of her with respect and every now and then he would send her clothes and money. This

went on for many years, until she died.

A few days after his birth, some Beduin women came to Mecca to get babies for nursing. Others got the babies; but one of them, Haleema of the tribe of Bani Sa'ad, could not get any. She would not take Muhammad. His father was dead, and she would not gain much by nursing an orphan boy. So she thought. But there was no other baby in the town to be nursed. Disappointed on every side, she thought at last that it was better to have an orphan boy than to have none at all. Therefore, she accepted Muhammad and took him away with her.

The Bani Sa'ad were a branch of the great clan of the Hawazin tribes. They were famous for their eloquence and poetry. Our Prophet was the most powerful and eloquent speaker of his day, and he used to say that his speech was pure and eloquent because he had been brought up among the Bani Sa'ad.

When Muhammad was two years old, Haleema brought him back to Lady Amina. The mother was delighted to see her boy. He was strong and healthy and looked twice his age. But Lady Amina feared the climate of

Mecca and asked Haleema to take him back with her to the desert. Three years more he lived with her. He was in his sixth year when he was finally brought back to his mother.

Our Prophet loved his foster-mother Haleema like his own mother and always remembered her for her kindnesses. Many years later, there was a drought in the territory of the Bani Hawazin. Rains failed and much cattle died for want of water and grass. There was much hardship among the people. In this distress Haleema came to our Prophet. He spoke to his wife Khadija and she gave her one camel, forty sheep and food. When the Prophet was King at Medina, Haleema once came to see him. The Prophet cried, "My mother, my mother" and embraced her with joy. He spread his own mantle on the ground for her to sit upon. Both she and her husband became Muslims after Muhammad had become Prophet. Haleema's name is honoured among the Muslims to this day.

Muhammad (peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him!) now lived with his mother. He was six years old when his mother went to

Medina to visit the grave of her husband. It will be remembered that Hashim, Abdullah's grandfather and our Prophet's great-grandfather, had married at Medina. His wife Salma was, therefore, the great-grandmother of our Holy Prophet and Lady Amina stayed with her family. Muhammad went with her. At Medina he used to play with a little girl named Unaisa, and in a small pond there he learnt to swim. Our Prophet had a very good memory. When forty-seven years later he came again to Medina, he remembered all these things.

They stayed at Medina for one month and then left for Mecca. But on the way, at a place called Abwa, half-way between Mecca and Medina, the Prophet's mother fell sick. She died and was buried there. Thus at the age of six, Muhammad became doubly an orphan. His father had died before he was born. And now he was robbed of his mother also. He must have wept bitterly at being thus left alone. Nobody can take the place of father and mother and the state of an orphan is always pitiable. He must have felt the blow very deeply. Fifty-three years later he again

visited the place. He saw his mother's grave and wept.

There was another woman in the party, Umm-i-Aiman, the slave girl left behind by his father. On his mother's death, she took charge of the precious orphan and brought him safely to Mecca. His grandfather Abdul Muttalib was still alive. He loved his little grandson very dearly and took him in his care. But he was already eighty years old and died two years later. On the grandfather's death, our Prophet's uncle Abu Talib took him to his own house and began to look after him.

Muhammad was now a strong boy of eight years. The boys of Mecca used to graze their cattle, goats and sheep in the surrounding hills and valleys. He went with them. There he ran and romped and played with them and ate delicious black-berries that grew in the hills. It did him good, and in the free and healthy air of the open desert he grew up strong, robust and manly.

CHAPTER V

YOUTH AND MANHOOD

Our Holy Prophet's character was lovable from his childhood. His charming manners, refined speech and willingness to help everybody who asked his help made him friends with all who came into contact with him. He was always humble, meek, but manly and truthful. He was courteous to everybody. These virtues made him loved by all his relations and those who knew him, and so his uncle Abu Talib loved him. Indeed, Abu Talib was so fond of his nephew that he always kept him near himself. He made him sleep by his bed, eat with him and walk with him whenever he went out.

Like other Meccans, Abu Talib was also a merchant. Muhammad (peace be upon him) was twelve years old when his uncle wanted to go to Syria for business. He wished to go alone. He could not take his nephew with him because the journey was long and he was too young. But our Prophet would not let him go. He clung to him and wanted to go with him. So the fond uncle had to

give in and took him along to Syria.

This was his first journey to a distant country. Afterwards, when he grew up to manhood and became a merchant himself, he made many more journeys. He visited Yemen as well as Bahrain on the shores of the Persian Gulf. The latter country he knew very intimately. He was a keen observer of men and their manners, and nothing escaped his eyes. In these journeys he learnt how people in different countries lived, what things they made, and what they sold and purchased, and what were their manners and customs.

When the Holy Prophet grew up to be a young man of twenty years or so, he began to take part in the affairs of the city. Since the death of Abdul Muttalib Mecca had become an unruly town. There was no one to protect the weak and the helpless, and travellers were sometimes robbed in the streets in broad day-light. The Prophet hated oppression, cruelty and injustice and wished that no wrong should be done to the travellers. Accordingly, a meeting was held, in which the descendants of Hashim (that is, the Prophet's

relations), the relations of the Prophet's mother and another family took part. They formed a league among themselves and took an oath that they would defend every man, whether Meccan or outsider, free or slave, from every wrong and injustice in Mecca, that if any one was robbed in the city, they would have his property restored to him or make up the loss out of their own pocket. Our Prophet was present at the meeting and took the oath. He used to say that to protect the weak and fight against injustice he would enter into such an alliance with anybody.

In the meantime, the excellence of Muhammad's character was becoming known to the citizens of Mecca. He lived a very pure life. The wealthy citizens of Mecca had many vices and took pride in their sins. Muhammad lived in the midst of them in the fullness of his youth, but no vice ever came near him. He lived in the midst of them like an angel. He was honest. He never broke his word and never told an untruth.

There lived at Mecca a lady of the name of Khadija. She was a distant relation of our Holy Prophet. She was a widow. She

was wealthy. She was handsome and she belonged to a noble family. She was a very good woman and the people used to call her *Tahira*, which means "The Pure". Several leading men of Mecca desired to marry her, but she refused. She wanted to live by herself. She also did business. She employed agents to work for her, and every year a string of camels laden with her merchandise went to Syria and Yemen. When the fame of Muhammad's virtues reached her ears, she took him into her employment and sent him as her agent to Syria to trade on her behalf. She promised to pay him twice as much for his services as she paid others. A servant of hers went with him.

Muhammad (peace be upon him) went, sold her goods, purchased what Khadija had asked him to bring and returned to Mecca. It was a very successful journey. The profits were much larger than they used to be before and Khadija was delighted. Afterwards, he made some more journeys for her.

I have said above that our Prophet was a very lovable man and everybody who came to know him began to love him. The same

thing happened with the Lady Khadija. As she came to know him more and more, she found that he was no ordinary man. He was quite different from others. His manners were charming. His speech was exceedingly sweet and polite. His heart was pure and his ways above reproach. Although she was much older than him—she was forty, while he was only twenty-five—she fell in love with him and desired to marry him. He agreed and they were married.

It was a very happy marriage. Their hearts were united. Both were virtuous. Both had noble minds and pure hearts. Both delighted in doing deeds of charity and helping the poor. Khadija was a saintly woman and Muhammad was like an angel of God on earth. They loved each other and respected each other deeply. As you know, our Prophet had become an orphan before he was born. His father had not left him much property and he was poor. Lady Khadija placed all her wealth at his command and he became rich.

By this marriage the Prophet had five children. The first was a son, Qasim by name,

In Arabia, a gentleman is not called by his personal name. He is called either after his father as the son of So-and-So or after his son as the father of So-and-So. Such a name is called *Kun-yat*. After the birth of Qasim our Holy Prophet was called Abul Qasim ('the father of Qasim'). The other four were daughters, Zainab, Ruqayya, Umm-i-Kulsoom and Fatima. The boy died early, but the daughters lived and married, and we will read of them again.

After his marriage the Prophet continued to do business. His fame for honesty, fair-dealing and truthfulness grew from day to day. People called him Al-Amin, 'the Trusty.' By this title he was known throughout Mecca and the adjacent territories. Everybody trusted him and respected him. They began to use him as their bank. They deposited their properties with him for safe-keeping and got them back when they wanted. In that age, when theft was regarded as an ordinary thing and robbery was looked upon as an honourable profession practised by all, it was very extraordinary.

Our Prophet was thirty-five years old

when he was able to avert a bloody war. The Kaaba was destroyed in a flood. It had no roof in those days. The Quraish decided to rebuild the Kaaba and put a roof on it. Everybody took part in the work and so did our Prophet. But when it came to putting the Black Stone in its place, a dispute arose. The Black Stone is very sacred and everybody claimed that he should have the right of putting it in place. In matters of honour the Arabs were a very obstinate race. Nobody was willing to yield. So they began to prepare for war in order to decide the question by the sword. At last, someone suggested a way out of the difficulty. He proposed that the man who should enter the place first should decide the dispute or put the stone in its place with his own hands. They all agreed and began to wait. Our Holy Prophet was the first to enter. On seeing him they all cried out, "Here comes Al-Amin; we will accept his decision." They explained the matter to him. Instead of taking the stone and setting it in place with his own hands, he did a wonderful thing. He took off his mantle from his shoulders, spread it on the ground, put the stone

in its centre and asked the four leading men of Mecca, who were quarrelling about the matter, to lift the mantle by its four corners. They did it. When the stone reached the level of its setting place, he pushed it into position with his own hand. War was thus averted and everybody praised his wisdom and justice.

About this time our Prophet did two acts of kindness which must be mentioned. His uncle Abu Talib had become very poor. He had a large family and found it hard to feed them all. There was famine in the land. Seeing his distress the Prophet went to another uncle of his, Abbas by name, and said to him, "Uncle, you know, your brother Abu Talib is poor and has a large family. He is in distress. You are rich and so am I. Let us relieve him of some of his burden. You take one boy and I will take another. This will lighten his burden somewhat." Abbas agreed. He took Jafar and our Prophet took Ali. From this time forth, Ali lived in his house.

The other kindness was to a stranger. His name was Zaid. He was born in Syria. When quite a child, he fell into the hands of

a robber band of Arabs, who sold him into slavery. He was brought to Mecca. After living with one master after another for many years, he came into the possession of Lady Khadija. She made a present of him to her husband and Muhammad (peace be on him) set him free. But he continued to live with him and they became fast friends. Zaid's father Harisa had been searching for him all these years. At last, he found out that Zaid was at Mecca. He came and asked Muhammad to let him go with him. The Prophet said, "Let Zaid choose for himself. If he wants to go, he can go; if he wants to stay, he can stay. But the Prophet's kindness had so won his heart that Zaid preferred to stay with Muhammad, and his father had to go without him.

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CHAPTER VI

CALL TO PROPHETHOOD

The Prophet was thoughtful by nature. As he grew older, he became more thoughtful. There was much misery spread around him. The strong were cruel to the weak. The rich were proud. The tribes of the desert were no better than bands of robbers. There was much bloodshed in the land. They were all ignorant savages. Was there no way to better them and improve the condition of his country? He thought deeply over this question.

The whole country worshipped idols. The idols were mere figures of stone. They could neither hurt nor help anybody. What was the use of worshipping them? The Prophet hated the whole lot of those idols, never went near them and refused to eat the meat that had been offered to them. He had seen Jews and Christians in Syria. The Jews considered themselves the chosen people of God and despised every other nation. The Christians

worshipped images of Jesus and Mary and their different sects were always quarrelling among themselves. The Prophet liked none of these things. His heart was searching for the light of truth. He could not have that light from either the Jews or the Christians or his fellow countrymen who worshipped idols.

About three miles from Mecca there is a cave in the mountain, called Hira. He retired to this cave, took a stock of food with him and in that cave spent months and months in deep thought, prayer and meditation. Sometimes he went alone, sometimes his wife Khadija went with him. This went on for several years. Then, by and by, he began to dream dreams, and what he dreamed in sleep always came true in day-time. Gradually, the dreams became clearer and clearer, until one day, when he was very deep in thought, a sudden flood of light burst upon his heart. There was a voice—the voice of God. It told him that he was a Prophet, a Messenger of God towards men. It called upon him to teach a new religion to mankind. He should teach them that there is but One

Zaid, whom the Prophet had made a free man, also became Muslims immediately. Abu Bakr's name is known to every Muslim child. He was one of the greatest heroes of Islam. He was a wealthy merchant of Mecca. He was wise and kind-hearted and was respected by everybody. People used to consult him in all important affairs. He was younger than our Prophet by two years and the two had been close friends from early youth. When Abu Bakr heard that Muhammad claimed to be a Prophet, he said without hesitation, "That must be true, for my friend never speaks untruths." So he also became a Muslim.

For three years the Prophet went on working quietly. Some more wealthy merchants and daring soldiers entered the fold of Islam during this period. They belonged to different families of Mecca and only a few of them were related to the Holy Prophet. Almost all of them became famous and rose to high positions in later years. Among them were Usman, who married the Prophet's second daughter Roqayya and became the third Caliph after the Prophet, and Sa'ad, son of

Abu Waqqas, who conquered Persia for the Muslims.

Besides these wealthy merchants and soldiers of high families, there were some poor artisans, tailors, blacksmiths and the like and several poor slaves who also entered the new religion. In these three years, altogether forty persons, men and women, accepted Islam. Among them the larger number was of poor artisans and slaves. All the preaching was done secretly. The Muslims would gather in a private house, where the Holy Prophet would teach them the Holy Quran. Sometimes they met in the hills outside Mecca, where nobody would see them and then they would say their prayers. One day, Ali and the Prophet were praying like this when Ali's father Abu Talib suddenly came upon them. He was astonished at their way of saying prayers and watched them. When they had finished, Abu Talib asked the Holy Prophet, "Son of my brother, what religion is this that you follow?"

The Prophet replied, "It is the religion of God and of our ancestor Abraham. It is the religion of truth and God Almighty has

appointed me to teach it to mankind. Uncle, you are a worthy man. I call upon you to accept the truth and help in spreading it."

Abu Talib answered, "Son of my brother, I cannot give up the religion of my forefathers. But by God, so long as I live, I shall protect you and none shall dare touch a hair of your head." Then turning to his son, he asked, "And what is your religion, my boy?"

"I believe in God and His Prophet Muhammad, and I go with him," said Ali.

Abu Talib replied, "Well, my son, he will never teach you anything bad, so you are free to cling to him."

Such was the old uncle's trust in Muhammad's character. Peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him!

CHAPTER VII

PERSECUTION.

The Prophet preached Islam quietly and secretly for three years. Then came the command of God to preach openly and to all. The Prophet called a meeting of the Quraish on a hill-top and said, "Citizens of Mecca! If I were to say that a large army was standing behind this hill ready to attack you, would you believe me?" "Certainly," they replied, "Because we know, you always speak the truth." Thereupon, the Holy Prophet preached Islam to them. He called upon them to worship God alone, to give up the worship of idols, reform their ways and believe in him as the Prophet of God. The Quraish refused and went home in great anger.

But the Prophet did not give up hope. He preached to them daily whenever and wherever he found an opportunity. Many debates were held. You know, the wise man does what seems good and reasonable. But

ignorant people have no reason and prefer to follow their customs. They do what others do and what their forefathers did before them. So the Quraish said, "Our forefathers worshipped idols. We want to follow them. We want no change." The Prophet said, "Your idols are but figures of stone. They are mere nothings. They are mere names invented by your ignorant forefathers. They cannot hear. They cannot speak. They cannot help themselves. What can they do for you? God Almighty sends the rains, so that the earth produces abundant grains and fruits and you and your cattle drink water. He watches over you while you are asleep. He gives you sons and daughters and gives you wealth, and Him alone you should worship. I warn you that those who worship idols will go to hell."

There was much sin in Mecca. Some of the leading men were especially bad. There were among them liars, back-biters, drunkards, gamblers and shameless sinners of many descriptions. The Prophet called upon them to give up their sins and reform themselves. There were those dishonest merchants among

them who gave false measure and short weight. The Prophet called it a grievous sin and said that those who cheated others and were dishonest in their dealings would go to hell. And this angered the dishonest ones. Such debates took place daily. Many more persons became Muslims. The Prophet's arguments were true. They could not be answered. But the chiefs of Mecca became angry and alarmed. Some of them were jealous. They thought that if more people became Muslims, Muhammad and the family of Hashim, to which he belonged, would become more powerful and the power and influence of their own families would vanish.

There was another reason for their opposition too. The wealth and importance of Mecca depended upon the Kaaba and the annual pilgrimage, as has been explained before. The Meccans were afraid that if Islam became strong and the worship of idols was abandoned, the tribes of Arabia would stop coming to Mecca and their trade would be ruined. They would not have the same influence among the tribes, as they had before.

There was yet another reason. Islam teaches that all men are equal in the sight of God. It teaches that the strong should not oppress the weak and the rich should not rob the poor. Rich people are sometimes very heartless. They have no sympathy with the poor and no pity for their sufferings. They grow fat upon their labour, but treat them in an inhuman fashion. Islam forbids this and says that people who do such things will surely go to hell. The wealthy chiefs of Mecca did not like these teachings. They believed that might was right and that the poor people were born just to serve them. They could never think of treating them as equal human beings.

For these reasons the Meccans began to oppose the Holy Prophet. They tried to tempt him. They offered him money and said, they would make him the richest man in Arabia if he would only keep quiet and not preach against their idols. The Prophet replied, "My friends, I ask nothing for myself. I only ask that you should believe in God, throw away your wretched idols and lead pure and righteous lives." They went to his

uncle Abu Talib. "Your nephew," they said, "speaks ill of our gods and says, they are mere sticks and stones. He says that our forefathers were ignorant and calls us foolish. Either you should withdraw your protection and abandon him, or you should yourself come out in the open field, so that we may decide the matter by the sword."

Abu Talib was shaken for the moment by this threat. He was old and not strong enough to withstand the whole people. He sent for the Prophet and said, "Son of my brother, do not put a greater burden upon me than I can bear." Abu Talib loved the Prophet like his own son and Muhammad (peace be on him) loved him as if he were his father. He was a little boy of eight years when he came to live with Abu Talib, and since that time the two had loved each other very dearly. Will they part now? Will they give up their dear old friendship? The thought smote the heart of Muhammad and he wept. But to Abu Talib he replied, "Uncle, if they were to offer me the wealth of the East and the West, I would not accept it and I would not relinquish the work to which God has

called me. I shall either accomplish it or die in the attempt." Abu Talib was deeply moved. "Go, my son," he said, "None shall dare to touch a hair of your head, so long as I live."

The anger of the Meccans now broke out in full fury. They began to beat the Musalmans wherever they found them. They spread thorns and dug pits in their paths. One man threw a piece of cloth around the neck of our Holy Prophet and tried to strangle him. Another threw filth at him. It became dangerous for any Musalman to show himself in the streets of Mecca. Men of high families were tortured by their relations. But the worst sufferings were of the poor and the slaves. Their masters gave them brutal punishments for becoming Muslims. They were beaten and dragged in the streets. They were made to lie on the burning sands in the scorching mid-day sun of Arabia and heavy stones were laid on their chests, so that they should not be able to move. One man, Khabbab, who was a blacksmith, was made to lie on live charcoals. Another man, Yasir by name,

died under tortures.

Even women were not spared. They were beaten and starved. One woman was speared to death and another was blinded by the ruffians. The sufferings of the slaves were unbearable. Abu Bakr came forward to help them. He purchased many of them of their masters and set them free. It was a very noble act on his part. He was wealthy and had 40,000 silver pieces. He spent his money generously on freeing the slaves, so that he had no more than 5,000 left with him. The Holy Prophet's wife Khadija also spent her money freely to relieve the sufferings of the poor.

The persecutions continued. The Meccans tried their utmost to turn the Muslims from their faith. They failed miserably. The Muslims bore their sufferings with patience, but refused to give up Islam. "We would die, but we will not give up our Prophet Muhammad," they declared. The name of Balal is highly honoured in Islam. He was an Abyssinian slave at Mecca and was daily tortured by his master. He was dragged in the streets, made to lie in the burning sun and

lashed. But each time the lash fell on his body, he cried out, "Ahadun, Ahadun"— "God is One, God is One." Balal was rescued from his daily sufferings by the generosity of Abu Bakr, who paid his price and set him free.

The sufferings of the Muslims became at last unbearable. The Holy Prophet, therefore, advised them to leave Mecca and seek refuge in Abyssinia. This was in the fifth year of his prophethood. Eighty-three Muslims fled to Abyssinia, while several, who had no money for the journey, were left behind. The Meccans pursued them, but they took a boat and escaped across the Red Sea. The Quraish then sent their agents to the King of Abyssinia asking for the return of the fugitives and saying that they had invented a new religion and had fled from punishment. The King sent for the refugees and asked them about the new religion. Ja'afar, brother of Ali and son of Abu Talib who also had become a Muslim and had fled from Mecca, replied as follows:—

"Your Majesty, we were an ignorant people. We worshipped idols and ate dead

animals. We were an immoral people. We were cruel to our neighbours. The strong oppressed the weak and robbed them of their properties. A man rose among us, of whose noble birth and righteous life we were well aware. He called us to Islam and taught us to abandon the worship of idols, to speak the truth, to shun bloodshed and to be kind to the neighbour. He taught us to pray to God alone and to practise charity towards the poor. He taught that we should not touch the property of helpless orphans and should not slander women. We believed in him and abandoned the worship of idols and our evil ways. For this our people became our enemies and desire that we should turn heathens again."

Ja'afar then read a passage from the Holy Quran. The King was deeply moved by the noble teaching and sweet language of the Quran and declared that he would not give up the refugees. The agents of the Meccans were thus disappointed and returned home while the Muslims settled down in Abyssinia. A short while after, another party went over to Abyssinia, so that the

number of refugees in the country became full one hundred.

CHAPTER VIII

HUNGER BLOCKADE

The Holy Prophet and a few of his followers remained in Mecca to stand the abuse and cruelty of the Quraish. One of his followers, Arqam by name, had his house at the foot of the hills. In this house they gathered secretly, said their prayers and held their meetings. When night fell, they quietly went to their homes in the dark. Preaching was going on all the time; the fame of the Prophet had spread far and wide and new converts were being won steadily. In the year following the emigration to Abyssinia two notable men entered the fold of Islam. The stories of their conversion are very interesting.

Among the chiefs of the Quraish was a man named Amr. He was considered to be very wise and had been given the title of *Abul Hikam*—"Father of Wisdom"—by his

fellow citizens. He was the bitterest enemy of Islam in Mecca. For this reason, the Muslims called him *Abu Jahl*—"Father of Ignorance"—and by this name he is known to this day.

The Holy Prophet had an uncle, Hamza by name. He was about the same age as our Holy Prophet and both were good friends, although Hamza had not yet accepted Islam. He was a very brave soldier and spent his time in hunting. Taking his bow and arrows he would go into the hills every morning and hunt the whole day.

One day, Abu Jahl met the Holy Prophet and grossly abused him. The Holy Prophet answered never a word and went quietly home. But a slave girl had seen and heard everything. When Hamza returned from the hills in the afternoon with his bow hanging from his shoulders, she told him how Abu Jahl had abused the Prophet. In a great rage, Hamza went straight to the Kaaba where Abu Jahl was sitting with his friends, struck him with his bow and shouted, "Fight if you dare, for I am a Muslim from today and I will see how you insult my nephew

again." Abu Jahl was cowed down. From the Kaaba Hamza went home. His anger having cooled down, he thought over the matter for a while, then went to the Holy Prophet and declared himself a Muslim.

The conversion of Omar was even more dramatic. He was one of the greatest men that have ever lived, and some day I will tell you the story of his life. He was one of the leading men of the Quraish and most bitterly opposed to Islam and the Prophet. There was a slave girl in his house, who had become Muslim and he used to beat her daily. One day he thought, it would be better to slay Muhammad and finish the whole affair at a single stroke. Accordingly, he took his sword and went in search of him. On the way he met a relation of his, who was also a Muslim, though Omar did not know it. The Muslim relation asked Omar where he was going.

"To kill Muhammad," he replied. The other man said, "Why don't you look to your own family first? Your sister Fatima and her husband have also become Muslims."

On hearing this, Omar turned his steps towards his sister's house. She and her hus-

band were reading the Quran when he reached there. On seeing him, they concealed the leaves of the Quran, for they knew very well that he was a ferocious man and a very bitter enemy of Islam. But he had overheard them and asked what they had been reading. "I hear, you have joined Muhammad," he added and fell upon his brother-in-law and beat him severely. His sister came forward to protect her husband, but he beat her also. At last, she cried out, "Omar, do what you will, we have accepted Islam and cannot go back to your heathen gods." Her tone was very firm. Omar turned to look at her. Her face and clothes were covered with blood. He felt very sorry. His heart softened. He begged her pardon and asked her to read to him also what she had been reading. She read: "Whatever is in the heavens and the earth declares the glory of God and He is mighty and wise." She went on reading. In a few minutes Omar's heart was won and he declared himself a Muslim. Then he went to the house of Arqam and joined the Holy Prophet.

Omar's conversion had a wonderful effect. The Muslim party became very strong and

now they came openly to say their prayers in the Kaaba. The news caused great weeping and wailing among the Quraish.

The Quraish now became thoroughly alarmed. They saw that Islam was spreading rapidly. Powerful men like Hamza and Omar had joined it, and a few men and women of almost every family of Mecca had become Muslims. "If we do not do something quickly and put a stop to the growth of Islam, before long the Muslims would become too powerful and we would be lost. Our power would be gone and nobody would respect us any more." So thought the chiefs of Mecca.

Accordingly, they held a council and decided to starve out the family of Hashim. All the families opposed to the Holy Prophet, therefore, made an agreement among themselves that they would neither give their daughters to Hashimites nor take theirs in marriage. They would do no buying and selling with them, nor let them have any foodstuffs, nor, indeed, have anything to do with them, until the Hashimites should agree to deliver up Muhammad (peace and the

blessings of Allah be upon Him), so that they might slay him. The agreement was written, seals were put on it and it was hung up in the Kaaba.

All the members of the family of Hashim now moved into the quarter of Abu Talib and the siege began. This happened in the seventh year of prophethood and the siege continued for full three years. The people suffered fearfully from hunger and want. Sometimes they had nothing but leaves of trees and dry skins to eat. Some of them had relatives among other families. These would sometimes throw in quantities of foodstuffs when nobody was looking. During the sacred months of the pilgrimage, when fighting was forbidden, they would come out and buy foodstuffs from other tribes. They could do no business and became very poor. They could not buy enough food to last the whole year. Lady Khadija spent away almost all her money in helping the poor. There was so much distress that women and children could be heard outside crying from hunger.

At last, some of their relatives took pity on them and made up their minds to put an end

to the blockade. They went to the Kaaba and tore up the agreement. With the exception of a few obstinate enemies like Abu Jahl, all were satisfied and the siege was raised.

Two heavy sorrows fell upon our Holy Prophet soon after. His uncle Abu Talib, who had stood by him against his enemies, died at the age of eighty-five. His dear wife Khadija also died shortly after. The Prophet was then fifty years old. Their married life had been a very happy one. Khadija's company was a source of bliss to him. Now he was left alone with none to comfort him. And thus closed the tenth year of prophethood. On account of these two deaths it is called the "Year of Sorrow".

CHAPTER IX.

EMIGRATION TO MEDINA.

Persecution continued. The heart of Mecca had become hard and they would not listen to the Prophet. They invented other methods of persecuting him. Abu Jahl and other chiefs who were his enemies were his neighbours. They threw filth in his house. They threw dirt at him when he walked in the streets. They told everybody that he was mad and that evil spirits had entered into him. They set street urchins after him who hooted and yelled at him.

The Holy Prophet was an extremely brave man. He was not afraid of difficulties. No opposition or cruelty could dishearten him. He had perfect faith in his mission and he knew that he must succeed. If Mecca would not listen to him, he would go to others. He went to Taif and spoke to the chief men of the city. They too would not listen. They had close relations with the chiefs of Mecca and were under their influence. And they

treated him more cruelly than the people of Mecca had ever done. They set the roughs of the city upon him. The mob hooted and clapped their hands and threw stones at him. Both the legs of the Holy Prophet (God bless him) were wounded and his shoes were filled with blood. If he stopped anywhere to take breath, they pulled him up by hand, pushed him forth and threw more stones at him. Thus the ruffians pursued him for two or three miles out of the city, until the Holy Prophet took refuge in a garden. The owner of the garden was a Meccan. He saw the Prophet, took pity on him, and knowing that Muhammad was a noble-born citizen of Mecca, sent him bunches of ripe and delicious grapes set in a tray by his slave. The Prophet spoke to the slave and told him who he was and what he taught. The slave listened, fell at his feet and became a Muslim.

The Holy Prophet refreshed himself with grapes and then opened his heart for prayer. He prayed, "Lord! If Thou art not displeased, I have no fear. Forgive these people, for they know not what they do, and guide them to the truth." Such was the heart of our

Holy Prophet. He was merciful and forgiving even to his bitterest enemies.

The Holy Prophet now returned to Mecca. He preached to whoever would listen. But the opposition was too great and success was small. Then came the annual pilgrimage. As usual, the tribes of Arabs gathered from all sides and pitched their tents on the plain of Okaz where the famous twenty days' fair was held. The Holy Prophet went to tribe after tribe. The Meccans went with him to warn the people against him. "This man," they would say, "has turned from the religion of his forefathers. Do not listen to him." There were some who liked his teachings, but they were afraid of the Meccans and their own relations and would not become Muslims. At last one night the Holy Prophet met a party of six men from Medina. The Prophet enquired who they were. They said, they belonged to the tribe of Khazraj. The Prophet's great grandmother Salma belonged to this tribe. The Prophet preached to them and they became Muslims. And these men carried the message of Islam to Medina.

The following year at the Hajj time

twelve more men came from Medina and met the Holy Prophet secretly at a place called Aqaba. This place is famous in the history of Islam and its name must be remembered. They became Muslims, but asked the Holy Prophet to send with them an older Muslim who should teach them Islam. The Holy Prophet sent Mus'ab bin Umair with them and they returned to Medina.

Mus'ab worked wonders. There were two Arab tribes settled in Medina, Aus and Khazraj. Mus'ab went from house to house, calling upon the people to become Muslims. He met with great success, and large numbers of both tribes accepted Islam. When the time of pilgrimage came round again next year, seventy-two Muslims went from Medina with Mus'ab to meet the Holy Prophet. The whole thing was kept secret and even the men of the caravan of Medina who were not Muslims did not know what their real intentions were. When the pilgrimage was over and the great fair was about to break up, they met the Holy Prophet at Aqaba at midnight. The Prophet's uncle Abbas, though not a Muslim, went with him and said to the Muslims

of Medina, "Muhammad has lived among us in safety. We have defended him and will defend him to the last. But he wishes to go and live among you. Are you strong enough to defend him?" A man of Medina also said, "Yes, brethren! Think well over the matter. It means war with the whole of Arabia." One of the chief men replied, "We know it, we know it. We have been born under the shadow of swords and will defend him with our blood." They took the pledge. One by one they took the hand of Muhammad (peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him!) and swore that they would defend him with their lives and property. Then as silently as they had gathered, they dispersed in the darkness of the night and went to their tents.

The tribes of the pilgrims went to their homes. A few days later, the Holy Prophet asked the Muslims of Mecca to leave the city and go over to Medina. Secretly and silently, by twos and threes, they left until a hundred families disappeared from Mecca. Whole quarters of the city were left empty. Only the Prophet himself and two of his companions, Ali and Abu Bakr, were left behind.

Just think of it. The people of Mecca were only his enemies, because he was the principal cause of their trouble. They did not care much for his followers. If they could slay him, his followers would disappear of themselves. But the Holy Prophet was a faithful leader and a fearless man. He did not care for himself. He did not care what happened to him and how he suffered at the hands of his enemies. He only cared that his friends should not suffer. He thought of others first and of himself last. This was the beauty of his character and it was this constant care for the safety and comfort of others that made him great. He had sent away one hundred men to seek safety in Abyssinia and himself remained behind in the midst of his enemies. Now he sent away a hundred families to Medina and took no thought of himself until every one had left and gone into safety. The lion-hearted Muhammad was still there to face his blood-thirsty enemies. Peace and the blessings of God be upon him !

The Quraish now became very alarmed. They saw that the Muslims had found a safe home. Medina was not so far as Abyssinia.

There the Muslims would gather force and overpower them one day. No time was to be lost and the final step must be taken at once. They held a great meeting in their council house. "What should we do now?" they asked one another.

"Chain him and lock him up in a house," said one.

"No use," said another. "We besieged him for three years, but what came of it? Better banish him."

"That is worse," said Abu Jahl who was thirsting for the Prophet's blood. "If you banish him, he will join his friends and misery will fall upon us. My advice is that we put him to death. Let us take one strong young man from each family and the party should go and plunge their swords into his body all together. The blame for the murder will thus fall upon all the families and the family of Hashim will not be able to take revenge upon them all."

This advice was accepted. The party was chosen, and when night fell, they went and surrounded the house of the Prophet. Now it happened that many people had

deposited their moneys with the Holy Prophet. The Meccans hated him and wanted to kill him. But their faith in his honesty was so great that they still deposited their moneys with him. These moneys had to be returned to their owners. So he asked Ali to return the money in the morning and sleep during the night in his bed. It was dangerous to sleep in that bed that night. But Ali was brave like a lion—he is known by the title of Asad-Ullah, "the Lion of God,"—and the Muslims were so devoted to their leader that they were willing to die for him. The assassins stood before the Prophet's door with drawn swords ready to cut him to pieces as soon as he stepped out. Presently, sleep overcame them and our Holy Prophet passed out through their midst. When they awoke, they saw a man sleeping in the bed. So they waited, for it was not the custom of Arabs to enter a man's house to kill him. It is said that an Englishman's house is his castle. So an Arab's house or tent was his castle. The assassins waited. But when the day broke, they found that it was Ali and that Muhammad had escaped during the night! Peace

and blessings of Allah be upon him!

The Holy Prophet, on leaving his house, went straight to the house of Abu Bakr. Abu Bakr had two well-fed camels ready for the journey. The Holy Prophet took one, paid the price as he would not take it for a gift, and both rode out of Mecca. Instead of going towards the north in the direction of Medina, they took the road to the south towards Yemen, for they knew that they would be pursued. Having travelled a few miles they hid themselves in a cave and here they remained three days. Food and the news of what was happening in the city were brought to them daily. When the Quraish discovered that the Holy Prophet had escaped, they sent scouts in every direction. Some men even reached the mouth of the cave in which they were hiding. Abu Bakr was frightened. "We are only two," he said. "Fear not," the Holy Prophet encouraged him, "God is with us." So strong was his faith and so great his courage! And God was, indeed, with them, for the scouts soon retired, and the roads were clear. In the evening of the third day they left the cave. Abu Bakr's servant brought round

the camels and they took the road to Medina.

The news of the Holy Prophet's escape had already reached Medina and the people were anxiously waiting for him. After thirteen days' journey, the party arrived at Quba, a small village near Medina. The Holy Prophet alighted here, and here the residents of Medina came to greet him and welcome him to their city. The people were glad that the Holy Prophet had come to live in their midst. The Prophet stayed at Quba for a few days and built a mosque there. Having rested from his long journey, he went to the city. The Muslims of Medina put on their arms and came to receive him with military honours. Everybody was happy and great excitement prevailed in the city. Women gathered on the house-tops and sang their song of welcome: "The moon has risen on our heights." The Prophet's great-grandmother Salma was from the family of Bani Najjar, and this family gave him a special welcome. Their little daughters stood in a row and sang: "We are the daughters of Bani Najjar and Muhammad is our cousin and a very good cousin is he." The Holy Prophet, who loved

little children with all his heart, went up to them and said, "Do you love me?" "Yes, we do," replied the little innocents. "And I love you too," said the Holy Prophet.

Thus, with drums beating and music playing and shouts of welcome from all present the Prophet of Islam entered the city—as King of Medina. Peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him!

This event of the flight from Mecca is most important in the history of Islam, because from this time Islam began to make very rapid progress. It is called *Hijra* or Emigration. The Muslim era is dated from this event. It is written A. H. (which means *Anno Hijri* or the Year of Emigration). Those Muslims who fled from Mecca and took refuge in Medina are called *Muhajiroon* or Refugees, and the Muslims of Medina who gave them the refuge are called *Ansar* or Helpers. Peace be upon them all! The event took place early in the thirteenth year of prophet-hood and the entry into Medina in September, 622 A. D. Ali also escaped from Mecca and joined the Holy Prophet a few days after his arrival at Quba.

CHAPTER X

AT MEDINA

The two tribes of Aus and Khazraj that lived in Medina have already been mentioned. There was great enmity between them. Only six years before the arrival of the Holy Prophet, they had fought a great battle, in which large numbers were killed on both sides. Peace was made, but enmity remained, and there was fear that war might break out between them at any time. The last war had made them very weak, and both parties desired peace. But there was no government in the city and no ruler to keep them at peace. Therefore, they desired to make one of themselves king over Medina. Their choice fell upon Abdullah bin Ubai, a chief of the Khazraj tribe. Abdullah was a coward, and like all cowards he was a hypocrite and a liar. For a hypocrite it is necessary that he should be able to make fine speeches. Abdullah could make very fine speeches. The people were deceived by his smooth talk and thought, he

was a good man. Both sides respected him. His influence was great in Medina, and it is said, they had made a crown of gold for him. But before he was made king and could wear the crown, the Holy Prophet arrived at Medina. As you know, when the sun rises in the morning from the east, the moon loses its light and the stars vanish out of sight. So it happened at Medina. Before the sun of Muhammad's glory the little light of Abdullah bin Ubai grew dim and vanished.

The Holy Prophet was the chief of the Muslims. The city of Medina was rapidly becoming Muslim and Medina wanted a king to keep peace between her people. Therefore, from the time the Holy Prophet entered the city, he became its king. Abdullah wished to be king too. But his hopes were now lost and he was angry. He was a coward and could not fight for the kingship openly. Therefore, he became secretly an enemy of the Holy Prophet, while openly he called himself a friend. He was a hypocrite and remained a constant danger to the Muslims as long as he lived. Under the Prophet's influence the mutual enmity of the Aus and Khazraj gradually died

out and they became one united people.

There were also Jews at Medina. There were three tribes of them: Bani Qainuqa, Bani Nazeer and Bani Quraiza. They were artisans, goldsmiths and merchants, cultivated land and owned gardens of date-palms. They lent money on interest and were very rich. Formerly, the government of Medina was in their hands. But their power was overthrown by the Arabs. There was, therefore, an old enmity between them and the Arabs. For some time they were friendly towards the Holy Prophet. But later they became his enemies. Their story will be told in the next chapter.

The first thing the Holy Prophet did at Medina was to purchase a piece of land for building a mosque on it. He chose a plot. It belonged to two orphan boys who wished to give it free. But the Holy Prophet did not like to cause any loss to them and paid the price. The Holy Prophet himself took part in building the mosque and worked with others, as he always did. He could work better than anybody else and was proud of it. He was their leader, their teacher and their king.

His followers requested that he should not do heavy work like a labourer. But the Holy Prophet did not like to sit idle while the others worked. So he worked with them, for it was his teaching that honest work makes a man noble, even if it is ordinary work, and the noblest is he who works most.

The mosque was completed in a short time. Its walls were of mud and unburnt bricks and the roof was of palm leaves. It was a very simple building, for the Holy Prophet liked simplicity. Houses for his family were built next to the mosque. They were just as simple. On one side of the mosque a raised platform of earth was built and a shed was put on it. Poor men who had no homes of their own lived in it. Their numbers sometimes rose very high, and the Holy Prophet had much difficulty in feeding them all. When one of them married, he had to go and build a house for himself somewhere else. The Holy Prophet taught them and sent them as preachers of Islam to distant tribes.

Most of the Refugees had left their properties at Mecca. They had become poor and means had to be found for their liveli-

hood. The Holy Prophet appealed to the Muslims of Medina and asked that every one of them should take one Refugee home with him and make him his "brother." This brotherhood meant that the *Ansar* should divide their properties equally with the Refugees. It was a great sacrifice, but the Medina Muslims cheerfully agreed to it. Every one divided his property,—house, land, gardens and everything else—into two equal parts, kept one part with himself and gave the other half to his Refugee "brother". It was a noble thing on their part to do so, and shows how they loved Islam and how willing they were to obey the Holy Prophet. The arrangement was, however, temporary. When the Muslims obtained more lands, these were given to the Refugees and the properties of the *Ansar* were returned to them. Besides, the Meccans were born traders. They set up as shopkeepers and some of them became wealthy merchants in a few years.

The first few months of life at Medina were of great hardship. The climate of Medina was new to the Meccan Muslims and many were laid up with fever. Also, there

was much poverty. But the Holy Prophet suffered most of all. He would not accept charity and he spent his own money freely among the poor. Like a true and faithful leader he always thought of others first and of himself last. Sometimes he had nothing to eat for two days together. He would be fainting with hunger, but his pride forbade him to speak of it to others.

But Islam made rapid progress at Medina. No doubt, here too there were enemies like Abdullah bin Ubai and his party of hypocrites and the Jews. But he was free to preach and meetings and prayers were held openly in the mosque. There was no need to hide any more. Daily the Muslims gathered in the mosque and daily the Great Prophet taught and won more converts to Islam. People who were formerly afraid to join him now came forward without fear and accepted Islam, and the number of Muslims increased rapidly. But the fear of the Quraish was still there.

CHAPTER XI

THE BATTLE OF BADR

The Quraish were afraid that if the Holy Prophet went to Medina, Islam would become strong and their power would be lost. Medina was situated near the road to Syria, and it was easy for the Muslims, when at Medina, to stop their trade with that country. The trade with Syria was a matter of life and death to the Quraish, and if that trade were stopped, they would be ruined. Therefore, they tried to kill the Prophet and when he escaped from Mecca, they put a price upon his head. They said, they would give one hundred camels to any man who brought Muhammad's head. The Prophet knew it. He knew that any man might come and kill him to earn the big prize. Therefore, when he slept at night, armed men kept watch over his house.

Shortly after the Holy Prophet's arrival at Medina, the chief of the Quraish wrote to Abdullah bin Ubai: "You have given

refuge to Muhammad. Either slay him or turn him out of Medina. Otherwise we shall attack your city, kill you all and carry away your women." All the Arab tribes were under the influence of the Quraish and they had turned them all against the Muslims, especially the tribes that lived between Mecca and Medina. Some men of distant tribes had become Muslims, but they could not come to the Holy Prophet for fear of these tribes. It was plain, therefore, that there was war between Mecca and Medina, and there was fear that the Meccans and the tribes friendly to them might attack Medina at any time.

The Holy Prophet was the King of Medina and it was his duty to protect the city from attack. First of all, he called the people of Medina together, Jews as well as the Arabs and the Refugees from Mecca, and made an agreement with them, namely :

1. That the Jews would be free to follow their own religion.

2. That the Jews and the Muslims would be friends towards one another.

3. That the Jews and the Muslims and

the non-Muslims of Medina would help one another in case of war.

4. That none of them would give protection to the Quraish.

5. If any attack was made upon Medina, they would all fight together to defend it, and

6. That they would obey the Prophet in all things.

The Holy Prophet made two more decisions. He decided to stop the trade of the Quraish in order to compel them to make peace. Secondly, he decided to make treaties of friendship with the tribes that lived around Medina. For this purpose parties of fifty or sixty men were sent to different tribes and made treaties with them. Some tribes agreed that they would help neither the Quraish nor the Muslims. Some other tribes agreed that if they were attacked by any enemy, Muslims would help them, and if the Muslims were attacked by their enemies, they would come to the help of the Muslims. The first year of Hijra passed in making these treaties. Not a drop of blood was shed, and not a pennyworth goods of any

tribe were touched.

Early in the second year the Quraish made the first attack. They made a raid upon the pastures of Medina and carried away the camels of the Holy Prophet. They were pursued but escaped. Shortly after, the Holy Prophet himself went at the head of two hundred men towards Yanbu. Yanbu is a sea-port on the Red Sea and those who want to go to Medina land at this port. There he made a defensive alliance with the tribes. This alliance was dangerous to the Meccans' trade, for the road to Syria passed through the territory of these tribes.

On his return to Medina, the Holy Prophet sent a small party of about eight or twelve men towards Mecca to watch the movements of the Quraish. At a day's journey from Mecca they met with a party of the Quraish, killed one, captured two, seized their camels laden with merchandise and returned to Medina. The relations of the prisoners came from Mecca to obtain their freedom. They paid ransom for them and they were set free. But one of them refused to go, became a Muslim and settled down at

Medina. Such things happened frequently. The Holy Prophet was kind, his speech was sweet and his treatment of others was so good that many who came as enemies stayed with him as friends for ever. Peace and the blessings of God be upon him!

A few weeks after this event, news reached Medina that an army of 1,000 strong was marching from Mecca. A rich caravan laden with goods worth £50,000 was returning from Syria. They had a fear that the Muslims would attack the caravan and seize the goods, and the army had come for its protection. The Holy Prophet called a council of war and asked them whether they were willing to fight. Some were afraid. The Quraish were too many and the Muslims too few. It would be like walking into the jaws of death, they said. But others were prepared to lay down their lives for Islam and fight any army. By their agreement, the *Ansar* were obliged to fight only if they were attacked in Medina. Would they agree to go out and fight? The Holy Prophet turned to them. "We?" said one of their chiefs, "we would jump into the sea if Your Majesty asked us to do so. Lead!"

The decision was made and the command was given. All Muslims capable of bearing arms were called out to gather under the flag of Islam. There was great enthusiasm at Medina. Even young boys came out. They were turned back. They wept because they too wanted to fight for Islam. But they were too young and could not be taken to the battle-field. There was fear lest the Jews and the hypocrites should make any trouble in Medina in the absence of the Holy Prophet. Therefore, the Holy Prophet appointed a deputy over Medina and another over Quba. After making these arrangements, he set out towards Mecca at the head of 313 men. About eighty of them were Refugees and the rest were *Ansar*. This brave little army had between them only two horses and seventy camels, upon which they rode by turns.

The Meccan army, on the other hand, came with great pomp and pride. They felt very sure of their victory. Wherever they halted, they killed ten camels to feed the army, played music and drank and danced. When they had gone a few days' journey, they

received a message from Abu Sufian, the leader of the caravan which was coming from Syria, that the caravan was safe and that the army should return to Mecca. Many people now wished to return. But Abu Jahl, who was ever thirsty for the Prophet's blood, would not agree. He made fiery speeches, called those men cowards who wanted to return and urged them to go forward. "We will go as far as Badr," he said, "if we find the Muslims there, we will fight them and kill their Prophet. If we do not find the enemy, we will stop there, eat and drink and make merry for three days, and then we shall return. In this way, we shall win great honour among the Arabs." They agreed. But some men returned, and the remaining 960 men marched towards Badr. Among them were 100 horsemen, all clad in coats of mail.

The small village of Badr is about seventy miles south-west of Medina on the road that leads from Mecca to Syria. Four or five days after leaving Medina the Holy Prophet reached this village. The Meccans also arrived about the same time, and on the following day, March 16, 624 A. D., the battle of Badr

was fought. The Holy Prophet himself put the army in order of battle. Three great warriors of Mecca first entered the field and Hamza, Ali and Obaida went out to meet them. Hamza and Ali killed their opponents, Obaida was wounded, but his opponent was killed by the other two. The battle then became general. Many brave deeds were done on both sides, but before half the day was gone, the Meccan army of 960 strong was broken and severely defeated by the small army of 313 Muslims. The Quraish lost seventy men killed and as many taken prisoners, while the Muslims lost only fourteen men. The rest of the Quraish fled from the field, leaving all their baggage and camp property in the hand of the victors. Abu Jahl and the other chiefs of Mecca lay dead on the field.

It was a great victory, and the battle of Badr is considered the most important in the history of Islam. The Quraish were the chief opponents of Islam. Their power was broken and the whole of Arabia began to look up to Muhammad (peace be on him) as a great general and a powerful king.

The Holy Prophet now buried the dead,

his own as well as those of the Quraish, and returned to Medina. The heathen Arabs used to kill their prisoners. But the Muslims treated them kindly, and the Holy Prophet permitted them to purchase their freedom. Those who were rich paid the ransom and went home. Those who could read and write were asked to teach the children of Medina and were then set free. Those who were too poor to pay nor could teach were let go out of charity.

Among the prisoners was the Holy Prophet's son-in-law Abul-Aas who had married his eldest daughter, Lady Zainab. The Muslims did not like to take ransom from him and set him free out of their love for the Holy Prophet. Lady Zainab was still at Mecca, because her husband who loved her well had not allowed her to go to Medina. Now he sent her to the Holy Prophet. Some time later he himself became a Muslim and settled down at Medina. The Prophet's second daughter Roqayya had been married to Usman. She fell sick and died while the Holy Prophet was at Badr. Usman then married the Prophet's third daughter Umm-i-Kulsoom. Some months

after the battle of Badr, the Prophet's youngest daughter, Lady Fatima, was married to Ali. For her piety, charity and many other virtues, her name is very famous in the history of Islam. She became the mother of two sons, the well-known Imams, Hasan and Husain. Those who are called Sayyads are descended from her through these two sons.

I have said in the last chapter that there were also Jews at Medina. There was ancient enmity between them and the Arabs. So long as the Aus and the Khazraj tribes were divided, they exercised great power over them. Many of them were in their debt. The Jews were educated and clever, while the Arabs were ignorant and simple. They desired that the two Arab tribes should remain disunited, so that they themselves should remain powerful. But when Islam came, the Aus and Khazraj became united and powerful. The power of the Jews was broken and they were angry. Also, the Meccans wrote to the Jews that they should kill the Holy Prophet. In a short time they became bitter enemies of the Holy Prophet. They abused him. They laughed

at the Holy Quran. They spread scandals against innocent Muslim women. They made mischief in the city and tried to make Muslims fight among themselves. By their treaty with the Holy Prophet they were to consider the Quraish of Mecca as their enemies and to be friends with the Muslims. Instead, they entered into a secret league with the Quraish and looked for an opportunity to slay the Holy Prophet.

Bani Qainuqa were the first Jewish tribe to take up arms against the Holy Prophet in open war. A Jew insulted a Muslim woman. He was killed by a Muslim. The Muslim was killed by another Jew and thus the war started. All wars started like that in Arabia. The Holy Prophet tried to make peace, but the Jews insulted him and called him to war. They were besieged in their forts. The siege lasted fifteen days and then they surrendered. They agreed to accept any punishment which the Holy Prophet chose. Abdullah bin Ubai, the chief of the hypocrites who was their friend, requested that they should be banished. So they were banished to Syria. This event took place a few weeks after the battle of Badr.

CHAPTER XII.

THE BATTLE OF OHOD.

We now return to the Quraish. They had lost seventy men in the battle of Badr. Sorrow was in every home, and every citizen of Mecca was thirsting for revenge. The leadership of the Quraish was now in the hands of Abu Sufian who, soon after, made a raid upon Medina, burnt a few houses and hay-stacks in a village three miles from the city and returned to Mecca. He was pursued but escaped.

Great preparations were now made at Mecca. Help was taken from other tribes and money was spent freely. One whole year was spent upon these preparations. In March, 625 A. D., Abu Sufian marched from Mecca with an army of 3,000 strong. Among them were 200 horsemen under the command of the great Khalid bin Walid and 700 warriors wore coats of mail. Fifteen ladies of high families also went with the troops to fire up the warriors with their songs on the battle-field. They made their camp on the

plain at the foot of the hill of Ohod, a few miles from Medina.

It was Thursday. The Holy Prophet learnt of their arrival and their numbers. Strong guards were placed at the gates of the city and armed men kept watch over the Prophet's house at night. On Friday morning he called the Muslims together and consulted them. The Holy Prophet was for staying in the city and defending it from inside. But they decided to go out and fight in the open field. In the afternoon, after the Friday prayer was over, the army marched towards Ohod.

According to the treaty, the Jews, too, ought to have gone to the battle. But they refused. Abdullah bin Ubai, the hypocrite, went with the Muslims. Early on Saturday morning the Holy Prophet, keeping the hill of Ohod behind him, arranged his forces in order of battle. Suddenly, Abdullah bin Ubai, the coward, left the field with his 300 men and returned to the city. The Muslim army was now only 700 men, of whom one hundred were clad in coats of mail. Lest there should be any attack from behind while the Muslims were fighting the enemy in front, the Holy

Prophet posted a party of fifty archers at a suitable place. He gave them strict orders that they should not leave the place for any reason, even if the Muslim army was victorious, until he gave orders.

As usual, the battle began with single fights. A Quraishite warrior came and called for a warrior. Ali leapt forward like a lion and cut him down. Another Quraishite came, and Hamza, shouting "I am the son of Abdul Muttalib," cut the fellow in two. The battle then became general. It was an unequal fight. There were 3,000 men on one side and only 650 on the other. But these fought like lions. Before long, they broke the enemy's lines and put them to flight. The Muslims were victorious and began to plunder the enemy's camp.

Just then occurred a fatal mistake which turned victory into defeat. The fifty archers, who had been told not to leave their post on any account, left their place and fell to plundering. Khalid saw their mistake and with a force of cavalry attacked the Muslims in their rear. The foot soldiers of the Quraish also returned to the attack and the Muslims

were surrounded on all sides. A fierce battle followed. Many Muslims were slain, but they went on fighting bravely. Presently, the cry arose that the Prophet was slain. The cry was false, but it made many Muslims lose their hearts. But within ten or fifteen minutes, the Holy Prophet was found safe and sound. The Quraish hated the Prophet most and wished to kill him alone. Therefore, their whole army turned towards the spot where he was standing. They attacked the Prophet and wounded him severely. They would have killed him, but the Muslims came up in time. They surrounded him on all sides and built a solid wall around him with their bodies. Arrows and swords fell thick and fast, but none could reach the Prophet. At last, the Holy Prophet and the Muslim army went up the hill and the enemy was beaten back.

The Muslim losses were heavy. Seventy men were killed. Hamza was slain. While the men were fighting at the foot of the hill, the savage women of the Quraish did a horrible thing. They cut off the ears and noses of the Muslims who had been killed. Hind, Abu Sufian's wife, made a garland of them and put

it round her neck. She cut open the body of Hamza, tore out the liver and began to chew it. Such was her hatred of him. There were also women in the Muslim army. They gave drinks to the warriors and looked after the wounded. Lady Fatima washed the wounds from the face of the Holy Prophet and stopped the blood with great difficulty. After taking a little rest, they buried their dead and returned to Medina.

Had the Quraish won the victory? They were not sure. The Muslims were still strong and could fight and the Holy Prophet was still alive. They thought of making another attack, but the Holy Prophet sent a party after them and they fled to Mecca. There was much weeping over the dead in Medina. The Holy Prophet comforted them and told them to have patience.

Defeat in the battle of Ohod had a very bad effect on the desert tribes. They used to gather annually at Mecca at Hajj time and were naturally under the influence of the Quraish. Robbery was their profession and Islam was its strongest enemy. They saw that if Islam became strong, they would not be

able to do their plundering. The great victory at Badr had put some fear of the Muslims in their hearts. But the defeat at Ohod made them raise their heads again. They began to make raids upon Medina, and the fourth year of Hijra was all taken up with defending the city from their raids.

These savages were very treacherous. They came to Medina, told lies and said, they wished to become Muslims. They took Muslim missionaries with them to teach them Islam and then killed them all. On one occasion, the chief of a tribe came to the Holy Prophet and begged that some missionaries should be sent with him to preach to his people. The Holy Prophet sent seventy men who were all learned in the Quran. They were treacherously slain and only one man escaped to tell the tale. On another occasion, messengers came from two tribes, saying that their tribes had accepted Islam and they wanted teachers. The Holy Prophet sent ten men with them. When they had gone far from Medina, they were suddenly surrounded by 200 men. Eight of them were killed and two were made prisoners.

The prisoners were sold to the Meccans who executed them publicly. They met their death very bravely. One of them, Khubaib by name, died singing of his love for Islam. The other martyr, Zaid by name, was asked by Abu Sufian before his death, "Would you not be glad if Muhammad were slain in your place?" "By God", replied Zaid, "I would rather die than see a thorn injure the foot of Muhammad"! Such was the spirit of early Muslims, and such was the love that Muhammad had put in their hearts. Peace be upon them all!

Not only the desert tribes were up in arms, but the Jews of Medina also were looking for an opportunity to kill the Holy Prophet. There were two tribes of them still in Medina, Bani Nazeer and Bani Quraiza. The Bani Nazeer had secret relations with the Meccans. They helped the Meccans in their wars against the Muslims, although by treaty they ought to have helped the Muslims and should have had no connection with the Meccans. On one occasion, they asked the Holy Prophet to come and talk with their priests. If the priests

were convinced, they said, they would accept Islam. The Holy Prophet replied, he could not trust them until they made a new treaty. This they refused to do. On another occasion they asked him again. The Holy Prophet went, but found that they were preparing to kill him. So he returned.

A few months after the battle of Ohod, the Holy Prophet went to the quarter of Bani Nazeer to collect some money to pay blood money for two men who had been killed by accident. They asked him to wait. The Holy Prophet stood in the shade of a wall. A Jew went up to the house-top to throw a millstone upon his head. The Holy Prophet came to know of his evil intention in time and immediately returned to his own place. A message was then sent to them to leave Medina. They refused and war was declared.

The Muslims were called to arms and the Bani Nazeer were besieged. Abdullah bin Ubai, the hypocrite, sent them word that he and their Jewish brethren, the Quraiza, would come to their help. But nobody came and the Nazeer surrendered after standing

fifteen days' siege. They were banished from Medina and were told to take away as much of their property as they could carry on their camels. They left with great pomp, with drums beating and women singing and playing upon their tambourines. It was the jolliest procession the people of Medina had ever seen.

CHAPTER XIII

THE BATTLE OF THE DITCH

Some of the leading men of Bani Nazeer settled down at Khaibar, a rich valley in the north of Medina which was then in the possession of Jews. From there they began to spread mischief in the country. They made an alliance with the Quraish, visited many tribes and induced them to prepare for a great battle against the Holy Prophet. Some of the tribes gathered their forces and prepared to attack Medina. The Holy Prophet sent troops against them and put them to flight. On one occasion the Prophet himself went against a tribe and captured 600 of them. But he set them free without taking any ransom.

The plans of the Jews of Khaibar and of the Quraish of Mecca were at last ripe and in January 627 A.D. they marched upon Medina with an army of 10,000 men. Many tribes took part in this attack. It was like a combination of many nations to kill one man—Muhammad (peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him!) Abu Sufian was their commander-in-chief. Our Prophet was a wide-awake man. He kept himself informed of everything that took place in the country. He knew exactly how many tribes were against him and how many men were coming to the attack. As soon as he received information that Abu Sufian was coming with a large army, he called his council of war. Salman, a Persian gentleman who had come to Medina and become a Muslim, was also there. His advice was that a deep ditch should be dug, which the enemy should not be able to cross. This advice was accepted by all. Medina was well protected on three sides. It was open to attack only on the fourth side and on this side they dug a deep ditch. This was a new method of warfare in Arabia and for this reason this battle is

known as the "Battle of the Ditch". In the Holy Quran it is called the "Battle of Allies," because many tribes took part in it against the Muslims.

The Holy Prophet worked as usual with the others. Covered all over with dust, weary and hungry, he worked from morning to evening without rest. In twenty days, before the enemy arrived, the moat was ready. Women and children were put in a fort, and the Muslim army, 3,000 strong, was posted at different points behind the moat. A new treaty had been made with the Quraiza, the Jews, a year before and it was their duty to join the Muslims in the defence of the city. But they broke the treaty and joined the enemy. Lest they should attack the Muslims from behind, the Holy Prophet posted a force of 200 Muslims to watch their movements.

The battle began. The enemy could not cross the moat. Therefore, they fought with arrows and stones. Thus they went on day after day without doing any harm. The ditch was narrow at one point, and one day four Meccan horsemen jumped over it. They

challenged warriors from among the Muslims. Amru bin Abdood, who came foremost, was regarded as a very great warrior. The fiery young hero Ali, the "Lion of God," answered his challenge. Amru was the first to attack. His sword cut through Ali's shield and struck him on the forehead. (The shields of the Arabs were made of wood and covered with leather.) Ali struck and cut the fellow down. Two others were also killed. The fourth man fell into the ditch and was shot at with arrows. He cried out, "O ye Muslims ! Stop shooting arrows, for I want a gentleman's death." Thereupon, Ali jumped into the ditch and cut off his head with the sword. To die with the sword is to die a gentleman's death.

When the men were fighting across the ditch, the Jews were preparing to attack the fort in which Muslim women and children had been placed for safety. One Jew came to the gate and looked for a way to attack. The poet Hassaan bin Sabit, who had been posted to guard them, was a coward and could do nothing. Arab women were brave and a woman's courage saved the fort. Lady Safyya, the Holy Prophet's aunt, took a tent

pole and broke the Jew's head with it. Then she cut off his head and cast it before the gate, so that the Jews should think that there were men in the fort. No more attacks were made on the women after that.

The siege lasted for nearly a month. It was winter and very cold. The Muslims suffered greatly from hunger, for no food could be brought from outside. The enemy's provisions were also over. It was no easy thing to provide food for ten thousand men and fodder for their camels and horses daily. They also suffered from cold and hunger. And one night a strong wind blew, which threw down their tents, turned over their cooking pots and created confusion in their camp. They lost heart, packed their goods and ran away. The Quraiza, who had joined the enemy, also returned to their fort. When the day broke, the place was clear and no enemy was to be seen anywhere. The battle of the Ditch was over and the field remained in the hands of the Muslims.

It was now necessary to punish the Jews. They had broken their treaty at a very dangerous time. They had joined the enemy,

whereas they ought to have stood by the Muslims in the defence of the city. By their treachery they had put the life of every man, woman and child in danger. While the Muslims were fighting to defend the city, they had tried to attack the fort, in which women and children had taken refuge. It was a very great crime, and by every law, ancient or modern, their punishment was death.

Therefore, as soon as the Meccans and their allies were gone, the Holy Prophet commanded the Muslim army to march upon the Quraiza. The Quraiza, instead of asking for forgiveness for their treachery, prepared for battle. Ali went forward to call them to peace. In reply, they abused the Holy Prophet. They were at once besieged. The siege lasted a month and then they surrendered.

They were in alliance with the Aus and the chief of the latter was Sa'ad bin Muaz, a Muslim gentleman. He had fought in the battle of the Ditch and was now lying wounded in the mosque. The Quraiza requested that their case should be decided by him. The

Holy Prophet granted their request. Sa'ad decided their case according to their own law of the Bible. The Bible says that when a place is captured after a siege, the men should be slain and the women and children should be made slaves. It is a very cruel law. But the Quraiza had not only been captured after a siege, they had also been guilty of very great crimes. Those crimes are always punished with death. They were traitors. They had been traitors at a time of great national danger, when the life of every Muslim was hanging in the balance. For such traitors there is only one punishment—that of death. That is the punishment given to-day and that was the punishment given in former times. Therefore, Sa'ad, the judge chosen by themselves, decided that the men of Quraiza should be slain and their women and children should be made slaves. The sentence was carried out, and from 400 to 600 men were killed.

Had the foolish wretches thrown themselves on the mercy of the Holy Prophet, perhaps their lives would have been spared.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE TRUCE OF HUDAIBIA.

Pilgrimages to Mecca are of two kinds : the great Hajj pilgrimage and *Omra*. The latter is much simpler than the former and may be called the lesser pilgrimage. In the year 6 of the Hijra the Holy Prophet decided to make the lesser pilgrimage in a sacred month, in which fighting was forbidden. In this month, even the worst enemies could travel in peace. The Holy Prophet hoped that the Meccans would not oppose. Accordingly, in February, 628 A. D., the Holy Prophet with 1,400 of his followers started towards Mecca.

But when the Quraish heard of his coming, they collected a great army and prepared for battle. The Holy Prophet put up his camp at a place called Hudaibia, one march from Mecca. You will remember that the Prophet's grandfather Abdul Muttalib had made a permanent alliance of friendship with the tribe of Bani Khuzaa. Therefore, they were still the Holy Prophet's allies. Now,

some of their men came to the Holy Prophet and told him that the Quraish were prepared for battle and would not permit him to enter Mecca. The Holy Prophet sent by them the following message to the Quraish: "Tell the Quraish, we have not come to fight. We have come only to make the *Omra*. The Quraish have suffered much by war. Tell them to make peace with me for a number of years. It is better that they should agree to make peace. But if they will not, I shall fight them till God decides the matter between us."

The message was given. The Quraish agreed and sent a man to settle the terms of the truce. But no agreement was made and he went back. The Holy Prophet then sent one of his own men. The Quraish killed his camel and were about to kill him also, but some good men saved him. The Quraish then sent a column of troops to attack the Muslims. They were all captured, but the Holy Prophet set them free. Then the Holy Prophet sent his son-in-law Usman to talk over the terms of the truce. They made him a prisoner and the news spread that he was

killed.

The Muslims were very angry when they heard this news. Everybody cried for revenge. The Holy Prophet sat down under a tree and asked for a pledge of death. One by one they came, put their hands in the hand of the Holy Prophet and swore: "We shall avenge the death of Usman or die." The news, however, proved false and Usman returned in safety.

The Quraish then sent another man, and after many speeches, the truce was made and an agreement was written. The terms were as follows:—

1. The Muslims should return to Medina without making *Omra*.

2. They could come the following year, stay for three days in Mecca and then return.

3. They should come without arms. They might bring their swords, but the swords should be in scabbards and the scabbards should be in bags.

4. The Arab tribes should be free to make alliances with whichever side they liked.

5. The Muslims who were in Mecca

should not be taken to Medina.

6. If any man, Muslim or non-Muslim, went from Mecca to Medina, he should be sent back to Mecca. But if any Muslim went to Mecca, "*he shall not be sent back.*"

The conditions were very hard upon the Muslims. There were some poor Muslims at Mecca whom the Quraish were treating very cruelly. The sixth condition was too unfair. The Muslims were very angry about it. They did not want such a treaty. "It is a shame to us", they said, "we are willing to fight." The Holy Prophet advised them to have patience. "The treaty is made and we cannot go back upon it," he said; "God Almighty will surely help us."

The Prophet was right. Peace be upon him! The treaty was really a great victory for Islam. In the Holy Quran it is called a "clear victory." The Holy Prophet wanted peace to preach Islam in the country. Had the Quraish left him in peace and made no war upon the Muslims, Islam would have spread by that time in the whole of Arabia. Now that peace was made, Muslims began to move about freely in the country. Mission-

aries were sent to distant tribes to preach Islam. Meccans themselves began to come to Medina for trade. They sat with Muslims, talked with them and learnt about Islam. In this way Islam began to spread rapidly in the country.

In a short time, the Meccans agreed to give up the sixth condition of the truce which was so unfair to the Muslims. It happened this way. A Muslim fled from Mecca and came to Medina. Two Meccans came to fetch him and he was sent back with them. On the way he killed one of them and fled to the sea coast. Some more Muslims fled from Mecca and joined him, and from there they made themselves a terror to the Meccans. They plundered their caravans and stopped their trade with Syria. The Meccans thereupon wrote to the Holy Prophet that they gave up the sixth condition. They would have no objection if the Muslims who fled from Mecca settled down at Medina. The Prophet, therefore, sent for the Muslims who had settled on the sea coast. They came to Medina and the road to Syria became open again.

So far, Islam had been preached only in Arabia. But the Holy Prophet had come as a teacher to all the world. Now there was peace in the country. Therefore, the Holy Prophet thought of preaching Islam to the outside world. For this purpose he sent letters to the chiefs of distant Arab tribes as well as to the Roman Emperor, the Persian Emperor, the King of Abyssinia, the ruler of Egypt and to Haris the Ghassanide, who was now a mere chief under the Roman Emperor. One of these letters exists to this day. Another is said to be in the possession of a Turkish prince. In these letters the rulers of those lands were called upon to accept Islam, so that their subjects should also follow their example and become Muslims.

The Roman Emperor received the Holy Prophet's messenger with courtesy. The letter was read in the court. Abu Sufian, who was then the chief enemy of Islam, was also in Syria at the time. He had gone there as usual with a trade caravan. The Emperor sent for him and questioned him about the Holy Prophet. Abu Sufian told him that the Prophet was a man of noble birth, that his followers

were increasing greatly, that he always spoke the truth and never broke a promise and that he was always true to his agreements. "He teaches," continued Abu Sufian, "that we should worship the One true God alone and none other, that we should live clean and pure lives, speak the truth and be kind to our neighbours." The Emperor's heart was won over to Islam. But his officers and bishops were angry. He was afraid of them and for this reason he did not become Muslim.

The Persian Emperor, on the contrary, was very angry when he received the letter. He tore up the letter into pieces and insulted the name of the Holy Prophet. His governor in Yemen, however, came to Medina and entered Islam. A short time after this, the Emperor was killed by his own men.

The King of Abyssinia became Muslim. The ruler of Egypt wrote a kind letter in reply, sent presents, but did not accept Islam. Haris, the Ghassanide, was angry and gave threats of war.

In this year, two very famous men entered the fold of Islam: Khalid bin Walid and Amru bin Aas. Khalid had fought against

the Holy Prophet at Ohod and turned the Muslim victory into defeat. He quietly left Mecca one day and took the road to Medina. On the way, he met Amru bin Aas who asked Khalid where he was going. Khalid replied, he was going to Medina to become a Muslim. "So am I," said Amru. They came together to the Holy Prophet and became Muslims. A few years later, Khalid conquered Syria and Amru conquered Egypt for Islam.

CHAPTER XV

KHAIBAR

Next to Mecca, Khaibar was the greatest centre of opposition to Islam. Only Jews lived in this town. The fertile valleys of Taima, Fadak and Wadi-ul-Qura, situated near it, were also inhabited by the Jews. Khaibar was a strong place and had six forts. Some leading men of Bani Nazeer had also settled down here after their banishment from Medina. The Jews of Khaibar took part in the battle of the Ditch, and it was through their instigation that the Quraiza had entered the war against

the Muslims. Mecca was at peace now, but the Jews of Khaibar went on making mischief. They made leagues and conspiracies and instigated the tribes of Nejd to rise against the Muslims. Again and again, the Holy Prophet had to send troops to check the raids of the Beduins. On one occasion, they carried off twenty she-camels of the Holy Prophet along with the servant who tended them and his wife. The animals were recovered, but the raiders were let go.

The Jews of Khaibar were at the back of all these troubles. It was plain that so long as they had power, the Muslims would have no peace. The Holy Prophet tried to make peace with them, but they fell upon his messengers and tried to kill them. Therefore, early in 7 A. H. (August and September, 628 A. D.), the Holy Prophet took an army of 1,400 infantry and 200 cavalry and marched upon Khaibar.

Khaibar is 200 miles from Medina. After a fortnight's march, the Muslim army arrived near the city on an afternoon. Night was spent there and early on the following morning, they appeared under the walls of the

city. The Jews were surprised. They had not thought that the Prophet would be upon them in so short a time. The Holy Prophet still hoped that they would agree to make peace. But his hopes proved vain and the Jews prepared for war.

Thereupon, the city was attacked. There were 20,000 Jews in the city. But the Muslims were fighting under the most masterful general of Arabia—Muhammad, on whom be peace—and they fought bravely. Five of their forts were stormed and taken. The sixth fort, which was called Qamoos, was very strong. Many attacks were made upon it, but all failed. Marhab, the commander of this fort, was one of the most famous warriors of the day. He was strong and brave and was considered to be equal to one thousand men in war.

Ali's eyes were sore and he had taken no part in the battle. But one morning the Holy Prophet commanded him to go and attack the fort. As he went, Marhab came forth, with a verse on his lips, to fight him in single combat. He shouted:

"Khaibar knows that I am Marhab,
Brave and tried and clothed in steel."

The Arabs were born poets and every Arab could make a verse now and then to suit the occasion. But Ali was a real poet, and he answered Marhab with a verse of his own :

" My mother called me *Idon* *
And a lion of the desert am I,
Ugly, wild and fierce as he."

As they came closer, Ali gave such a blow with his famous sword *Zulfiqar* that Marhab's head was cut in two. At his death the Jews lost heart and the fort *Qamoos* was taken.

Khaibar was now in the hands of the Muslims. The Jews requested that they should be left in possession of their houses and lands and that they would pay half the produce of their lands and gardens in rent. Their request was granted and they were left in possession of the city. In this battle, the Jews lost 93 men killed and the Muslims only 15.

After the conquest, the Holy Prophet stopped at *Khaibar* for a few days. One day a Jewess asked him to dinner. The Holy

**Haider*, one of the names of Ali. *Hazrat Ali* was a handsome man. He called himself 'ugly' in this verse to strike fear.

Prophet accepted and went. He had put just one morsel in his mouth when he found that there was poison in the dinner. He withdrew his hand and questioned the woman. She confessed that she had put poison in the food because she wanted to kill him. The Holy Prophet never took personal revenge, so he forgave her and let her go. But one of his companions had eaten more of the food and he died. The woman was, therefore, executed for murder.

The Jewish village of Fadak, not far from Khaibar, submitted without fighting. Some fighting took place at Wadi-ul-Qura. But the Jews soon laid down their arms and submitted. The two places were given the same terms as Khaibar. The Holy Prophet then returned to Medina.

You will remember that one hundred Muslims had migrated to Abyssinia in the fifth year of Prophethood. Some of them returned when the Holy Prophet migrated to Medina. The rest arrived after the conquest of Khaibar. Ali's brother Ja'afar also returned with this party.

One year was now passed over the truce of

Hudaibia. It was time for making the lesser pilgrimage. The Holy Prophet called upon those Muslims, who had been to Hudaibia the year before and had taken part in the pledge of death, to get ready for the journey. The *Ansar* had not visited Mecca and the Refugees had not seen their homes for seven years. Therefore, they were very glad to go. The party left their arms eight miles from Mecca in the care of 200 horsemen and entered the city. The Quraish did not wish to see the Muslims. Therefore, they had all gone away to the hills and left the city empty. The Holy Prophet and his companions remained three days in Mecca according to the treaty. At the end of the third day, they left and returned to Medina.

In the year 629 A. D. (8 A. H.) occurred a sorrowful incident. When the Holy Prophet had sent letters to the Persian and Roman Emperors and to other chiefs and kings, he had also sent one to Sharjeel bin Amru, the Arab chief of Bostra in Syria and a vassal of the Roman Emperor. Sharjeel was a Christian and was so angry on receiving the letter

that he killed the Holy Prophet's messenger. To kill a messenger is a most barbarous crime which cannot be forgiven. To avenge this wrong, the Holy Prophet prepared an army of 3,000 strong and gave its command to Zaid, son of Harisa.

Zaid had been a slave of Lady Khadija and had been given his freedom by the Holy Prophet. In the army were men like Ali's brother Ja'afar and the great soldier Khalid bin Walid. These were men of very high birth. There were other noblemen in the army. They were all placed under the command of a freed man. The people talked and said, men of high birth should not be put under a man who had been a slave in his early life. When the Holy Prophet heard of it, he spoke to them. "Our religion is Islam," he said, "and in Islam it is worth that counts and not mere birth. And it is the duty of a Muslim to obey his commander, whoever he may be. Besides, Zaid is quite fit to command." They were silenced. The Holy Prophet further commanded that if Zaid was killed in the battle, Ja'afar should take up the command,

and in case of his death, Abdullah bin Rawaha, a gentlemen of Medina, should become the commander.

The battle took place at Muta on the Syrian border. Sharjeel had collected a huge force of 100,000 men. But the Muslims were not afraid and made the attack. Zaid was slain in the battle and Ja'afar took up the command. He too fell fighting and so did the third commander Abdullah. Khalid then took up the command. He was a most fierce warrior and it is said, he broke eight swords in that fight. But 3,000 could hardly be a match for 100,000 men and the best that Khalid could do was to retreat in order and bring the men back in safety to Medina.

Thus ended this sorrowful affair. The Holy Prophet grieved much over the men who had been killed, especially over young Ja'afar who was his cousin and very dear to him.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE CONQUEST OF MECCA.

The Holy Prophet was one day sitting in the mosque at Medina when suddenly a cry arose outside. Someone was reading verses :—

“ Have no fear. I will remind Muhammad of the treaty that was made between us and his family. Come, O Prophet of God : come to our help, and call your men to help.”

They were forty men of the tribe of Bani Khuzaa who had come riding upon fast dromedaries. They had come to remind the Holy Prophet of the alliance which his grandfather Abdul Muttalib had made with them. They wanted his help. Their story was this : The tribe of Bani Bakr, who were their neighbours and ancient enemies, had entered into an alliance with the Quraish after the truce of Hudaibia. As the Quraish were at peace with the Muslims and their allies, so the Bani Bakr too, being the allies of the Quraish, ought to have remained at peace with them. But they

broke the peace and made a sudden attack upon the Bani Khuzaa. Ikramah son of Abu Jahl, Safwan brother of Abu Sufian and some other chiefs of the Quraish also fought with the Bani Bakr. The truce of Hudaibia was thus broken. But that was not their only crime. Bani Khuzaa went into the sacred territory (*Haram*) of the Kaaba where it was forbidden to fight or shed blood. But the Bani Bakr and the Quraish pursued them even into the sacred territory and killed large numbers of them there.

The Holy Prophet was sorry to hear their story. He sent a message to the Quraish: "Here are three conditions. Take your choice and do one of them. (1) Pay the blood-money for the men you have slain, or (2) withdraw your protection from the Bani Bakr, or (3) declare the truce of Hudaibia as ended."

The Quraish chose the third and told the Holy Prophet's messenger that the truce was no more. But when the messenger had left, they thought they had done a foolish thing. Therefore, they sent Abu Sufian to Medina to renew the treaty. He came, but the Holy Prophet gave

no answer. He went to Hazrat Abu Bakr. He went to Hazrat Omar. He went to Lady Fatima. But none would listen to him. Last of all he went to Hazrat Ali. He too could do nothing for him and Abu Sufian returned to Mecca a disappointed man.

The day for the final decision had now arrived. The Holy Prophet ordered the Muslims of Medina and the neighbouring tribes to prepare for war, and in January, 630 A.D., (8 A.H.) a powerful army of 10,000 fully armed men marched from Medina. They encamped within a few miles of Mecca. Orders were given that the army should spread out and light fires. As the night fell, the whole desert seemed to be alight with fires. It appeared as if a very large army had come. The Quraish knew that the Muslim army had arrived. They sent Abu Sufian to see for himself and make sure. He was caught and brought before the Holy Prophet. The army requested that he should be put to death. But the Holy Prophet wanted no blood to be shed. An interesting conversation then took place. "Abu Sufian!" asked the Holy Prophet, "would you not believe that there is no other

God but One?" "If there had been, he would have been of use to us to-day," replied Abu Sufian. He accepted Islam.

Morning came and the army advanced upon Mecca. Abu Sufian stood on a hill to watch the army pass. Columns upon columns, each under its own flag and men clad in steel went swinging past. Abu Sufian stood in wonder. "The might of thy nephew is great," he said to the Prophet's uncle Abbas, who was with him. "Nay, but he is the Prophet of Allah," replied Abbas. Last of all came the *Ansar*. On seeing Abu Sufian their commander Sa'ad bin Ibada said, "Mecca shall know the keen edge of our swords to-day." The words were carried to the Holy Prophet. He wanted no bloodshed. He at once took the command from Sa'ad and gave it to his son. Abu Sufian was sent into the city to offer peace to the inhabitants. A proclamation was made in Mecca that whoever took refuge in the house of Abu Sufian or closed his own door or laid down his arms would be safe.

The Holy Prophet entered Mecca by one gate and the army under the command of Khalid entered by another. A party of the

Quraish under the leadership of Ikramah, son of Abu Jahl, attacked the army and killed two Muslims. Out came the Muslim swords and the enemy fled, leaving thirteen dead behind. The Holy Prophet was very sorry over the incident. But it could not be helped.

The Kaaba was now cleared. Idols were broken and thrown out. Pictures on the walls of the Kaaba were wiped out, and the place was made fit for Islamic worship. The Holy Prophet then made a great speech. There is no god but One, he said, and all men are equal. The nobility of a man depends upon his worth, on his conduct, on the purity of his life and not on his birth. Blood feuds are a sinful thing, he declared, because they are the cause of wars and bloodshed, and henceforth they are all forbidden.

The chief men of the Quraish were now gathered before him. They were helpless like prisoners. There were those among them who had spread thorns and dug pits in his path and thrown dust upon him. There were those who had nearly killed his eldest daughter Zainab. There were others who had persecuted and tortured his companions.

They had tried to kill the Holy Prophet himself. They had driven him and his companions from their homes and they had gone to fight against him and instigated others to do the same. Now, they were all there present before him helpless like prisoners. The Holy Prophet turned to them and said in a loud voice: "Ye men of the Quraish! Do you know what I am going to do to you?" With one voice they cried: "Thou art a noble brother and the son of a noble brother."

The Holy Prophet replied:—

"I forgive you all. Go, you are free."

Such was the mercy of Muhammad. Peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him!

There were many people at Mecca who wished to become Muslims. They could not do so from fear of the Quraish. Now they came forward and accepted Islam. The power of Mecca was broken and many became Muslims. But all Mecca did not become Muslim at once. Some of them waited for weeks. Some men fled from Mecca. They were called back and given protection. Ikramah had fled to Yemen. His wife became a Muslim and asked forgiveness for him. It was given

and she went to fetch him from Yemen. He was the son of the Prophet's greatest enemy Abu Jahl. But when Ikramah came, the Holy Prophet got up and went forward to embrace him !

The Holy Prophet stopped at Mecca for fifteen days. During these days, the Hawazin, a great clan of many tribes, had been collecting their forces. When the Holy Prophet learnt about it, he sent a spy to make sure. The spy brought the report that an army of 6,000 strong was encamped in the valley of Honain, half-way between Mecca and Taif. The Holy Prophet at once ordered the army to prepare for battle. For meeting his expenses of war he borrowed a sum of 30,000 silver pieces from a wealthy Meccan. Another Meccan who was still a non-Muslim lent one hundred coats of mail, and in February, 630 A.D., an army of 12,000 marched towards Honain. Among them were 2,000 non-Muslim recruits from Mecca.

The Hawazin were a brave people. In archery they had no equals in Arabia. They posted their archers in the passes and on the hills and had occupied every position

of advantage before the Muslim army arrived on the battle-field. The Muslims were twice as many as the Hawazin. They were so sure of their victory that some of them had not even put on their coats of mail. The result was very unfortunate. When the Hawazin made their first attack, the whole Muslim army fled before them like sheep. Only one man was left on the battle-field. It was Muhammad. Peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him!

The Holy Prophet would not move from the field, although arrows were falling like rain about him. At this time of great danger, he cried aloud: "I am the Prophet of God. It is not a lie. I am the grandson of Abdul Muttalib." The Prophet's uncle Abbas was with him. Abbas had a loud voice. The Holy Prophet asked him to call for the *Ansar* and the Refugees. He called and the army returned. Within a few hours the Hawazin were beaten. Part of the defeated army fled to Taif. The rest were captured along with their wives and children, camels, goats and other property. The number of prisoners was several thousands.

Among the prisoners was Shaima, the Holy Prophet's foster-sister and daughter of Haleema who had nursed him. When Shaima was captured, she said to the Muslim soldiers, "Do not touch me. I am your Prophet's sister." Nobody knew that the Holy Prophet ever had a sister. He could not recognise her. He had left Haleema's house when he was only a little boy of five years. Now he was sixty-one and Shaima must have been about seventy years old. She was asked to bring proof. She bared her back and said, "When you were a little boy and I used to carry you, once you bit me on the back and this is the scar of your bite." And she showed the scar. The Holy Prophet was very pleased to see his foster-sister. He stood up, spread his own mantle for her to sit upon, talked to her kindly and said, "If you like, you can come with me to Medina and live there in comfort. If you wish to stay with your own people, I will send you home." She preferred to stay with her own people. The Holy Prophet, therefore, gave her some camels and goats and sent her home.

After putting the other prisoners in a

place of safety, the Holy Prophet went to Taif and besieged it. Taif was surrounded by a strong wall. The citizens shut the gates and rained arrows from the top of the wall on the Muslim army. The Holy Prophet ordered some machines to be made to help in the siege. The citizens threw red-hot bars of iron on the machines and burnt them. The siege continued for twenty days without any gain. There were enough provisions and water in the city and it could stand a siege of any length. The Holy Prophet called a council of war. One Beduin chief said, "The fox has gone into its hole. If you sit here long enough, you will catch it. If you leave it alone, it will do no harm." The Holy Prophet accepted the advice, raised the siege and came back to the place where the prisoners were.

The Holy Prophet had been waiting for their relations to come and ask for their freedom. A deputation now came. They reminded him that he was brought up among the Bani Sa'ad, one of the Hawazin tribes, and said, "Among those women who are placed in those huts, some are your foster-aunts and some are your foster-sisters, cousins and others. They

nursed you and fondled you and took you to their hearts." The Holy Prophet was deeply moved. He spoke to the army. They agreed, and all the prisoners were released without taking anything in ransom. Besides, each prisoner was given a suit of clothes.

Thus winning the hearts of the people with his generosity, the Holy Prophet returned to Medina. Islam spread among the Hawazin rapidly after this.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE SPREAD OF ISLAM.

The battle of Honain was the last great battle fought by the Holy Prophet. We have now to see what he had been doing during these eight years for the spread of Islam. It should be remembered that war was only a secondary matter. The Holy Prophet never went to war on his own account. That was not his work. His work was only to teach religion and morals to his people. That was the work which kept him busy from day to day. He fought only when he was attacked or about to be attacked. He kept no army. When fight-

ing had to be done, the samemen, who worked as shop-keepers, merchants, artisans, peasants, gardeners or herdsmen in their daily life, took up arms at the Prophet's call and fought for him. When the fighting was over, they returned to their occupations. Islam wanted peace. So long as there were wars, its progress was very slow. The truce of Hudaibia gave some peace and within two years thousands became Muslims. In fact, in the two years following this truce more men entered Islam than they had done in the previous eighteen years. In the next chapter we shall learn of the Holy Prophet's daily occupations. Here we will relate how he spread Islam.

As we have seen, the progress of Islam at Mecca was very slow. There was too much opposition. The Holy Prophet was not free to preach and men were afraid to come to him. Still, some progress was made. In the fifth year of his mission he sent one hundred men to Abyssinia. In the beginning of the thirteenth year he could send as many more to Medina. There were others besides. The Bani Daus lived about two days' journey

south of Mecca. Their tribal poet Tufail bin Omar was famous throughout Arabia. He was also a chief of his tribe. He came to Mecca, saw the Holy Prophet and became a Muslim. Another man, Zamad bin Sa'alba, a chief of the tribe of Azd in Yemen, also came to Mecca and after hearing the Holy Quran from the Holy Prophet became a Muslim. Abu Zar Ghifari, whose tribe lived north of Mecca along the road to Syria, also became Muslim when the Holy Prophet was still at Mecca. When these men went home, they made more Muslims in their own tribes.

When the Holy Prophet went over to Medina, Islam spread more rapidly. For example, at the battle of Badr the Holy Prophet could put only 313 men in the field with great difficulty. The battle of Ohod was fought one year later and the Muslim army numbered seven hundred men. At the battle of the Ditch the number of the Muslim army reached nearly three thousand. The truce of Hudaibia gave some peace and the number of Muslims increased rapidly, so that at the conquest of Mecca ten thousand soldiers marched under the flag of

Islam.

The earlier years at Medina were very unsafe. The whole of Arabia was under the influence of the Quraish and, therefore, inimical towards Muslims. It was very difficult to send missionaries to distant tribes. When they were sent, they were frequently murdered. For example, in 3 A. H., a party of seventy missionaries was sent at the invitation of a distant tribe. They were all murdered on the way and only one man escaped to tell the tale. In the same year, a party of ten missionaries sent to another tribe was also killed and only one man escaped. Fifty missionaries were slain in 7 A. H. and fifteen in 8 A. H.

But in spite of all these dangers, Islam went on spreading. The opposition of the Quraish, their propaganda against Islam among the tribes, their attacks on Medina and their defeats had made the name of Muhammad (peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him) famous throughout the country. Almost every Arab had come to know that there was a man at Medina who was teaching a new religion, who said that the worship of idols was a foolish thing and that people should

pray to God alone. The fear of the Quraish kept the people away. But their defeat at the battle of the Ditch gave courage to many and the tribes of Muzaina, Ashja' and Juhaina became Muslims. In the same year (5 A. H.), some merchants came to Medina from Bahrain on the shores of the Persian Gulf. They became Muslims and through them Islam began to spread in their tribes. The truce of Hudaibia opened the way for many other tribes and people came to accept Islam from as far as Yemen.

But the conquest of Mecca in 8 A. H. removed all obstacles from the path of Islam. Arabs had great faith in the Quraish. They were the guardians of the Kaaba and the priests and leaders of Arabia. When their power was broken and they themselves began to enter Islam, the other Arabs also made haste to accept it. They began to enter Islam in thousands. In the two years following the conquest of Mecca, many deputations came to Medina on behalf of the tribes to accept Islam, so much so that the year 9 of the Hijra became known as the "Year of Deputations." Deputations came from Yemen, Hazramaut, Bahrain

and many other parts of Arabia. The Persian governors of Yemen and Bahrain became Muslims and their territories became parts of the Muslim Empire. Oman was also under Persia. But its inhabitants and their chiefs became Muslims and Persian authority came to an end.

When a tribe accepted Islam, teachers were at once sent among them to teach the religion to the people. Not all the deputations came to accept Islam. Some came only to make political treaties, for they wished to remain idolators. But in making these treaties, permission was always obtained for sending missionaries in their territories. And these missionaries won the people to Islam in a very short time.

The story of two deputations is interesting. One was from Taif. You will remember that the Holy Prophet had failed to take the city and had been obliged to raise the siege. On that occasion someone had asked him to curse the city, but the Holy Prophet had prayed for them: "My Lord! Guide the Saqif and send them to me." The Saqif was the name of the tribe that lived in the city. The Holy

Prophet had not yet reached Medina when one of their chiefs, Urwa-bin-Masa'ud by name, presented himself before him and became a Muslim. He returned to Taif and called the people to Islam. He was met with a shower of arrows and died the death of a martyr.

Shortly after this, Sakhra-bin-Aila, the chief of a distant tribe, laid siege to Taif and swore that he would not raise the siege until the city surrendered to the Holy Prophet. The city at last did surrender and Sakhra carried the news to Medina. A few days after this, the citizens of Taif held a council and decided to send a deputation to the Holy Prophet. The deputation were ready to accept Islam, but desired that their goddess *Manat* should not be touched. "She will destroy the city if she comes to know that anyone is going to break her," they said. But the Holy Prophet said, the idol must be broken. However, they accepted Islam, but said, they would not touch *Manat*. The Holy Prophet then sent two men, Abu Sufian being one of them, to break the idol and throw it out. The women of Taif wept and called shame upon their men when they saw their temple being destroyed. But

there was no help for it. The temple was destroyed and a mosque was built in its place. This was done lest the people should fall back into idolatry. Within two years the whole city became Muslim.

The other deputation was from the Christians of Najran. They were lodged in the mosque which they also used as a church. They stayed for several days and many arguments took place. They said, they were already Muslims. But the Holy Prophet said, so long as they worshipped the Cross and called Jesus the Son of God, they could not be Muslims. They were defeated in arguments, but they would not accept the truth. At last, the Holy Prophet said, "Let us both pray to God that He may decide the matter between us." But they would not agree to that proposal either. They agreed to pay tax and were allowed to go home in peace.

Mecca had been conquered in January, 630 A. D. Islam spread so rapidly after this that in September of the same year the Holy Prophet was able to raise an army of 80,000 strong. Rumours had been spreading for some months past that the Roman Emperor

was collecting troops to invade Arabia. At last, some Syrian merchants brought the news that he was already on the way. The Holy Prophet decided to meet him before he entered the country. It was very hot. There had been no rains. The people were suffering from drought and famine and were unwilling to go. There were large numbers of those who wanted to go, but had not the means to go, and the Holy Prophet could not provide for all. In spite of all that, 80,000 went. The Holy Prophet led them in person. But on arriving at Tabook, situated at fourteen marches from Medina, he learnt that the news was false. There was, therefore, no fighting. The Holy Prophet stayed there twenty days, made treaties with the Jews and Christians of the neighbourhood and returned to Medina.

Since emigrating to Medina, the Holy Prophet had taken no part in the Hajj pilgrimage. In the Hajj of 9 A. H. (March 63, A. D.) also he took no part. But he wanted to retain the Hajj in Islam, so that Muslims should be able to meet together once every year. Accordingly, he changed the Hajj ceremonies

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removed the idolatrous parts from it and made it suited to the pure worship of Islam. He sent a party of three hundred Muslims under the leadership of Abu Bakr to perform the Hajj in the new style and teach the people so. At the close of the Hajj ceremonies, when the people were all present, Ali read out the proclamation which is contained in Chapter IX of the Holy Quran. The proclamation was that, after that date, no heathen would be permitted to take part in the Hajj and none would be allowed to go naked round the Kaaba. This order was very necessary, because otherwise the two different kinds of ceremonies would have got mixed up and created trouble. Also, idolatry was dying fast, and in one year more no heathens would be left in the country.

Islam kept spreading in the country, so that when the Holy Prophet went to perform the Hajj of the following year (10 A. H.), 100,000 Muslims gathered around him. After the ceremonies were finished, the Holy Prophet one day mounted his dromedary (her name was Qaswa) and addressed the people from her back. It was the longest speech the Holy Prophet had ever delivered. He spoke

slowly and clearly so that every one heard word by word. "Behold!" he said, "all the heathen practices of the days of ignorance I trample under my feet to-day. No race is superior to another. All are the children of Adam and he was made from dust. Every Muslim is a brother to his fellow Muslim and all Muslims make one brotherhood. Your slaves, remember your slaves. Feed them with the food that you yourselves eat and clothe them with the clothes that you yourselves wear. All the blood-feuds of the days of ignorance are wiped out. All the interest on moneys lent is written off, and, to begin with, I write off the interest that people owe to my uncle Abbas. Fear God in the matter of women. You have rights on your women and your women have rights over you. Your lives, your properties and your honour shall be sacred among you as this day, this month and this city are sacred. I am leaving one thing behind with you. If you hold fast to it, you shall never go astray. It is the Book of Allah."

After explaining some other commandments of Islam, the Holy Prophet turned to

his people : " God Almighty will question you about me on the day of judgment. What will you say ?" One hundred thousand persons answered with one voice : " We shall say, thou hast delivered the message of God and done thy duty."

Can there be any greater success than for a whole nation to say that a man has done his duty ?

This speech was delivered on three different days at three different places, so that the people should remember it well and carry it to those who had not been able to come to the Hajj. " Perhaps I may not see you again," he told them. He then bade the people farewell and left for Medina. A few miles from Mecca he halted and made another speech. " I am only a mortal," he said, " death might come any day. I am leaving two things with you. The first is the Book of God in which there is light and guidance. Hold fast to it. The other is my family. I leave them into your care."

It was the Holy Prophet's last pilgrimage. It is called the " Pilgrimage of Farewell." It took place in March, 632 A. D. His work wa,

done and he saw the end of his earthly life drawing near. He thought of his companions who had fought and died for Islam. He visited the graves of the martyrs of Ohod. In the last week of May he fell ill. Abu Bakr was appointed to lead the prayers during his illness. The illness increased day by day. One day he felt strong enough to go to the mosque. After the prayers he delivered a sermon. It was his last sermon. In this sermon he warned them: "Others have worshipped the graves of their prophets and saints. I warn you not to begin to worship my grave after my death." This commandment he repeated several times during his illness.

On Saturday, June 6, the fever became very high. It was worse on Sunday. On Monday, the 8th of June, 622, about 3 o'clock in the afternoon, the Great Prophet breathed his last. Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him !

The death took place in the room of his beloved wife Lady Aysha. The next day the people came in small parties and said the funeral prayers. This went on the whole day, and in the night of Tuesday he was buried on

the same spot at which he had died. Peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him!

CHAPTER XVIII.

HIS WORK.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) was most successful in his work. In fact, no teacher had been ever so successful as he was. He became Prophet at the age of forty and died at the age of sixty-three.* In the twenty-three years of his prophetical work he changed the face of the whole country. Warfare was stopped. Robbery and plundering raids were stopped. Bloodshed was stopped. Lawlessness was gone and in its place peace reigned in the whole country. For the first time in their history, the Arabs were united into one nation and the whole country was brought under one flag.

Before Islam, they were a weak people. The Holy Prophet made them mighty. They

* Sixty-three according to the lunar months, but sixty-one according to the solar years.

used to be savages. The Holy Prophet made them a civilized nation. Before Islam, might was the right. Now there were judges to do justice between them, and there was a government to keep peace in the country. The weak were no longer oppressed. The orphans were no longer robbed. The widows were no longer wronged. Girl infants were no longer buried alive. Instead, people now went about seeking the poor to feed them and to clothe them. The travellers were helped. The slaves were kindly treated. Women were honoured and girls were loved. The widows and orphans were protected. The differences of high and low were wiped out and the people were made as brothers to one another. They used to be ignorant. Now there were teachers to teach them. They used to be cruel. Now they became merciful. Blood-feuds were stopped. The old enmities were dead. Their place was taken by love and sympathy.

They used to be a sinful people; now they became a virtuous people. All the sins and vices of Arabia were gone. Gambling was gone. Drinking was gone. The worship

of idols was gone. The idols themselves had gone, and the whole nation worshipped One God alone.

In short, the country was changed. The Arabs were changed. Their whole nature was changed. Their hearts were changed. Cruel, heartless and sinful men were changed into civilized and God-fearing men. This was the work of Muhammad. Peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him !

How did he gain such success? The secret was this: What he taught to others, he himself acted upon it. The teachings of Islam are contained in the Holy Quran. The Prophet's example, called *Sunna*, is contained in the books of *Hadees*. The Holy Quran is the word of God. It was revealed to the Holy Prophet in portions and was completed in twenty-three years. Every man, woman or child who became Muslim was taught the Holy Quran. Hundreds of them learnt it by heart. The Holy Prophet taught it daily. He explained its meaning to the people. Meetings were held; lessons were given and questions were put. People were free to ask him any questions. They were free to come

to him any time during the day. If any one had a doubt, he would go straight to the Holy Prophet and ask him about it. They crowded round him and asked him questions upon questions. He was never tired of answering them. Men and women, rich and poor, all came and asked him questions with complete freedom. He taught them in the mosque. When he sat to take his food with other people, he taught them manners of the table. He would go into the market and would teach them to be honest in their dealings. He would teach them what was honest and what was dishonest, what was good and what was bad in business. One day he went to the market. A man was selling grain. He put his hand into the heap and felt that it was wet from inside. He questioned the man. The man said, rain had wet it. "Then why don't you keep it open, so that the people should know" said the Holy Prophet. He visited the market very often and gave strict orders that nobody should give false measures or short weight or cheat the people in any other way.

No opportunity was lost. Even when they

were going to fight a battle, he would teach them on the way. He would teach them the morals of war. He taught them that they should fight only when they were attacked ; that when the enemy was beaten, he should be treated with kindness ; that women, children and old men must not be killed and that war should be fought only for maintaining peace and not for plunder or other worldly gain. In short, whether sitting or walking, at home, in the mosque, in the street, on the march or on the battle-field, he lost no opportunity of teaching good morals.

Our Holy Prophet was very eloquent. His words used to be full of meaning. He spoke slowly and very clearly, so that the people heard and understood every word he said. In meetings he sometimes said the same thing twice or thrice, in order that his words should sink into the hearts of his listeners.

In the last three years of his life, the Holy Prophet's work increased excessively. Before that, he had to govern only Medina. But from the conquest of Khaibar, the empire increased rapidly, until the whole of Arabia

came under his rule. Governors were appointed over different parts. Their salaries were very small. The governor of Mecca got less than four pence a day. Missionaries, teachers and tax-collectors were sent all over the country. The Prophet received their reports, gave them instructions and had to supervise their work. Medina and the surrounding country were governed by himself. He met the deputations, looked to their comfort and made treaties with them himself. He visited the market almost daily. In addition to that, he had to do the work of teaching. People came from all over Arabia to see him and talk with him. The work was too much. It tired him out and he had to say the early morning prayers sitting. It is no easy thing to govern a country. It requires many ministers and much labour. The Holy Prophet did it all alone. The work tired him out and broke him down.

The Holy Prophet also helped the ladies of his household in their domestic work. The Emperor of Arabia swept the floors, milked the goats and patched his clothes with his own hand. The Holy Prophet lived like a poor

man to the day of his death. Sometimes no fires were lit in his house for days, for there was nothing to cook. Vast amounts of money came from different parts of Arabia in taxes. The money was distributed among the poor or spent upon the government of the country. On one occasion, 100,000 dollars worth of goods came from Bahrain in taxes. It was the first occasion that such a large amount was received. It was heaped up in the mosque. The Holy Prophet sat by and asked the people to take away as much as each could carry. When the whole amount was carried away, the Holy Prophet shook the cloth and came empty-handed home. His charity was boundless. No man ever returned empty-handed from his house. If he had nothing to give to a poor man, he would give away his own food and himself go without it. He was the same in power as he had been in the days of his persecution at Mecca. He thought of others first and of himself last. He kept sums out of public revenues for his personal expenses. But most of the money was spent in charity or on government, while he himself hungered.

The Muslims loved their Prophet and obeyed his every word. He became the Emperor of Arabia, but it made no change in his way of life. He took no special honours for himself. He sat and talked with the people like one of themselves. One day a man from a distant tribe came to Medina and alighted from his camel in the mosque. He wanted to speak to the Holy Prophet. There were many men sitting in the mosque. They were sitting so like equals that it was difficult to say who was their leader. He looked from one to the other, but could not say who was the Holy Prophet. At last he had to ask, "Which of you is Muhammad?" "That man with a fair face—that is Muhammad" someone pointed out. Our Holy Prophet had a fair complexion and was very handsome. His forehead was high, his chest was broad and deep. He was a very strong man, but in his ways he was sweet, gentle and modest like a girl.

Orphans and widows were his special care. One of his daily jobs was to visit the houses of the poor widows, to fetch water for them, to do shopping for them and to help them in every possible way. Even when he had be-

come the Emperor of Arabia, he did these daily jobs. Adi, chief of the tribe of Tayy, who had seen the courts of the Persian and Roman emperors, came to visit him once. The Holy Prophet took him home. On the way an old woman met him. She spoke to him and talked to him for a long time and the Holy Prophet listened to her patiently. "By God, this is no king, but God's own man," said Adi to himself.

An old Abyssinian woman used to sweep the mosque. Suddenly she stopped and did not come for several days. The Holy Prophet, who had a kind thought for everybody, enquired about her. They told him, she had died. "Why did you not inform me in time? I would have said funeral prayers over her," said the Holy Prophet. Then he went and prayed over her grave. Such was his humility!

The Holy Prophet was a loyal friend. You will remember the name of Zaid bin Harisa, whom the Holy Prophet had given his freedom at Mecca. Zaid was killed in the battle of Muta. When the Prophet received information, he went to his house. His wife had just bathed and dressed the children. He

embraced them and kissed them and then burst into tears. The thought that they had been left orphans made him weep. So tender was his heart ! Zaid's wife at once understood that her husband had been killed.

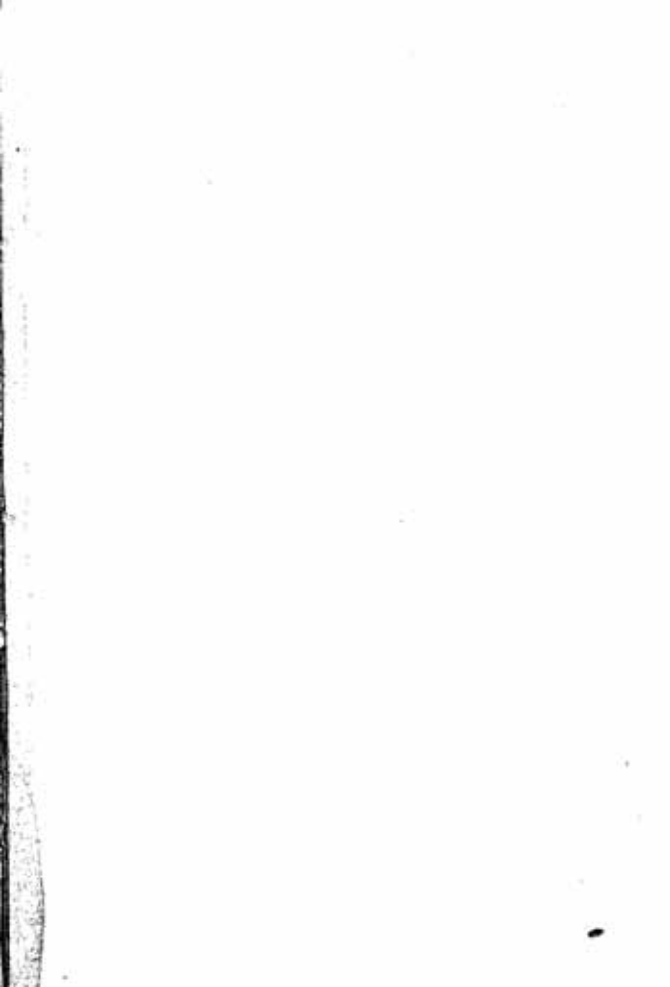
The Holy Prophet was very fond of children. He would pat their cheeks if they met him in the street. He played with them and they came to him without fear. They would ride upon his back and run races with him. The little ones would sometimes wet his clothes, but he did not mind. His grandsons Hasan and Husain often rode upon his shoulders and would ask him to run. There was a little boy at Medina who used to come to him often. The Holy Prophet called him Abu Amr—"Father of Amr"—by way of fun. On seeing him coming, the Holy Prophet would say, "There comes Abu Amr. Now, my friend, how is your parrot to-day?" "Fine," the boy would answer, "he can talk now."

The Holy Prophet's heart was full of love and full of sympathy for all. He loved animals and was very kind to them. He was untiring in his service to men. In his speech he was polite. His courtesy was unfailing. In

his morals he was the purest. In his manners he was the most lovable. For these and many other virtues his people loved him more than they loved their own fathers and mothers or their children. Peace and blessings without end be upon our Beloved Prophet.

THE END

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