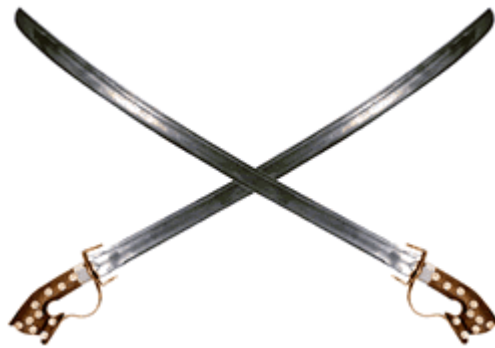


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The Rev. Canon Sell, D.D., M.R.A.S.

THE BATTLES

of

BADR AND OF UHUD



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BY

THE REV. CANON SELL, D.D., M.R.A.S.,

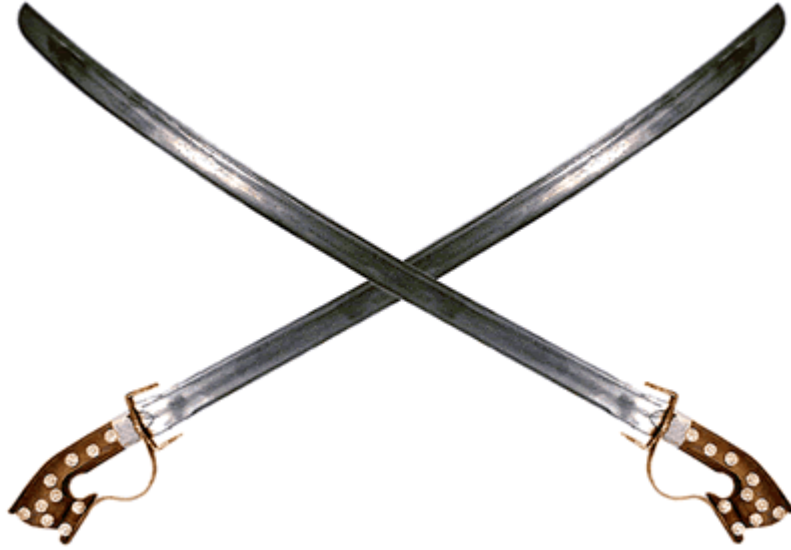
FELLOW OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MADRAS

AUTHOR OF 'THE FAITH OF ISLAM,' 'THE RELIGIOUS ORDERS
OF ISLAM,' 'ESSAYS ON ISLAM,' 'ISLAM: ITS RISE AND
PROGRESS,' 'THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE
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PREFACE

THE two battles here described, the one a victory, the other a defeat, were such important events in the career of Muhammad at Madina, and afford such good illustrations of the value of the mode in which the Qur'an was revealed, — delivered, as Baidawi tells us, 'according to the circumstances' — that they are worthy of close and careful study.

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E. S.

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THE BATTLE OF BADR

IN the year A.D. 622 Muhammad was driven out from Mecca by the hostility of the Quraish¹ leaders and, accepting the invitation of some of the inhabitants of Yathrib, he then, with a few adherents, fled to that city, which had become known as al-Madina — the city. The Muslim community there was made up of the Muhajirun, or the immigrants from Mecca, and the first converts in Madina, called the Ansar, or helpers.

Various measures were taken to strengthen the small Muslim community and to develop in it a spirit of brotherhood. Though it soon became the chief power in the city, yet not all its professors were equally hearty and sincere. There was a body of men called the Munafiqun, or hypocrites, described by ibn Ishaq as men 'who were in reality little removed from the idolatry of their fathers and the rejection of the true faith; only that Islam had by its prevalence overcome them ... who were in secret traitors.' The Jews repudiated the claims of the Prophet; the

¹ The Quraish were the leading tribe in Mecca, to which Muhammad himself belonged. The term is used in this article as equivalent to Meccans.

idolaters opposed him; the Munafiqun were only waiting for an opportunity to renounce him. The first year was thus spent at Madina under adverse circumstances. It is not often realized how great the distress of the Muslims was in the early days at Madina, Margoliouth shows from original authorities¹ that the barest necessities of life were wanting and this is borne out by a prayer offered by Muhammad when he heard of the possibility of capturing a rich caravan on its return journey to Mecca. He prayed thus: — 'O Lord, they (i.e., Muslims,) go on foot, make them riders; they are hungry, satisfy them; they are naked, clothe them; they are poor, enrich them.'² Thus some effort was necessary to provide the necessary means of livelihood and some signal display of power was needed to give an impetus to the progress of the new religion. The effort was made in the attempt to capture the rich caravan of the Meccans and the display of power was shown in the victory at Badr. At an early stage of his residence at Madina, Muhammad realized that open war with his countrymen was unavoidable and had begun to prepare the minds of his followers for it:—

War is prescribed for you, but it is hateful to you; yet haply ye hate a thing which is better for you. — Suratu'l-Baqara (ii) 212.

Fight for the cause of God. — Suratu'l-Baqara (ii) 245.

¹ *Musnad*, vi, 4; *Muslim*, ii. 148, 110, quoted in *Mohammed*, p. 234.

² *Mudariju'n-Nabuwat*, p. 559.

Before the battle of Badr, the Prophet had himself headed four expeditions and three more had been conducted by his lieutenants; but little harm had been done to the Quraish and little booty had been obtained. In the sacred month of Rajab, a Quraish caravan had been plundered, but the victory did not compensate for the alarm caused by such a violation of Arab custom as to fight in a month, sacred from time immemorial from all tribal attacks and disputes. But a revelation came to justify the daring innovation.¹ Still these various expeditions had stirred up a martial spirit and increased the desire for gain. They were told that reprisals were justified, for

A sanction is given to those who because they have suffered outrages have taken up arms; and verily God is well able to succour them; those who have been driven from their homes wrongfully, only because they say, 'our Lord is the God.'
— Suratu'l-Hajj (xxii) 40-1.

The way was thus prepared for a more serious conflict and the opportunity soon came. The battle of Badr is a distinct epoch in the early history of Islam. The vast mass of traditions associated with it, the minuteness of detail with which the historians describe it, the marvellous and miraculous circumstances believed to have happened in connexion with it, the reverence in which those who were slain in it are held —

¹ Suratu'l-Baqara (ii) 214.

all these things show the high estimation in which the biographers of the Prophet held it.

The battle of Badr was fought on the 17th day of the month Ramadan (which that year coincided with our January) in the second year of the Hijra, or flight from Mecca, and it added greatly to the growing influence of the Prophet. It is called the Yaumu'l-Furqan, the day of separation, because it divided the true from the false. 'In that day', says a Muslim historian, 'God himself exalted the Muslims, for victory is only from Him, the conqueror, the wise.' The immediate cause of the battle was the desire of Muhammad to capture a rich caravan on its way from Syria to Mecca. ¹ In the previous October he had tried to capture it on its outward journey but failed to overtake it. This time the Prophet determined to secure it. It was a custom amongst the people of Mecca to send out two caravans a year, one in summer and one in winter. On this occasion, the caravan, under the guidance and control of Abu Sufyan, consisted of one thousand camels richly laden with merchandise. ² It was escorted by about forty armed men. When Muhammad heard of its arrival in the Hijaz on its return journey from Syria, and in the hope that it would not this time escape him, he called

¹ *Tarjuma-i-Maghazi* (Urdu translation of Waqidi's History), p. 9.

² *Ibid*, p. 14, 15.

the Muslims together and said: 'Here is a caravan, belonging to the Meccans, it is a very rich one. Is it a cause of wonder if God should give it to us?'¹ He also prayed thus: — 'O God, make by thy grace the foot-soldier a horseman; the poor rich; let no one return without a rich booty in camels, clothes and goods.'² Some of his followers responded to his appeal for aid; some remained at home, for they thought that a small band would be sufficient for the purpose. A body of three hundred and forty men went forth from Madina, amongst whom were eighty-seven Muhajirun and two hundred and thirty-six Ansar. These latter were under no liability to go forth to fight, for in the 'First pledge of 'Aqaba', given when they invited Muhammad to come to Madina, there was no promise made with regard to fighting for the cause of Islam. No obligation beyond the defence of the Prophet, if attacked in Madina, lay upon them; but the residence of Muhammad in their city had deepened their ardour in his cause, and increased their attachment to his person and their subservience to his will. The love of adventure, the desire for booty, both strong in the Arab mind, also influenced the Ansar and thus, according to tradition, there was a very strong desire to join the expedition. The Muslims had only a small number

¹ Tarjuma-i-Maghazi, p. 10. ² Ibid, p. 14.

of camels and so the men had to ride in turns. Muhammad and 'Ali had only one camel between them. Soon after they had started, Muhammad sent Talha bin 'Ubaid and Sa'id bin Zaid to the borders of Syria to reconnoitre and to find out whether preparations for the arrival of the caravan at Badr had been made. They went to Bakhar and visited a man called Kashadu'l-Juhni, who concealed them. In a few days the caravan arrived there; but Kashad swore that no spies were about. As soon as it was safe to do so, the spies returned to Madina with the news, and finding Muhammad had already started for Badr went after him, and gave in their report that the caravan was expected in a day or two.

Abu Sufyan had, before leaving Syria, heard rumours ¹ of Muhammad's intended raid, and so, after despatching Dhamdham to Mecca for help, he with the caravan travelled in great haste along a route close to the shores of the Red Sea. Badr, however, lay on the road and owing to its vicinity to Madina was a place of danger. Abu Sufyan then rode on ahead to Badr to find out the position of affairs. He then heard that two strangers had been seen there and had rested their camels near the well. He also found date stones in the dung and said: 'By God! these are camels from Madina.' Having thus learnt

¹ See Waqidi's account of these reports, which clearly prove that the Muslims were the aggressors.

that the Muslims had started out, he returned at once to the caravan, changed its route and sent it hastily homewards. He then sent word to the party, which he expected was now on its way to protect the caravan, to say that it was safe and that they might return.¹ On receiving this message some of the Meccans wished to go back: but Abu Jahl stoutly opposed a retreat. 'No,' said he, 'we must not return to Mecca, till we have refreshed ourselves at Badr by feasting there three days, so that all the Arabs may hear of our campaign and have a high opinion of us.' Akhnas, who was connected with the family of Zohra, said in reply: 'O men of Zohra, we set out to defend our merchandise; now that Heaven has relieved us from this peril, return to your homes, do not expose yourselves uselessly.' On this two tribes, the Bani Zohra and the Bani 'Adi returned home. The rest of the Meccans, however, went on and encamped near the hill of Akankal from which in a northerly direction lies the valley of Badr.

It so happened that three days before the arrival of Dhamdham at Mecca, 'Atika, daughter of 'Abdu'l-Muttalib, had an alarming dream. She told her brother 'Abbas that she had dreamed of a great calamity about to fall on the Meccans. She said: 'I saw a rider on a camel who cried

¹ *Raudatu's-Safa*, Part ii, vol. 1, p. 293.

out, "O perfidious ones, take a three days' journey into the country and hasten to your ruin." He went to the enclosure of the Ka'ba and repeated there his warning, then proceeding to the top of an adjacent hill he did the same. When there he took up a piece of rock and threw it towards Mecca. It broke into many pieces and struck the houses.' 'Truly,' said 'Abbas, 'this a prophetic vision. It must not be told to any one.' But 'Abbas himself could not keep the secret and so he told it to his friend Walid, who passed the news on to his father, and thus it soon became a topic of general conversation. The next day, when 'Abbas was performing the tawif, or circumambulation of the Ka'ba, he was accosted by Abu Jahl who ironically enquired how long there had been a prophetess in his family and went on to say: 'If nothing comes to pass, I will give a certificate to the effect that you have in your family an impostor.' 'Abbas much disconcerted returned home, when the women of the house began to reproach him thus: 'You have allowed that villain Abu Jahl to abuse the men of your family and now he attacks the females of it. Will you permit this?' 'Abbas, smarting under the reproaches which his improvident want of reticence had provoked, declared his intention of seeking a quarrel with Abu Jahl. On the third morning after the dream, he went to the Ka'ba and saw Abu Jahl, who, strange to say, avoided an inter-

view by running away. The reason for this was not fear of 'Abbas, but the warning voice of Dhamdham who had just arrived. As a sign of destruction he cut off the ears of his camel, turned the saddle the wrong way about, and rent his own clothes. He called out with a loud voice 'Quraish! Quraish! Muhammad will seize your rich merchandise; you can hardly arrive in time to defend it. Come quickly to the rescue.' The Meccans, alarmed at the possible loss of their valuable goods, hastened on their preparations for departure. 'Does Muhammad think,' said they, 'that he can march against this caravan as he did against that of 'Amr the Hadramite. By God, we will show him that he is mistaken.' The Meccans, influenced by Abu Sufyan, rose as a body, determined to punish Muhammad for what they considered to be his audacity and so to preserve their merchandise in the future. The most distinguished citizens of Mecca took up arms, except Abu Lahab, who swore by al-Lat and al 'Uzza that he would neither go nor send a substitute; but Abu Jahl taunted him with being a Muslim, and so it is said that he sent 'As bin Hasham who was in debt to him. 'Umaiyya, an aged man, announced his intention of sending a substitute, on which 'Uqba presented him with a pan, a few live coals and some perfumes and said: 'Perfume thyself, thou art a woman!' The army was composed of about one thousand men,

with one hundred horses. Full of hope and confident in its strength it set out on the way to Badr. 'Now' said Abu Jahl, 'if Muhammad and his companions think they will gain a victory over us like the victory at Nakhla, they are mistaken: our we will show them that we can protect our caravans.'¹ The army was accompanied by singing women with tabrets, who beguiled the time with songs and music when they halted at wells on the way.

The Muslim force, three hundred and five men with forty camels,² set out from Madina on the eighth day of Ramadan, fully expecting to find the caravan in a comparatively defenceless state at Badr. Two or three men rode on one camel. Muhammad and Zaid bin Haritha thus rode together. There were not enough camels for all to ride on and so Muhammad prayed, that God would supply them and provide the men who needed it with clothes and food.³ All this was done. Mirkhond distinctly states that the object was 'to punish Abu Sufyan and to plunder the caravan.'⁴ On the way, Muhammad heard that the Meccans had despatched a force to protect it, and so he took counsel with

¹ The speeches of the leading men are given in the *Majmu'ah-i-Kamil*, p. 20, and show that the proposed expedition was to rescue the caravan from danger.

² Some authorities say seventy-two camels and three horses.

³ *Tarjuma-i-Maghazi*, p. 34.

⁴ *Raudatu's-Safa*, Part ii, vol. i, p. 282.

his followers as to the course they should pursue under the altered circumstances. Abu Bakr expressed his firm resolve to obey the orders given by the Prophet. Umar supported him. Miqdad bin 'Amr then rose and said: 'O Prophet, lead us where God would have us to go. We will not be like the children of Israel who said to Moses, "Go thou and thy Lord together and fight the enemy, as for us we rest here". Go thou and thy Lord and we will join you in the combat.' Muhammad thanked him and praised his zeal. As all who had yet spoken were Muhajirun, Muhammad wished to know the views of the Ansar, who were under no obligation to do more than fight in defence of Madina. Then said Sa'd bin Mu'adh: 'Prophet of God, we believe in the truth of this mission, we have sworn to obey thee, lead us where thou wouldst have us to go.' Muhammad then said: 'March forth with joy, we shall capture the caravan, when we have beaten the Quraish. Heaven has promised me this.' The Muslims then continued their march and on the seventeenth day of Ramadan encamped a little way from Badr. At nightfall Muhammad sent 'Ali Zubair, Sa'd bin Abi and Qas forward to reconnoitre the ground. They returned in the morning with two men who belonged to the Meccan army and who had been sent forward in search of water. Muhammad, after saying the namaz, enquired of the prisoners the present position of the Meccans.

They were in the employ of Abu Sufyan and professed ignorance, but after receiving a good beating said that the Meccan army was encamped under some low hills on the other side of the valley. 'What is their number?' said he. 'We do not know', they replied. 'How many camels are slaughtered daily for food?' 'Nine or ten.' 'Ah! in that case they are nine or ten hundred in number.' He also ascertained that the Bani Zohra and the Bani 'Adi had left the army and returned to Mecca.

It was as important to the Muslims as to the Quraish to be first at Badr in order to secure the water-supply, which consisted of a small stream flowing through the valley, producing a number of springs. In connexion with these, cisterns had been made for the use of travellers. Muhammad halted his army at the nearest of these springs. Hubab advised him to go further on, so as to secure the spring nearest the enemy and to destroy the other cisterns. This advice was followed and the Muslims thus gained entire possession of the water-supply. A hut of palm branches was then erected for the Prophet, near which horses were kept should flight to Madina become necessary. The ground was very sandy and marching was difficult, but during the night heavy rain fell which made it quite hard and easy to walk on.¹ This was looked upon as a divine interposition, for

¹ It is said that it made the ground muddy when the Meccans were there, so that their marching was difficult.

(When) He overshadowed you with a deep sleep, as a security from Himself; and caused to descend upon you rain from the heavens, that He might purify you therewith, and take from you the uncleanness of Satan; and that he might strengthen your hearts, and establish your steps thereby. — Suratu'l-Anfal (viii) 11.

The Muslims secured a good night's rest, but Muhammad dreamed of the enemy. His dreams, however, encouraged him and were, as he said, sent by God for that purpose:—

And (when) God caused them (the Meccans) to appear before thee in thy sleep, few in number; and if He had caused them to appear to thee as a great multitude, ye would have been affrighted and have disputed in the matter. — Suratu'l-Anfal (viii) 45.

Thus refreshed and assured the army prepared for war. Seeing the Quraish in the distance, Muhammad said 'O Lord, thou hast in truth sent me a book, hast ordered me to fight and hast promised me one of the two companies.'¹ He then prayed thus: 'O my God, the idolaters are approaching full of pride and arrogance to fight with and to accuse thy apostles of imposture. Lord, send the help which thou hast promised.' The answer is said to have come in this revelation:—

When ye sought succour of your Lord, He answered you, 'I will verily aid you with a thousand angels,'² rank on rank.' —Suratu'l-Anfal (viii) 9.

¹ That is, either the caravan, or Abu Sufyan with his people.

² In a later Sura this number grow to three thousand. — Suratu Ali 'Imran (iii) 123.

He then arranged his men in two lines and gave as the war cry the word Ahad! Ahad ! the One! the One! Addressing his men he said: 'Amongst the Quraish are some who against their true feelings have taken up arms against us; such are the sons of Hashim and others. Do not kill them. Spare Abu'l-Bakhtari and above all, spare my uncle 'Abbas.' 'What,' cried Abu Hudhdaifa, 'we kill our fathers, brothers and friends, shall we spare 'Abbas? By God, if I meet him I will give him a taste of my sword.' On seeing the marks of displeasure on Muhammad's face, he repented and said he would expiate his fault by a martyr's death.

The Quraish, in the meantime, began to descend into the valley. A scout reported the number of the Muslims to be about three hundred, stout and strong, longing for a conflict. Muhammad at this time sent 'Umar to the Meccans to advise them to retire, saying that he did not wish to fight. This news caused the question of retiring to be again raised in the Meccan army. Shaiba and 'Ataba two of the leading chiefs, strongly urged a retreat. It was pointed out that even if they slew all the followers of Muhammad, they would lose an equal number. Abu Jahl then opposed this and said: 'By God, the sight of the enemy hath weakened the blood of 'Ataba. No, we will not return till God decides our quarrels.' With some reason he urged that

the fight must go on 'so as to prevent them (the Muslims) from ever afterwards attacking our caravans,'¹ about desisting from which act Muhammad had made no promise. Addressing 'Amr, he said: 'See the murderers of thy brother. Vengeance! Vengeance!' The cry roused the ardour of the Meccans and they prepared for battle.

The fight began by the advance of a small body of Quraish cavalry to get water. They were attacked, and only one escaped; he, in gratitude for his good fortune, became in after years a Muslim. Another warrior, Aswad, determined to make by himself the perilous attempt. 'I swear,' said he, 'I will drink of that water, destroy the basin, or die.' Hamza opposed him and with one blow nearly cut off his leg. The wounded man crawled on, defending himself the while, drank some water, broke down part of the cistern and so performed his vow. He then expired of the wounds he had received.

The usual Arab custom of single combats had been followed at several points, when two brothers, Shaiba and 'Ataba, and Walid, the son of 'Ataba, advanced and defied three warriors from the army of the Muslims to meet them in combat. Three men Mu'adh, Ma'udh and 'Auf, at once stepped forth, but when 'Ataba found they were Ansar he

¹ *Raudatu's-Safa*, Part ii, vol. i, p. 305.

declined to meet them, saying that it was not with them he had a quarrel and that men of his own tribe should come forth.¹ Muhammad, then turning to his kinsmen, said: 'Ye sons of Hashim, arise and fight, according to your right.' Then 'Ubaida, Hamza and 'Ali, all relatives of the Prophet, stepped forth. 'Ataba said: 'Speak that we may know you.' Hamza answered, 'I am the son of 'Abdu'l-Muttalib, Hamza, the Lion of God and the Lion of the Prophet.' 'A worthy foe,' said 'Ataba, 'but who are the other two?' On hearing their names he said: 'Meet foes every one.' Then Walid came forward and 'Ali fought with him and soon gave him a mortal blow. Then advanced 'Ataba and was confronted by Hamza, from whom he received his death wound. Shaiba alone now remained and drew near to fight with 'Ubaida. This conflict was more prolonged than the others, and 'Ubaida received a wound from which a few days later on he died. On seeing their champion fall, 'Ali and Hamza attacked Shaiba and soon killed him. The Meccans thus received the worst in these combats and their spirits fell, whilst the ardour of the Muslims increased, and, with their shout 'Oh thou that art triumphant, slay,' the battle became general. The Prophet then entered the

¹ Some authorities say that Muhammad ordered them back, as he wished that the honour of the first encounter should be held by his own relatives.

hut, which had been prepared for him, with Abu Bakr and prayed thus: 'Lord, fulfil thy mission. If this small body of faithful men perish, there will be none left on earth to serve thee.' 'Enough, O Prophet,' said Abu Bakr, 'God will not forget His promise.' All at once a trembling seized the Prophet and he swooned away.¹ On recovering he said: 'Rejoice, O Abu Bakr, God has sent us aid. I perceive the angel Gabriel holding the bridle of his horse.' He then went out, exhorted the warriors, and stirred up their zeal with the hope of celestial reward. 'Whosoever fights valiantly and dies of his wounds will enter into Paradise.' A Muslim inquired what action would call forth the smile of God. The ready reply was, 'That of the man who plunges into the fight with no armour but his faith.' The man cast away his armour, advanced against the enemy and died of many wounds. The Traditionists say that Gabriel and Michael clothed in white stood, the one on the right side of the Prophet, the other on the left. It was a wild stormy day and 'Ali says that such a wind as blew at Badr was never before felt. 'Afterwards there was another gust and then a third. With the first Gabriel (Jibra'il), with the second Mika'il, with the third Israfil arrived, each of

¹ Some suppose that he swooned from fear: but it seems rather to have been one of the fits which frequently preceded what he gave forth as a revelation from God.

them leading a thousand angels.'¹ Muhammad turned it to good use and said that it was the passing of the archangels with a thousand angels, each flying as a whirlwind against the foe. This was confirmed by a revelation:—

When ye sought assistance from your Lord, and he answered, Verily, I will assist you with a thousand angels, following one upon another: — this the Lord did as good tidings for you, and that your hearts might thereby be assured. — Suratu'l- Anfal (viii) 9, 10.

It is said that Satan assumed the form of Suraqa and said to the Meccans, 'no one will defeat you'; but when he saw the angels he turned away and said: 'I am free of you, for I see something, which you do not see.'

When the battle raged, the Prophet picked up a handful of stones and throwing them at the Quraish said: 'May their faces be covered with confusion. Fear come into their hearts, may they flee.'² This is alleged to have been done under divine guidance.³ The onset was then made, the Meccans fell back and lost heavily. When the battle was raging fiercely it is said that the Prophet prayed thus: 'O God if the infidels

¹ *Raudatu's-Safa*, Part ii, vol. i, p. 319. For the various views of this circumstance see the same book, p. 322.

² It is said that the gravel fell into the mouth and eyes of each one of the Quraish and they could not see where to go. — *Majmu'ah-i-Talib*, p. 40.

³ And thou didst not cast the gravel but God cast it that he might prove the believers. — Suratu'l-Anfal (viii) 16.

conquer, then polytheism will spread and thy religion will not remain firm.'¹ In the midst of the fight Mu'adh met Abu Jahl and with one blow cut off his leg above the knee. The son of Abu Jahl then nearly severed the arm of Mu'adh. As it impeded his action, he tore it off and continued to fight. Muhammad had given orders that the life of Abu Mukhtari should be spared, but, when he found that the same clemency was not to be extended to his companions, he refused to accept it for himself, lest the woman of Mecca should say that he had saved his own life by abandoning his friends. 'Umaiya bin Khalf and his son, 'Ali, both men of Mecca, were isolated and unable to get safety in flight. It so happened that 'Abdu'r-Rahman, who, formerly in Mecca, had been an intimate friend of theirs, passed by, carrying some armour taken from the slain. 'Umaiya called on him for protection, saying that the ransom he would obtain was worth more than the armour he was carrying. 'Abdu'r-Rahman took them prisoners. On entering the camp, he met Belal, the Mu'adhdhin, who wished to slay 'Umaiya. 'Take care', said 'Abdu'r-Rahman, 'he is my prisoner and under my protection.' But Belal was furious and said: 'May I die, if I do not kill him. See, O Muslims, here is the head of the idolaters.' The crowd gathered

¹ Rawi, quoted in the *Tarjuma-i-Maghazi*, p. 40.

round and, in spite of all 'Abdu'r-Rahman's efforts, hacked the prisoner to pieces. So he lost both the armour and the ransom.¹ Sa'd bin Mu'adh was in favour of the slaughter of all the prisoners.² One of the first things Muhammad did after the victory was to inquire whether Abu Jahl, his bitterest enemy, was dead. His servant went forth and found him still alive. Placing his foot on his neck he said: 'Ah, enemy of God, thou art confounded. To God and the Prophet is the victory.' He then cut off his head and took it to the Prophet who said: 'It is more acceptable to me than the choicest camel in all Arabia.'³

The success at Badr was attributed to the abnormal strength given to the Muslim warriors, of whom, according to Waqidi, twenty could overcome one hundred Meccans, and also to the legions of angels who aided the Muslims. A pagan Arab and his friend were watching the combat, hoping to get some loot when it was all over. He said that he heard a voice saying, 'Advance Haizum;'⁴ that he almost died of fright and that his companion was seized with terror. A Muslim relates how, pursuing a Meccan in

¹ *Raudatu's-Safa*, Part ii, vol. i, p. 325.

² *Ibid*, Part ii, vol. i, p. 328.

³ Waqidi, quoted in Muir's *Life of Mahomet*, vol. iii, p. 109: *Tarjuma-i-Maghazi*, p. 67.

⁴ The name of Gabriel's horse.

order to kill him, he saw the head of the fugitive suddenly roll on to the ground, though he had not struck him. An invisible hand had slain the enemy. It is said that the Meccans heard the noise of the horses of the angelic host though they saw them not. When the Muslims returned to Madina they replied to congratulations thus: 'O men of Madina, do not congratulate us. The victory was not won by our power, for we saw men lying decapitated, though we had not given them a blow.' It is said that the Meccans also attributed their defeat to angelic interposition, but as this statement comes through Muslim authorities, it may not be worth much. When Abu Sufyan returned to Mecca, Abu Lahab said to him; 'O nephew, tell us the news.' He replied: 'I saw between heaven and earth riders on piebald horses against whom none could strive.' The Qur'an asserts, in a statement made after the event, that the Quraish were miraculously led to see what was unnatural:—

One army fought in the way of God. The other was unbelieving. To their own sight the infidels saw you twice as many as themselves.¹ Suratu Ali 'Imran (iii) 11.

The Meccans lost seventy men, of whom twenty-four were persons of importance. 'Ali is said

¹ In Suratu'l-Anfal (viii) 46 the Muslims were said to be diminished in the eyes of the Meccans. The commentators admit the discrepancy and try to reconcile the statements by making the statement in Suratu Ali 'Imran precede the one in the Suratu'l-Anfal.

to have slain twenty-four with his own hand. The number of the Muslims slain was fourteen, six Muhajirun and eight Ansar. Although the spoil gained was less than the capture of the caravan would have yielded, it was still considerable. Ten horses, one hundred and fifty camels, valuable goods and large sums as ransoms for the prisoners were the proceeds of the victory. Many of the corpses of the Meccans were cast into a well. Muhammad stood by it and repeating the names of the slain said: 'O unworthy countrymen of the Prophet, you treated me as an impostor, you did not believe in my mission, you took up arms against me. God has accomplished the threats you made against me. I now realize all His promises.' 'Why talk to the dead?' said the by-standers. 'Know,' replied the Prophet, 'that they hear as well as you do, though they cannot answer. The recently buried hear the foot-steps of the mourners as they leave the burial ground.' Seventy prisoners were taken, bound with cords and placed in the hut. That night Muhammad could not sleep, and on being asked why this was so, said: 'I hear my uncle 'Abbas groaning in his bonds.'¹ He ordered them to be taken off the prisoner and then he slept. Another account says that the Muslims retired with their prisoners and passed the night

¹ *Raudatu's-Safa*, Part ii, vol. i, p. 328.

at Uthail, some miles distant from Badr. On the morrow Muhammad ordered all the booty to be produced. Those who had taken it claimed it; those who had pursued the enemy and exposed their lives in defeating the opponents claimed the whole, or the larger portion; those who had remained on the field of battle for the safety of the Prophet and of the camp also laid claim to a share. The Ansar, who had acted all through as the Prophet's bodyguard, also required consideration. The dispute became so hot that Muhammad had to interpose with a revelation and declare that, as God had given the victory, to Him the spoil belonged:—

They ask thee concerning the prey. Say, the prey is God's and his Prophet's. Wherefore, fear God and dispose of the matter rightly among yourselves; and be obedient unto God and his Prophet, if ye be true believers. — Suratu'l-Anfal (viii) 1.

Soon after a rule, which is still in force, was given to cover all such cases:—

When ye have taken any booty, a fifth part belongeth to God and the Apostle, and to the near of kin, and to orphans, and to the poor and to the wayfarer, if ye believe in God and in that which we have sent down ¹ to our servant on the day of discrimination, ² the day of the meeting of the hosts. — Suratu'l-Anfal (viii) 42.

The booty was finally divided on these principles, Muhammad receiving, over and above his

¹ An allusion to verse 1 of this Sura.

² The Yaumu'l-Farqan, i.e., the day of the battle of Badr.

share, the camel of Abu Jahl and the sword Dhu'l-Faqar which he gave to 'Ali. After this was done, the army left Badr and having gone about two miles halted in the valley of Uthail, when Muhammad ordered the prisoners to be brought before him.¹ He looked angrily on Nadhir bin Harith, who in terror asked Musa'b to intercede for him saying: 'If the Quraish had made thee a prisoner they would not have put thee to death.' To which Musa'b replied: 'Even were it so, I am not as thou art; Islam hath rent all bonds asunder.' Miqdad, who had captured the prisoner, fearing lest he should lose his ransom,² said: 'The prisoner is mine'; but Muhammad gave the command that he should be beheaded, which was done. Two other prisoners were put to death, Nadir, a poet, who had ridiculed the Prophet, and 'Uqba who had publicly insulted him. 'Uqba pleaded for more generous treatment,

¹ The slaughter is thus justified: —

No prophet hath been enabled to take captives until he had made great slaughter in the earth. — Suratu'l-Anfal (viii) 68.

² In the *Raudatu's-Safa* (Part ii, vol. i, p. 337) Muhammad is represented as weeping, because ransom was being accepted for some prisoners and so a revelation came which excused such leniency: —

Had there not been a previous ordinance from God, a severe chastisement had befallen you, for (the ransom) which ye took. [Suratu'l-Anfal (viii) 69.] Husain and Baidawi, commenting on this verse, say that Muhammad said that if the punishment had come, only 'Umar and Sa'd bin Mu'adh would have escaped it, for they were for killing all the prisoners and not for accepting ransoms.

but was told that he could not receive it because of his enmity to God and the Prophet. 'And my little girl', said 'Uqba 'who will take care of her?' 'Hell fire', replied Muhammad. He was then slain. 'Wretch that he was and persecutor! Unbeliever in God, in His Prophet and in His Book! I give thanks unto the Lord that hath slain thee and comforted mine eyes thereby' was the comment of Muhammad as the prisoner was slain.¹ A tradition records that Muhammad wished all the prisoners to be killed, but Abu Bakr pleaded for mercy in order to give time and opportunity for repentance. 'Uthman was on the side of severity. Too much reliance cannot be placed on these traditions and no doubt some of the details are exaggerated; but the executions which certainly took place were, in the opinion of the Muslims, justified by the revelation which came:—

It is not for a Prophet to take prisoners until he hath inflicted a grievous wound upon his enemies on the earth. Suratu'l-Anfal (viii) 70.

In Mecca when the news of the defeat arrived there was great consternation; but Abu Sufyan who had lost one son killed and another taken prisoner forbade signs of mourning, lest the enemy should rejoice. He swore that he would take

¹ Waqidi, quoted in Muir's *Life of Mahomet*, vol. iii, p. 116. Hishami, and Tabari also refer to this event. *Tarjuma-i-Maghazi*, p. 36.

revenge. He was the leader in the next conflict, the battle of 'Uhud. In Mecca there were some persons who were secretly inclined to Islam and they were glad at the result, but dared not show their satisfaction. In a few weeks the ransomed prisoners returned; those who could pay no ransom were, if willing, set free, after a time, on condition that they would not in future take up arms against the Prophet. The breach was now complete between the Meccans and the Prophet and all hope of conciliation was at an end.

Messengers were sent to Madina from Uthail to make known the news of the victory. The joy was very great and even the children took up the cry, 'Abu Jahl, the sinner, is slain!' The next day Muhammad arrived, 'with much booty and many prisoners'; but was grieved to hear that his daughter Ruqiyya had died in his absence. The prisoners, on the whole, by the direction of Muhammad, were then treated kindly. Some, indeed, declined to be ransomed and remained in Madina. The Meccans had to come in person to ransom their relatives and friends; but a visit to Madina was very distasteful to them. The prisoners were won over by the prolonged period of kindness they enjoyed and many became Muslims. Still a sufficient number were ransomed to bring considerable wealth to the Muslim coffers.

The battle of Badr was a turning point in the Prophet's career. Defeat would have been almost

ruinous to his cause; whereas success, gained as he declared by the miraculous interposition of God, materially strengthened his position. The die was now cast, and his followers were committed to a long and active struggle with his opponents. Islam must now stand or fall by the arbitration of the sword.

The importance of the battle is seen in the full accounts given by the historians and the vast mass of traditions which have grown up around it. One thing which strikes the reader of these narratives is that there was really no reason to give such prominence to divine interposition. The Meccans had started out a thousand strong, but many had returned when they knew that the caravan was safe, and amongst those who remained there were numbers who only did so owing to the vehement words of Abu Jahl. The tactics of the Muslims were superior to those of their foes. They secured the key of the position by getting possession of all the wells. They had been the aggressors; they had come forth with the full intention of fighting, though they had anticipated meeting only the guard of a caravan. Defeat would have been fatal to their cause. On the one side was an army, placed in an inferior position, containing many brave men, but also many who would rather not have been there. On the other side was a small compact force, thoroughly united in spirit, enthusiastically devoted

to its leader, fighting for its very existence as representatives of the new religion. What was deficient in numbers was fully made up in unity of purpose and moral force. Clearly there are sufficient natural causes to account for the victory of Badr.

The next question which arises is this: Who was responsible for the battle? There is no sufficient evidence to show that, after Muhammad's flight from Mecca, the Quraish as a body had been aggressors. Probably they were only too glad to get rid of one who, from their standpoint, was a troublesome citizen, a contemner of their ancient customs and worship; and if so they would have left him and his followers quietly alone at Madina. But what happened is this. About a year after his arrival at Madina, Muhammad started on his first warlike expedition to Abwa and Waddan ¹ but failed to find the Meccans. A second and third expedition followed, the latter with the definite object of capturing

¹ The Meccan caravan escaped him but he made some sort of covenant with the pagan Arabs there (*Mudariju'l-Nabuwat*, p. 554) to which *Suratu'l-Mumtahina* (lx) 3 may refer:—

God doth not forbid you to deal with kindness and fairness toward those who have not made war upon you on account of your religion, or driven you forth from your homes.

The Meccan, however, are expressly excluded from any such leniency.

The next verse reads:—

Only doth God forbid you to make friends of those who, on account of your religion, have warred against you, and have driven you forth from your homes.

a rich caravan. These, however, were failures. A fourth was in pursuit of an Arab chief, who was in alliance with the Quraish, but their complicity with his supposed misdeeds is not shown. Other expeditions were sent out under some of the Companions. These were simply marauding parties, which consisted entirely of the Muhajirun and not of the Ansar,¹ sent forth to loot the rich caravans of the Meccans. They, too, were failures, for the Meccans were on the alert and carefully avoided any conflict.

The Ansar did not partake in the earlier raids as, had they not been aggressive, they could have done under their compact.² They did, however, join in the battle of Badr and that certainly was not originally planned as a defensive expedition. However, by that time the martial spirit had pervaded the whole Muslim body and the original compact seems to have been lost sight of or ignored. This was quite natural for, when it was made, these continual raids on caravans could not have been foreseen. The constant failures placed the Muslims in a serious position and their prestige was at stake; so another raid was soon organized, even though it had to be made in a month sacred from ancient days from all feuds and quarrels. It was the month in which the

¹ This is a proof that there were not defensive expeditions, for the Ansar were pledged to defend the Prophet.

² See *Historical Development of the Qur'an*, (3rd ed.) p. 86.

Quraish, relying on the old established usage, would be off their guard and would take no special care to send warriors with their caravans. Thus it was that at Nakhla a caravan was easily surprised and looted. This violation of the sacred month rather shocked even the people at Madina and their doubts had to be set at rest by a revelation:—

They will ask thee concerning war in the sacred month. Say, To war therein is bad, but to turn aside from the cause of God, and to have no faith in Him and in the Sacred Temple, and to drive out its people is worse in the sight of God, and civil strife is worse than bloodshed. — Suratu'l-Baqara (ii) 214.

It does not appear that in any of these wars the Meccans had been the aggressors. The old historians feel no difficulty in giving a simple straightforward account of them, and the idea that the propriety of a course of action, such as the Muslims adopted as aggressors, should ever be questioned, or indeed was even open to question, did not apparently enter their minds. Modern Muslim writers in India, however, do assume the position of apologists. Thus in 'The Spirit of Islam' Syed Amir 'Ali Sahib describes the advance of the Meccans to Badr as a raiding expedition to the very vicinity of Madina 'to destroy the Islamites and to protect one of their caravans bringing munitions of war'.¹ The historical

¹ *The Spirit of Islam*, p. 145.

facts are that the caravan was not coming *to* Madina, but was hurrying away *from it* as *fast as possible*, and that it was conveying the usual articles of merchandise ¹ and *not* munitions of war. It is also a fact that the Meccans did not send out a relieving force until they knew that Muhammad had laid his plans to attack their caravan. Their expedition was purely one for the simple intention of showing that they were prepared to try to protect their property and to show the Muslims that this constant raiding must be stopped.

Whether, now that the caravan was safe, it would have been better to have rested content with that is a question they were best acquainted with. No doubt they thought that they could, owing to their superior numbers, chastize the Muslims and so insure their commerce from future molestation, and it is hard to say that they were wrong.

Maulavi Cheragh 'Ali Sahib adopts a similar line of reasoning and says: 'The Quraish would naturally have taken every strong and hostile measure to persecute the fugitives.'² This is an

¹ There were one thousand camels and valuable goods — متاع کران بها (*Tarjuma-i-Majmu'ah*, p. 15). It was a caravan containing the property of the Quraish اموال قریش described as great property — اموال کثیر (*Mudariju'n-Nabuwat*, p. 557). Nothing is said 'about munitions of war'. It is reasonable to suppose that had they been there, the early historians and traditionists would have loudly proclaimed the fact as a justification of the Muslim desire to capture it.

² *Critical Exposition of Jihad*, p. vi.

assumption and its correctness is not proved. As a proof that the Meccans were the aggressors, this verse is quoted:—

If they seek to deal treacherously with you, they have already dealt treacherously with God before.' — Suratu'l-Anfal (viii) 72.

but it was revealed *after* the battle and *to justify it*. It does not, therefore, contravene the accuracy of the historical statements.

It is said that Muhammad had tried to pacify the Meccans and that this proves that he was not the aggressor and this verse is quoted:—

'O Meccans! If ye desired a decision, now hath the decision come to you. ¹ It will be better for you, if ye give over the struggle.' — Suratu'l-Anfal (viii) 19.

But this revelation came *after* the battle and so only proves that Muhammad *then* wished for a truce. It does not deal with the question as to who was responsible for the commencement of hostilities. Maulavi Cheragh 'Ali Sahib takes up a much stronger position when he admits, for the sake of argument, that the marauding expeditions were actually made by the Muslims, for the purpose of waylaying caravans and not in self-defence. He argues that, as the Muslims had been, owing to ill treatment, compelled to leave Mecca, there was from the day of the Hijra, or Flight from Mecca, a state of war between the Muslims in Madina and the Quraish

¹ i.e. The victory at Badr.

in Mecca, and that, such being the case, it was quite lawful on the part of the Muslims to seize and appropriate all the property of their enemies whenever and however they could get it. ¹ This argument, at all events, accepts the historical sequence of events, even though the deduction from them may be open to question.

On the whole, it seems quite clear that the Muslims in Madina were the aggressors. The efforts made by modern Muslim writers to remove this impression from the minds of the English readers of their books seems to show that they find it difficult to accept the statements of their own historians. With the spirit which dictates their line of defence, with the higher moral ideal with which such writers would surround their Prophet, we may have much respect and sympathy; and value it as one benefit, at least, of the Western culture they have gained; whilst we may hesitate, in the face of the statement of facts given by the Muhammadan historians, to accept the explanations they give as historically correct.

¹ It is a fact that the Muslims were poor and in distress and this view of the need of property was propounded by the author of the *Raudatu's-Safa*, a long while ago. In connexion with the events of Badr, he says that Muhammad 'considered that the heat of the infidels could not be quenched without the play of bright scimitars, and that this end could not be easily attained in the world (in which affairs succeed by the aid) of means, without (obtaining possession of) the goods of the opponents, which have, in the Preserved Table, been appointed to be the salary of warriors.' Part ii, vol. i, p. 281.

THE BATTLE OF UHUD

THE news of the defeat at Badr was received at Mecca with great sorrow. At first, the Meccans repressed their grief, lest their enemies should rejoice when they heard how deeply the calamity had affected them; but after a few weeks it could be restrained no longer and in many a home there was wailing for the dead. They avoided all appearance of haste in sending a ransom for the prisoners and generally acted in a cautious manner. They were traders and it was no easy matter to stir them up to revenge; but, at last, the influence of Abu Sufyan prevailed and retaliation was determined on, though for a while no active measures were taken.

At Madina, the power of the Prophet was much increased by the victory at Badr, and he now commenced the repression of the Jewish tribes with a sternness greater than the circumstances called for; but this subject we must pass by. Muhammad then had, in self-defence it may be said, to undertake three small expeditions against certain Arab tribes, allies of the Quraish, for, though the Meccans were slow in their combined movements, yet Abu Sufyan, with a very small force, made a raid in the neighbourhood of

Madina and destroyed some property, and though this attack was of no importance in itself, it might have brought some tribes into conflict with Muhammad. The attacks of the Muslims on the Arab tribes were not successful and no booty was gained: so the old plan of attempting to capture a caravan was adopted.

The historian Waqidi gives a full account of this affair. He describes the difficulty the Meccan merchants found themselves in as regards a safe commercial route to Syria. They said that their trade would be ruined by Muhammad and his followers; that the ordinary western route was now closed to them; that, if they remained quiet and sent no caravan, they would be living on their capital and soon come to ruin. Then Asud bin Muttalib recommended them to try the eastern route to Syria by way of 'Iraq. After some discussion, a guide having been found, this plan was adopted and a large and rich caravan was sent. The news of this change of route reached Muhammad at Madina and he at once sent Zaid bin Haritha with a hundred horsemen in pursuit of the caravan. It was taken, and all the goods to the value of one hundred thousand dirhems, with two prisoners, were brought to Madina where the spoil was divided.¹ The prisoners were told to accept Islam, which they did, and in the

¹ Mudariju'n-Nabuwat, p. 585. Raudatu's-Safa, Part ii, vol. 1, p. 366.

words of the historian thus 'saved their lives from the grasp of death.' The defence for this raid is that it was almost certain that the Meccans would not leave the Muslims alone; but it also equally proves that the Muslim's either did not want peace, or that the Arab love of looting overcame their prudence. It was clearly manifest that the Meccans could now no longer remain quiet. Their very existence as a commercial community was in danger. The Badr route was unsafe and now the eastern one was within the reach of the Muslims.¹ The immediate cause of the battle of Uhud was the unprovoked capture of the caravan of the merchants of Mecca. It is not fair, or even historically true, to cast all the blame on the Meccans.

More than a year had passed since Abu Sufyan had saved the caravan, the attempt to capture which on the part of Muhammad had led to the battle of Badr. The Meccans had promised to devote the profits of this mercantile venture to measures to be taken for the protection of their commerce in future, and the goods had been carefully stored away for this purpose, but as yet nothing had been done. However, the earnest

¹ Syed 'Amir 'Ali Sahib blames the Meccans for the battle of Uhud. He attributes the sending of the expedition to a revengeful spirit on their part; but, strange to say, he entirely omits all mention of the previous capture of their caravan, which was both the cause and the justification of the Meccan attack culminating in Uhud. *Spirit of Islam*, pp. 153-4.

protests of Abu Sufyan and of others, like 'Akrima, who had lost relatives at Badr, and who could point to the recent capture of a caravan, as an instance of the peril they were in, prevailed and the necessary funds were supplied. The following verse evidently refers to some action of this kind:—

The infidels spend their riches with intent to turn men from the way of God: spend it they shall; then shall sighing come upon them, and then shall they be overcome, and the infidels shall be gathered into Hell. — Suratu'l Anfal (viii) 36.

Zaid's recent successful raid brought home to the Meccans the fact that, if they were not active, the Muslims were.

Some of the most eloquent men, of whom 'Amr binu'l-'As was one, were sent forth to seek aid from the neighbouring Bedouin tribes. Thus the Meccans were able to raise an army of three thousand men, of whom seven hundred were clad in armour. They also had two hundred horsemen, three thousand camels and camel litters for ladies. Safwan bin Ummaiya said, 'we must take our wives with us to bemoan those who have been slain at Badr, while our wounds are yet fresh. This measure will double our strength in battle.' ¹ Abu Sufyan was appointed the commander and after a march of ten days, early in the spring of A.D. 625 ² they arrived in the neighbourhood

¹ *Raudatu's-Safa*, Part ii, vol. i, p. 367.

² The actual date was the fifth day of the month Shawwal.

of Madina and encamped in a fertile plain, Dhi'l-Halifa near Uhud. The horses and camels found plenty of fodder, but the farmers withdrew the cattle, the implements of husbandry, and their labourers to Madina in good time and so saved them. The leading men of the Quraish accompanied the army. There were also in the camp many women, who, by their songs and music, fanned the ardour of the warriors and called for vengeance for their friends and relatives who had fallen at Badr.

It is recorded in the traditions that when the Meccans came to the grave of Muhammad's mother, some of them proposed that they should dig up the bones and keep them to exchange for any of their women who might be taken prisoners; but Abu Sufyan ridiculed the idea and forbade such a barbarous proceeding.¹

The city of Madina was protected on the north by some rocky ridges. The road to the southern suburbs was open and easy; but the houses there were capable of being used as defensive positions, and so the Meccans waited in their halting place for three days, hoping that the Muslims would come out and offer battle.

Meanwhile, the Prophet's uncle 'Abbas, a resident at Mecca, and well affected towards him, sent a letter, containing a full account of the

¹ *Mudariju'n-Nabuwat*, p. 588. *Raudatu's-Safa*, Part ii, vol. i, p. 370.

preparations which were being made at Mecca. So on the night of the 5th of Shawwal, Muhammad sent Habbab ibn Mundhir a shrewd intelligent man, as a spy to the camp of the Quraish to ascertain how far the report he had received from 'Abbas was correct. He returned and stated that it was so, on bearing which Muhammad said: 'God protects us, and He is our advocate, O Allah to Thee I turn, and in Thee I trust.'

During the Thursday night, when the alarm was great, a number of the Companions and some of the leading men of the Aus and Khazraj tribes kept watch at the Prophet's door. Muhammad passed a restless night and had a dream in which he saw that he himself was clad in armour, that his sword was broken at the point, that a cow was killed for sacrifice and that he was riding a ram. This he interpreted to mean that Madina was a secure place in which his followers should remain, that some calamity would happen to himself, that many of his Companions would be killed and that the leader of the infidels would be slain. Some of the Ansar who had not gone to Madina, advocated active measures and urged the Prophet to march forth against the enemy, but some of the older men, especially 'Abdu'llah bin Ubbay, then urged him to adopt a defensive attitude. They said 'Abide, O Prophet of God in Madina, and go not out, for by Allah, we have never gone out from

Madina against an enemy; but he has defeated us, and no enemy has ever entered Madina to attack us, but we have defeated him. So let them alone.' To this he agreed.¹ This was certainly the wiser course, for, even if the Meccans had attempted to take Madina by storm, a fight in the narrow lanes and streets would almost certainly have led to their defeat.

Then Hamza bin 'Abdul-Muttalib, Sa'd bin Ubada and others said: 'If we stay here the enemy will think that we are afraid of them and we shall be disgraced and other Arab tribes will be emboldened to attack us.'² For such a day as this they had longed. Hamza swore that he would not break his fast till he had fought the enemy. The result of all this urgent pleading was that the Prophet gave way and ascending the pulpit said: 'If ye be steadfast the Lord will give you the victory.' After many words of encouragement he ordered the army to prepare for battle. Then were the men of action glad,

¹ Some authorities, however, consider that Muhammad never approved of the waiting policy (see Margoliouth's *Mohammed*, p. 298) and this idea has some support in the verses, which rebuke those who advocated remaining in Madina; thus:—

Who said of their brethren while themselves sat at home, 'Had they obeyed us, (i.e., in remaining in Madina) they not been slain' Say: 'Keep back death from yourselves if ye speak truth.'

And repute not those slain in God's path to be dead. Nay, alive are they with their Lord.

— Suratu Ali 'Imran (iii) 62-3.

² *Mudariju'n-Nabuwat*; p. 589.

but a few still hesitated and some commentators say that then this verse came:—

When two troops of you became full of anxious thought, and lost heart. — Suratu Ali 'Imran (iii) 118.

but the majority refer it to a defection on the field of battle.

After the prayers were over, the Prophet returned to his chamber, and came forth clad in armour girded with a belt of perfumed goat-skin and carrying a sword and a spear. When the Muslims saw him thus prepared and observed his bearing, they were astonished and said: 'O Apostle of God, whatever you wish, we will do.' ¹ Muhammad then said: 'March forth in the name of Allah, the Most High, for the victory is yours if ye be steadfast.' The banners were given to valiant men to carry; the flag of the Muhajirun to 'Ali; that of the Bani Aus to Sa'd bin 'Ubada; that of the Bani Khazraj to Hubab. 'Abdu'llah ibn Umm Maktum was left in charge of the city. Though Uhud was only a short distance away from Madina, yet the road was bad and a guide was needed. Abu Hashma Haritha safely conducted the Prophet and his army to the position which they wished to occupy. The Muslim army was one thousand strong and contained one hundred men who wore armour. It had no cavalry, for only one horse was present.

¹ *Mudariju'n-Nabuwat*, p. 590.

On arrival at the field of battle 'Abdu'llah ibn Ubbay, the leader of the Munafiqun, who was much displeased at the rejection of his advice to remain in Madina, turned away and retired with three hundred men. It is said two troops who occupied the flanks wavered and were about to join him, when the Prophet, according to some authorities, gave forth this revelation:—

When two troops of you became full of anxious thought and lost heart, and when God became the protector of both! In God, then, let the faithful trust.

God had already succoured you at Badr, when ye were the weaker! Fear God, then, that ye may be thankful.

Then thou didst say to the faithful, 'Is it not enough for you that your Lord aideth you with three thousand angels sent down from on high?'

O yes: but if ye be steadfast and fear God and the foe come upon you in hot haste, your Lord will help you with five thousand angels.¹ — Suratu Ali 'Imran (iii) 118-121.

This exhortation had its effect and the Bani Sali'ma and the Bani Haritha regaining their courage stood firm. The defection of 'Abdu'llah ibn Ubbay is attributed to Satanic agency:—

Of a truth it was Satan who caused those of you to fail in duty who turned back when the hosts met. — Suratu Ali 'Imran (iii) 149.²

The loss of three hundred warriors was serious, but the seven hundred who remained were brave

¹ i.e. in Uhud.

² Baidawi says: 'The cause of their fall may have been their previous sins which made this one easy, or through fear of death before they had repented of their sins.'

and faithful men, ready to die in what they believed was the cause of God and of His Apostle. They were not disheartened at the superior numbers of the enemy.

Muhammad took up his position with judgment, facing in the direction of Madina. The hill of Uhud, a rugged spur of a mountain chain, extended for three or four miles into the valley. It is so isolated from the other hills that it almost stands alone. It is situated a few miles from Madina, in what was then a bad road, which as we have seen necessitated the employment of a guide by Muhammad. The hill protected his rear and it was impregnable, except at one opening, which the historians refer to as 'a place of great danger'. This Muhammad guarded by posting there fifty of his best archers under the command of 'Abdu'llah ibn Jubair. He gave strict orders that they were not to move from their position until he told them to do so. Neither the opportunity of looting nor the victory or the defeat of the Muslims was to draw them away. They were to guard the pass. The commanders of the right and left wings, 'Ukasa bin Muhsin and Abu Salma, were then appointed and ordered not to advance till Muhammad gave the order. The Muslim force was too small to take the offensive and it was wisely determined to await the onset of the Meccans.

Meanwhile Abu Sufyan arranged his forces, the

right wing under Khalid, the left under 'Ikrima bin Abu Jahl. Abu Sufyan took command of the centre. The standard was placed in the charge of Talha bin 'Abi Talha. The women with their timbrels came to the front and sang warlike songs ¹ and then retired to the rear. The battle commenced by the discharge of an arrow by Abu Amir who then with fifty archers attacked the Muslims but was repulsed. Then came forth Talha, the standard-bearer, and 'placing the foot of temerity into the plain of challenge' called for some one to oppose him in single combat. 'Ali responded to the call, and 'sallied forth towards him like a vernal torrent precipitating itself from a mountain into a valley', and slew him. Muhammad was delighted and cried out Allahu Akbar! God is great! and the cry resounded all through the Muslim ranks. The brother of Talha rushed forward and seized the banner. Hamza attacked and killed him. Other members of Talha's family stepped forth, but all — two brothers and three sons — were slain in single combat. The women who were in the rear beat their drums and encouraged the Meccans to fight.

¹ Muir gives the following specimen:—
We are the daughters of the brave;
On carpets we step delicately;
Boldly advance, we shall embrace you!
Turn back, and we will shun you!
Shun you with disgust!
Life of Mahomet, vol. iii, p. 168.

Thus far success was with the Muslims. Champion after champion of the Quraish had fallen and something like a panic set in, for they could not resist the furious onset the Muslims now made. Their lines were broken and they fled. The Meccan cavalry had tried in vain to turn the flank of the Muslims, for the band of the archers kept them at bay. All would have gone well if the troops had remembered the Prophet's injunction to be steadfast; but, the Meccan camp being now left unguarded, the desire to plunder it became so strong that the commanders could not control their men. The archers, seeing that looting was going on, in spite of all their leader could do, disobeyed the Prophet's order and left their important position in order to engage in the same operation and so secure their share of the booty. Khalid, the leader of the Meccan cavalry, at once came through the pass, and appeared at the rear of the now disorganized Muslim army. The rest of the Meccans seeing this reformed their ranks, and pressed on the Muslims who now fled in all directions.¹ Then there was a slaughter grim and great. The Meccans lost

¹ The hasty flight, according to Baidawi, was afterwards thus excused:—

Of a truth it was Satan alone who caused those of you to fail in duty who turned back
an the day when the hosts met. — Suratu Ali 'Imran (iii) 149.

This verse may, however, also refer to the previous defection of 'Abdu'llah ibn Ubbay.

twenty-two men killed; the Muslims seventy, forty Muhajirun and thirty Ansar. Muhammad was in a position of great danger, and when he saw his men fleeing he cried out, 'Come back, I am the Apostle of God! return!' A small band of fourteen men gathered round him for his protection, but were soon attacked. A stone broke one of the Prophet's teeth, another drove the rings of his helmet into his cheek. It is related that, on wiping the blood from his face, the Prophet said: 'How can people live who deal thus with their prophet, who is inviting them to Allah.' 'O God pardon my people.' Then Gabriel, it is said, brought down the verse:—

It is none of thy concern whether He be turned into them in kindness, or chastise them. — Suratu Ali 'Imran, (iii) 128.

Muhammad fell to the ground, and the cry went up that he was slain.¹ 'Where now,' said some of his disheartened followers, 'is the promise of his Lord?' The rumour seemed to have checked the vigour of the pursuit, for if Muhammad were dead, the Meccans had no desire to kill his followers. But he was only stunned

¹ The cry is said to have been made by Satan who appeared in the form of Ja'l bin Saraqa, and that it was heard as far off as Madina by Fatima, who came forth from her house and wept. She afterwards proceeded to the field of battle and attended to his wounds. Tradition states that not a drop of blood was allowed to fall on the ground. Had it done so, a great calamity, it is said, would have been sent from heaven upon men, and grass would never again have grown upon earth.

and soon came to himself. The Muslims began to shout for joy, but Muhammad wisely restrained them from thus calling the attention of the Meccans to his recovery. He was then taken to a sheltered place behind the rocks where his wounds were dressed. As the blood was being washed off he said: 'How shall the people prosper that have thus treated their Prophet, who calleth them unto their Lord? Let the wrath of God burn against the men that have besprinkled the face of His Apostle with blood.' Baidawi says the following verse was then revealed:—

Muhammad is no more than an apostle: other apostles have already passed away before him: if he die, therefore, or be slain, will ye turn upon your heels.

No one can die except by God's permission, according to the Book that fixeth the term (of life). — Suratu Ali 'Imran (iii) 138-9.

This was intended to allay the consternation which the report had spread amongst the Muslims. The Meccans searched for his body, but did not find it. Abu Sufyan approached as near as was safe and shouted out: 'Is Muhammad among you?' Getting no reply, he said 'Is Abu Bakr among you?' but no answer came. Then he sang out, 'Is Umar with you?' There was still silence, and so convinced that he was dead the Meccans then, in the usual indecisive way in which the Arab tribal conflicts were conducted, retired from the field of battle. The Meccan army

might easily have entered Madina and the aftercourse of Arabian history might thereby have been changed; but they turned towards home, satisfied with having at last taken their revenge for the defeat at Badr.

After the battle the women, mutilated some of the bodies of the slain. Abu Sufyan disclaimed all responsibility for this disgraceful act and said, what is no doubt true, that he had not ordered it to be done; but according to the Muslim historians, who are not generous in their estimate of their enemies, he was not very sorry about it. He also gave notice that he would return to Badr in the following year. By the order of the Prophet the Muslims said: 'Let it be so.' The Meccans, in accordance with the usual indecisive results of Arab warfare, failed to pursue their victory and retired to Mecca.

The Muslims then went in search of their killed and wounded. When Hamza's mutilated corpse was brought in, Muhammad was very much grieved and said that, if God gave him a victory, he would mutilate seventy Meccans in the same manner. Then Gabriel brought this verse:—

If ye make reprisals, then make them to the same extent that ye were injured;
but if ye can endure patiently, best will it be for the patiently enduring. —
Suratu'n-Nahl (xvi) 117.¹

¹ Muir points out that this verse occurs in a late Meccan Sura and so considers that it does not apply to this event (*Life of Mahomet*, vol. iii, p. 179); but most commentators, including

The intention of the Prophet was clear, and the commentators ¹ allow that retaliation was permitted; only that it should be 'to the same extent', i.e. on one not on seventy persons. Still they admit that Muhammad exercised a wise forbearance in following the last clause of the verse and in doing nothing.

The way in which this subject is treated in the 'Spirit of Islam' (p. 158) is noteworthy. The author says: 'Even Mohammed was so moved by indignation as to declare that the dead of the Koreish should in future be treated in like manner. But the gentleness of his nature conquered the bitterness of his heart. "Bear wrong patiently," he preached; "verily, best it will be for the patiently enduring." And from that day the horrible practice of mutilation which prevailed among all the nations of antiquity was inexorably forbidden to the Moslems.' It will be seen that the first clause of the verse [Suratu'n-Nahl (xvi) 117] is not quoted, which so far from 'inexorably' forbidding mutilation clearly allows it, on condition that it does not exceed the crime for which it is a retaliation. That Muhammad, at times, showed

Syed Amir 'Ali, say that it was revealed on this occasion. Nöldeke who agrees with them, says that Tirmidhi and the author of the *Itqan* place it at the taking of Mecca. He shows that in the Suratu n-Nahl there are several Madina verses. — *Geschichte des Qorans*, pp. 110, 111.

¹ *Tafsir-i-Husaini*, vol. i, p. 381; Baidawi, vol. i, p. 529; *Khalasatu't-Tafasir*, vol. i, p. 584.

gentleness, no student of his life will deny; but in this case the words about patience are not his, but were brought by Gabriel ¹ and, according to the orthodox view of inspiration, are the words of God himself; and Muhammad can only be said 'to preach' them in the sense that he delivered exactly what was revealed to him, and that the words are not his at all. ² If the hard and unintelligent idea of inspiration which Muslims hold could be given up then, and not till then, can this verse be used to show the gentleness of the Prophet. No doubt the practice of mutilation is now given up, but it cannot be said that the Qur'an absolutely forbids a restricted form of it.

Muhammad prayed over the mutilated corpse of Hamza. After this was done, the body of each martyr was brought to the same spot and a prayer (namaz) was then said over each one in succession. Seventy prayers were said over the body of Hamza. The martyrs, as they were thenceforth called, were buried just as they were in their blood-sprinkled garments, for said Muhammad: 'God will raise them up at the last day in such a state that blood will flow from their wounds'.

On the march back to Madina the men and women of each tribe that was passed by, though

¹ *Raudatu's-Safa*, Part ii, vol. ii.

² The terms used by the commentators are 'this verse descended', 'God sent it', the usual forms for saying it came not out of the Prophet's mind, but from heaven.

themselves mourning for their dead, were glad to see the Prophet safe and said: 'Any calamity besides that of losing this is trifling and easy to bear.' On arriving at Madina he observed that, though there was general lamentation, no sound of wailing came from Hamza's house; so he sent women to weep then till midnight.

It was now brought to the knowledge of the Prophet that some of the Meccans regretted that they had retired from the contest so soon; so he anticipated another possible attack and, to encourage his followers, he ordered Billah, the Mu'adhdhin, to shout out the following notice: 'The Apostle of God orders you to hasten and seek the enemy, but none are to sally forth on this business, except those who were present at the battle field of Uhud.' By a rapid march the army, though many men were still smarting from their wounds, reached Hamra al-Asad, a place about twelve miles from Madina; but the Meccans had left it the day before. Baidawi says that this verse was then revealed:—

As to those who after the reverse¹ which befel them, respond to God and the Apostle — such of them as do good works and fear God shall have a great reward. — Suratu Ali 'Imran (iii) 166.

Then Ma'bud, a friend of Muhammad, though he was not yet a Muslim, after condoling with the

¹ i.e. at Uhud.

Prophet at Hamra al-Asad went forth and overtook the Meccan army and gave such an exaggerated account of the strength of the Muslim force that the Meccans retired as hastily as possible to Mecca, Ma'bud then sent a messenger to Muhammad to inform him of the success of his stratagem.

Muhammad halted at Hamra al-Asad for three days, and then returned to Madina. This halt seems to show that he did not really wish to enter into conflict with the enemy, for he could, no doubt, have overtaken them; but the march served to impress the Arab tribes with his vigour, and so effected its purpose of restraining them from making attacks on what they might consider a beaten people.

The battle of Uhud was looked back upon with peculiar interest. The Prophet visited the place every year ¹ and blessed the martyrs buried there, saying: 'Peace be on you for all that ye endured, and a blessed future.' Fatima said that one day she went to Uhud and said at the graves, 'Peace be on thee, O uncle of the Prophet,' ² and the response came, 'on thee be peace.' Other visitors, Rahmatu'llah and 'Utaf bin Khalid, also say that a similar reply was made to their salutations. The names of the martyrs are all recorded and their

¹ The Khalifas Abu Bakr and 'Umar kept up this custom.

² i.e. Hamza.

memory is kept very precious. Marvellous stories are told about them. It is said, for instance, that they will rise at the Last Day with their wounds shining red, and an aroma like musk proceeding therefrom. But notwithstanding the halo of glory which Tradition has cast around the men who fell at Uhud, the defeat was, at the time, a very serious blow to the Prophet's cause. It required all the adroitness and skill, of which he was such a master, to avert a greater danger than the loss in battle of seventy followers. Many murmured at their defeat and said that 'were we to have gained aught in this affair none of us had been slain in this place.' Then the Prophet is told to say:—

Had ye remained in your homes, they who were decreed to be slain would have gone forth to the places where they lie, in order that God might make trial of what was in your breasts and might discover what was in your hearts. —
Suratu Ali 'Imran (iii) 148.

Thus, to have remained in Madina would have been of no advantage. Revelations now came in abundance to explain why this defeat came to test their constancy, and how it was the result of their own disobedience. Still, the broad fact remained that the victory of Badr had been extolled as a signal mark of God's good pleasure. Ought not, then, this defeat to be looked upon as an equally clear sign of the divine displeasure? The position was so

serious ¹ that many verses in the Suratu Ali 'Imran, the third Sura, are devoted to explanations ² concerning it. It is a most instructive example of the historical development of the Qur'an and of the great value a continuous course of revelations was to the Prophet in the changing episodes of his eventful life. I give a few now by way of illustration.

The murmuring of 'Abdu'llah ibn Ubbay and others is met by the verse:—

O ye who believe! be not like the infidels who said of their brethren when they had travelled by land, or gone forth to war, 'Had they kept with us, they had not died, and had not been slain!' God purposed that this affair should cause them heart sorrow! — Suratu Ali 'Imran (iii) 150.

The fatal move of the archers from their assigned position and the blame laid upon them for the defeat is thus described:—

Already had God made good to you this promise, when by His permission ye destroyed your foes, until your courage

¹ The Quraish attempted to persuade the Muslims to renounce their faith in the Prophet, but he had a revelation ready:—

O ye who have believed! if ye obey the infidels,, they will cause you to turn upon your heels and ye will fall back into perdition. — Suratu Ali 'Imran (iii) 142.

Baidawi says, the Munafiqun, or Hypocrites, are here referred to, who after the defeat said to the believers, 'return to your religion and your brethren; had Muhammad been a prophet he had not been slain.'

² This Sura was highly valued by the Prophet. It is recorded that he said, 'Whoso reads this Sura of the family of 'Imran shall for each verse receive a safe conduct over the bridge of Gehenna.'

failed you, and ye disputed about the order ¹ and disobeyed, after that (the Prophet) had brought you within view of that for which ye longed.

Some of you were for this world ² and some for the next. — Suratu Ali 'Imran (iii) 145-6.

The victory was in their hands, but the order to stand steadfast was not obeyed and defeat followed.

After the flight began the Prophet called on them to return, saying, O Muslims, I am the Prophet of God, come to me, come;' but no one turned towards him:—

When ye came to the height and took no heed of any one, while the Prophet in your rear was calling you to the fight! God hath rewarded you with trouble upon trouble, that ye might not have to be chagrined at your loss of booty, or at what befell you.³ — Suratu Ali 'Imran (iii) 147.

The battle was a test of the obedience of the Muslims and of the soundness of their belief.

We alternate these days of success and reverses among men that God may know those who have believed . . . that God may test those who believe and destroy the infidels. — Suratu Ali 'Imran (iii) 134-5.

When a reverse hath befallen you, the like ⁴ of which ye had before inflicted, say ye: 'Whence is this?' say: 'It is

¹ 'Order of the Prophet'.— *Khalasatu't-Tafasir*, vol. i, p. 311.

² Baidawi says, 'the commander remained in his place with less than ten men: the rest made for the booty'.

³ Baidawi explains the 'trouble upon trouble' to be sorrow for the pain they had caused Muhammad, or grief over the defeat, and that it was sent lest they should grieve over the loss of booty.

The reference to booty shows how important a factor in these battles the desire for plunder really was.

⁴ At Badr the Muslims inflicted a loss on the Meccans.

from yourselves,¹ for God hath power over all things'. — Suratu Ali 'Imran (iii) 159 [165]. That which befell you on the day when the armies met was by the will of God, and that He might know the faithful and that He might know the hypocrites. — Suratu Ali 'Imran (iii) 159 [166-7].

The Jews taunted the Muslims with this defeat and to them it could be said:—

Muhammad is no more than an apostle, other apostles have already passed away before him; if he die, therefore, or be slain, will ye turn upon your heels? But he who turneth on his heels shall not injure God at all; and God will reward the thankful.

No one can die except by God's permission, according to the Book that fixeth the term (of life). — Suratu Ali 'Imran (iii) 138-9 [144-5].

The primary reference, however, is to Muhammad's supposed death at Uhud and the argument here is that even had it been so Islam would not necessarily be false, or deserve the contempt of the Jews, for in the Traditions it is recorded that when he fell, the believers said: 'What if Muhammad be dead, Muhammad's Lord dieth not and verily His Apostle hath finished his work. Fight on for your faith'. It was the Munafiqun who said: 'Had he been a prophet, he had not been killed, return to your brethren and your religion'.

According to Waqidi, the following verse refers to the defection of 'Abdu'llah ibn Ubbay, but

¹ Baidawi explains this to mean 'owing to what they themselves committed in disobeying the command, and leaving their station.'

others say it is a reference to the Munafiqun, who dissuaded the people from fighting:—

O ye who believe! be not like the infidels, who said of their brethren when they had travelled by land or had gone forth to war, 'Had they kept with us, they had not died, and had not been slain.' — Suratu Ali 'Imran (iii) 150.

Those who turned their backs before the battle are spoken of thus:—

Believers, why profess ye that which ye practise not! — Suratu's-Saff (lxi) 2.

They are reminded that nothing happens by chance for:—

No mischance chanceth either on earth, or in your own persons, but ere we created them, it was in the Book (of eternal decrees).¹ — Suratu'l-Hadid (lvii) 22.

They were not to be disheartened at the result, for:—

How many a prophet hath combated those who had with them many myriads!² Yet were they not daunted at what befell them on the path of God, nor were they weakened nor did they basely submit. — Suratu Ali 'Imran. (iii) 140.

As to those who after the reverse which befell them respond to God and the Apostle, such of them as do good works³

¹ Nöldeke places this Sura after the battle of Uhud when a great evil had happened; but most Muslim commentators give a general meaning to it, and so, it may not refer to Uhud at all.

² For various interpretations of this word and for the various readings, see *The Historical Development of the Qur'an*, pp. 156-7.

³ Baidawi says this verse was revealed when the Muslims, still smarting from their wounds, were ready at Hamra al-Asad to go on with the war. This was a 'good work' and showed 'fear of God'.

and fear God, they shall have a great reward. — Suratu Ali 'Imran (iii) 166.

The confession of the fault of the Muslims is noticed in:—

Nor said they more than this: 'O our Lord, forgive us our sins and our mistakes in this our work; and set our feet firm, and help us against the unbelieving People.' — Suratu Ali 'Imran (iii) 141.

The commentator Muzhar says: 'Two faults were committed at Uhud. The Munafiqun were weak in faith and the Muslims fled in terror.'¹

The blessed state of the martyrs is noticed in:—

Repute not those slain on God's path to be dead. Nay, alive with their Lord, are they richly sustained. Rejoicing in what God of His bounty hath vouchsafed them . . . filled with joy at the favours of God and at this bounty.² — Suratu Ali 'Imran (iii) 163-4.

The Muhajirun are specially noticed in:—

They who have fled their country and quitted their homes and suffered in my cause and have fought and fallen, I will blot out their sins from them, and I will bring them into gardens beneath which the streams do flow. — Suratu Ali 'Imran (iii) 194.

The hopefulness of the Prophet is seen in words taken from a Sura delivered after the

¹ *Khalasatu't-Tafasir*, vol. i, p. 308.

² Baidawi says it refers 'to the glory of martyrdom, the possession of eternal life, nearness to God and the enjoyment of the pleasures of Paradise'. Vol. i, p. 184.

The Traditions give marvellous accounts of their state. I give one: 'When believers were martyrs at Uhud the most High God put their souls into the bodies of green birds which eat and drink of the fruits and rivers of Paradise'. — *Khalasatu't-Tafasir*, vol. i, pp. 320-1.

battle of Uhud. They give a rebuke to the faint-hearted:—

He it is who hath sent His Apostle with guidance and the religion of truth that, though they hate it who join other gods with God, He may make it victorious over every other religion. — Suratu's-Saff (lxi) 9.

Thus, though Islam had met with a reverse, all would come right and finally it would become the one universal religion which all would accept and obey.

The final conclusion of the whole matter is a verse which the commentator Husain interprets as having a reference to war and conflict:—¹

O ye who believe! be patient and vie in patience, and be firm and fear God, that it may be well with you. — Suratu Ali 'Imran (iii) 200.

The close attention which the Prophet paid to this subject, the many revelations he put forth regarding it,² the anxiety he showed to prevent any defection amongst his followers in consequence of it — all these things show how important an episode this defeat at Uhud was in the career of Muhammad. Setting aside the marvels with which Tradition has enriched the

¹ It may also refer to control over passions and evil: but the two interpretations are given by Baidawi, 'Abdu'llah bin 'Abbas and other commentator. The warlike one is given by all and, as the verse occurs in a Sura so full of the battle of Uhud, this interpretation is the more probable one.

² For a vivid description of the delivery of those apologetic verses, see Muir's *Mahomet*, vol. iii, pp. 194-5.

accounts of the battles of Badr and of Uhud, and passing over the alleged divine interposition, and dealing with them simply as historical events, the conclusion seems to be that the immediate cause of the battle of Badr was Muhammad's attempt to capture a Meccan caravan, and of the battle of Uhud his successful seizure of one. Whatever may have been the state of feeling between the men of Mecca and the men of Madina, it does not appear that in these two conflicts the former were the original aggressors.

We have no accounts given by the Quraish. All our information comes from Muslim sources, but even then an impartial student may be led to have some sympathy for the Meccans. They had to fight for their very existence as a commercial community and for freedom to carry on their daily business. These two battles were, from the standpoint of the men of Mecca, wars of defence and the Muslims were clearly the aggressors.

END