

Muslims in Britain and the start of the First World War

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Introduction

Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din (d. 1932), Muslim missionary from Lahore, then in British India, arrived in England in September 1912, with the aim of placing before the public the teachings of Islam in their true light, and combating the ill-informed, distorted and ugly image of this religion which prevailed here as well as in the West generally. In early 1913 he came across the mosque in Woking which had been built by Dr G.W. Leitner (d. 1899), a scholar of orientalism, with financial help from Muslim rulers of the states of Bhopal and Hyderabad Deccan in India. The mosque was opened only on special occasions and was generally derelict and disused. Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din had the mosque opened and established at its premises the Woking Muslim Mission in August 1913.

Under this Mission, the Mosque provided a permanent prayer venue as well as meeting place for Muslims in Britain. The Woking Mosque and Mission quickly became the national centre of Islamic activity in Britain, and its Imam was regarded as the religious head of the Muslim community of the U.K. The resident Muslim community at that time consisted of Muslims from overseas who were here as students, scholars, businessmen, professionals and diplomats, and it also included British people who had embraced Islam. Over the next fifty years, visiting dignitaries and leading figures from the Muslim world used to come to the Woking Mosque for religious and other meetings during their stay.

Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din also launched the monthly *Islamic Review* in February 1913, which remained in publication till around 1970. Besides containing articles on religious issues, it published news relating to Muslims in Britain and thus its archives are a unique chronicle of the history of Islam and Muslims in this country during those years.

The First World War

Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din was working tirelessly for his mission — being invited to various cities to give lectures on Islam, delivering lectures at the Mosque itself, receiving visitors, dealing with an enormous amount of correspondence from all over the world, editing the *Islamic Review*, sending reports of his work back to India to be published there — when the First World War broke out in August 1914. In a report written on 5th August, published in Lahore at the beginning of September, he describes the outbreak of the war, its effect on Britain, and how Muslims should respond. He also mentions the effect on his mission and on his own plans to return to India. Below we translate his report in full from the Urdu.¹

“ Brethren, *assalamu alaikum wa rahmatullah wa barakatuhu*

An astonishingly swift revolution

What a wonder of Allah! Within ten days the world has changed altogether. What to write and what not to write! On 23rd July, Austria gave Serbia an ultimatum of 48 hours, the details of which you must have read in the newspapers. And on 4th August Great Britain issued an ultimatum to Germany, war being declared at midnight. In the history of the world, never before have events proceeded with such lightening speed. Now there is war all around. The note to Serbia was issued on the 23rd. On the 24th the Russian cabinet considered it. On the 25th the reply from Serbia was declared unsatisfactory by Austria. On the 27th Sir Edward Grey called for a conference of the great powers on the situation. On the 28th Austria declared war on Serbia. On the 30th Russia started mobilizing its troops. On the 31st relations between Germany and Russia became strained. On 1st August Germany declared war on Russia. On the 2nd

1. *Paigham Sulh*, Lahore Ahmadiyya newspaper, 1–3 September 1914, p. 1 and 4.

German forces started advancing towards France and declared war. At the same time, relations became strained between Belgium and Germany.

Today, on the 5th, seven powers are ranged in the field of battle, trying to destroy one another. Austria and Germany are on one side, and Russia, France, Belgium, England and Serbia are on the other. News has just been received that Poland is now involved.

It is absolutely astonishing. European diplomacy has, in fact, very wisely been preventing these disastrous days from coming. But the events mentioned above acquired their own momentum with such speed that all human proposals proved fruitless. There is no doubt that if these wise nations had taken even twice the time before putting their resolutions into action, this scene of disaster might possibly have been averted. However, the problem was that before one crisis could be resolved, another raised its head. The present British government tried very hard, firstly, that peace should be maintained, and if not, then Britain be kept out of this world conflagration. In my opinion, in this matter the rulers of the British state cannot be praised too highly. They tried every way to extinguish this international fire, but fate had made the events pass so rapidly that the British people had unwillingly to jump into it.

A heart-rending scene

May Allah have mercy on His creation! The world in its history has never before witnessed the bloody scenes which will come into view shortly. In every country, not thousands, but hundreds of thousands of young men are bidding farewell, perhaps forever, to their children, their wives and their mothers. Ah! what a heart-rending scene. Seeing photographs in newspapers of how soldiers are departing from their families, brings tears to my eyes. There are thousands of families in which weddings have taken place in the past week or two, and today the bride-grooms are separating from their brides.

Consequences of a despicable, false ideology

Why has this happened? Only because the arrogance of man has gone beyond tolerable limits. That accursed ideology which, although it did have some truth in it, was conceived of in a wrong, despicable way, and misused. Today it has borne fruit. It is true that the lower elements have to be sacrificed for the higher ones, and the struggle for life requires that for one to survive, another has to meet destruction. However, here this ideology has been so far extended that, under its laws, each party considers itself to be the superior, and having the right to destroy what it regards as inferior. One part of the world arrogated to itself the right to belong to the higher category and legitimized all actions for its survival. The necessary consequence was that, after a while, this despicable ideology of survival should show its effect and they, the ones considering themselves superior, would decide among each other who is superior out of them and has the right to eradicate others for its own existence. This is the ideology which led to conceit and haughtiness. In the end it brought to us the present days.

No one realized that the entire system of the world depended on the survival of all the elements and their mutually harmonious actions. This was the secret which Islam expressed in the one sentence *Al-hamdu li-llahi rabb-il-alam* [“All praise is for Allah, Lord of the **worlds**”], which was rendered by Saadi [13th century Persian poet] in one meaningful poetical line as: “The children of Adam are limbs of one body”. Yes, all of us humans are brethren. We all have equal powers and capabilities. The secret of our survival relies, not on the destruction of one by another, but on mutual co-operation. If one man or nation has the right of existence, so does another man or nation have the same right. Since it was believed essential for European civilization to root out non-European elements from here, would it not become necessary for Teutonic civilization to extirpate the Slavonic element from Europe? A wrong foundation always produces wrong results.

We wish that the world would understand the secret why Islam preached the lesson of the brotherhood and unity of all mankind. Whatever may be the causes of the present war, no one can deny that it is not the outcome of one day's preparation. For more than the past twenty years, this tribulation has been hovering on the horizon of Europe, which has at last made its appearance. Every nation considers it legitimate for its survival to utterly destroy another. May Allah have mercy even now, and the less human blood is shed the better.

Prayer to God

Human effort to prevent this war is, in fact, at an end now. The Hand of the Powerful One has shown that events of the world are not in human hands but elsewhere. The Balkan war [of 1912] came suddenly and is now insignificant in comparison with this European conflict. Of course, we must bow our heads to that Mighty, Wise God and pray to Him that He may have mercy on His creatures, deal with their errors and transgressions by exercising forgiveness, and bring this war to an end very soon.

Exemplary attitude of the English nation

On this occasion, the Western nations have everywhere followed a path which is highly worth emulating. Till yesterday there were two political parties among these nations, whose differences were an established fact of history. However, at the time of this great danger, these parties have set aside their differences. The scene in the House of Commons on 3rd August was worthy of great respect and praise. When Sir Edward Grey presented the policy of the present government, the first person to support him was the leader of the opposition Bonar Law. Everyone knows of the friction between Ulster and the present government on the Irish question. Some even think that one of the reasons why the Germans launched the war is that they believe that the problem of Ireland cannot be resolved. Nevertheless, on 3rd August the Ulster faction itself announced through the Irish leader Mr Redmond that their military resources, which had been

put together for their self-defence, would now be used for the common cause of the war.

Ah! Muslims should take a lesson from this example. There are no political differences between us. The government [i.e., British rule of India] has freed us from such disputes. But do we not face a religious field of battle set up against our religion? Have not others made full preparations to strive against Islam in every way? Is not the existence of Islam as a religion a common cause of us? Is not the propagation of Islam our common religious obligation? Is not religion dearer to us than all worldly and political aims? At this time we have no political responsibilities. But is not the survival of our religion a most difficult issue? Muslims! for God's sake learn a lesson from the Western nations. We too face the greatest difficulties for the continued existence of our religion. You do not have the kind of differences which exist here between political parties. For the sake of the survival of your religion and its propagation, can you not put a cover on your differences? You can, if you so wish.

What should Muslims of India do at this time?

What should we Muslims do at this time? I think that the will of God has joined our destiny with that of Great Britain. It is our duty to support this state. It is important that we provide practical proof of our loyalty. If at this time some were to resort to anarchism or sedition in some part of India, it would be the duty of Muslims to take the lead in supporting the government to end such commotion. At this time, when the attention of all the authorities is towards Europe, India must remain above all kinds of disputes. There must be no incident in India to give anxiety to the authorities, and should such an incident take place Muslims must deal with it themselves. Muslims, due to their religion, are loyal and obedient to the state. They have the right to draw the attention of the government to their rights, but there is a time and place for everything. I believe this is a time when Muslims should ignore any local concerns, and if they have any complaints they should postpone them for the time being. They should

show sympathy and loyalty to the rulers of the time. This is what Islam teaches and this is what religion aims at.

Propagation of the faith

Our Mission here at this time cannot draw public attention for some time. I will write in detail about this later. This war has turned all thoughts towards itself. No one has any room left in his mind to think about anything else.

My return

I have written in an earlier letter that I have decided to perform the *hajj*, and Mirza Sultan Ahmad¹ and Lord Headley² intend to perform it with me as well, and we have written to Thomas Cook to arrange a passage. But the events of these ten days have altered everything. His Lordship cannot leave England under these circumstances. As to myself and the Mirza *sahib*, the puzzle is how can we travel and which route should we take? The plan was that we would travel through Europe to reach Constantinople.³ From there we would pass through Syria, Jerusalem, Damascus, Beirut and Madinah, and reach Cairo. After seeing some places in Egypt, we would travel to Jeddah via the Suez Canal, from Jeddah to Makkah, and from Makkah to Bombay.

On 25th July we gave up the plan to cross Europe and thought that we would go by sea from Marseille to Constantinople. On 2–th July⁴ this plan had to be given up as well since it became difficult to travel through France. We then thought that we could go directly to Constantinople from Tilbury, all the way by sea. On 1st August we had to give up the idea of going to Constantinople as well. By yesterday evening the plan was to go

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1. Eldest son of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, being from his first wife.
 2. Peer (d. 1935) who declared his acceptance of Islam in November 1913 and worked with Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din in the propagation of Islam.
 3. Later re-named as Istanbul.
 4. The digit after “2” is not legible in the printed report. The date would obviously be from 26th to 29th July.

directly to Suez by ship, and after performing *hajj* return to India. The events of yesterday and today have made this plan doubtful as well, since in the Mediterranean too hostilities between France and Germany have broken out at sea. I am now perplexed as to wherefrom and by which route I should go.¹ I have just received a letter from Lord Headley, saying that under these circumstances he cannot leave England.

Then there is another difficulty, although this will become clear next Friday, the day after tomorrow. From then, all transactions in gold coins will be stopped, and only notes will be used. There will be a one Pound note and a ten shilling² note. This is a wise step by the government to save the country from financial difficulties. However, it creates difficulties for us. The notes will be accepted in England, but who will accept them outside England? If we were coming directly from London, it is fine because the fare and expenses of the passage can be paid using these notes, to reach Bombay. However, if we are to go to the *hajj*, then unless we have gold coins, how can the expenses of the *hajj* or of reaching Madinah be paid? This is another complication facing me.

Request for prayer

Anyhow, please ask all our friends to pray for us. This is a time of trial and problems. We are utterly weak and frail creatures. May God have mercy on us and deal with us with His grace. My health was not good. So for six days I have been away from home at a seaside. There is some improvement. May God the Most High be the Guardian and Helper of us all. We are created weak, while God is entirely and wholly grace and mercy. Whatever tribulation comes upon us, it is created by our own hands.

May God have mercy on us, forgive our negligence, and deal with us with His grace and mercy.

— Broadstairs [Kent], 5th August [1914], Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din. ”

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1. An Editor's Note at the end of this report states that a telegram was received in Lahore to inform that Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din had boarded a ship on 28th August.
 2. That is half of a Pound, which today is 50 pence.

Eid-ul-Fitr, 23rd August 1914

In 1914, *Eid-ul-Fitr*, the festival following the month of Ramadan, was marked at the Woking Mosque on Sunday 23rd August. It was the first *Eid* at the Woking Mosque since the establishment of the Woking Muslim Mission by Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din at that Mosque just a year earlier. The function was reported in the *Surrey Herald*, from which its report was reproduced in the *Islamic Review*, October 1914 (p. 453–455). That report, published under the title and subtitles '*Muslim Festival at Woking, The Eid-ul-Fitr, Visit of an Indian Prince*', is as follows.

“ One of the unique features of Woking is the stately Mosque, a view of which is obtainable from passing trains. There are visitors to the Muslim house of prayer every day, and there are few who do not make a special point of seeing the interior while spending a holiday in the neighbourhood.

Well attended lectures are held every Sunday afternoon, but the largest gathering known at the Mosque assembled on Sunday for the “Eid-ul-Fitr,” or the Festival of the Breaking of the Fast. From the early morning Muslims began to pour into Woking by trains, and at eleven o'clock the prayer was commenced.

The assembly was a brilliant one, and the spotless whiteness of the interior of the Mosque threw out in bold relief the multi-coloured garments of the large gathering, amongst whom was His Highness the Ruler of Bahawalpur. The Mosque proved to be too small for all, and carpets were spread on the steps and in the courtyard.

The prayers were said in Arabic language, and formulas magnifying and glorifying God were recited. The leader of the ceremony was Moulvie Sadr-ud-Din, B.A., B.T.,¹ and his words were repeated for those outside

1. He had arrived at Woking from Lahore in June 1914 to relieve Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din who, via pilgrimage to Makkah, returned to India for two years.

to follow by Shaikh Noorahmad. The prayers were said according to Muslim customs — bowing, kneeling, and prostrating.

After the prayer a sermon was preached by Moulvie Sadr-ud-Din, and many references were given from the Bible and the Quran. At its conclusion an appeal was made for the usual collection on behalf of the poor, which is the custom at all Muslim festivals, and the money will be distributed among poor in Woking. The congregation then repeated several times the following words, but in the Arabic language: “God is great ! God is great ! All praises and glorification are due to God!” During the ceremony members of the public of Woking were in the Mosque to witness the proceedings, at the close of which an English lady made a declaration embracing Islam.

The gathering then proceeded to the lawn in front of the Memorial House, where lunch comprising Indian dishes was partaken of.

To commence the afternoon proceedings the Muslims made a procession through the streets, evoking considerable interest in the novel sight. Prior to the commencement of the lecture the Mosque was becoming quite full, and it was found necessary to adjourn to the lawn in order to provide ample accommodation.

The speaker, Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din, leader of the Muslims in England, being with the processionists, the gathering was entertained by an address from Shaikh Khalid Sheldrake, who explained misrepresentations and objections raised against Islam, and appealed for those present to investigate for themselves.

The procession having returned, Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din spoke for some time. He justified the action of the British Government at the present crisis, and said that the present material and physical civilisation, not being constructed upon a pure religious basis, was responsible for the terrible war.

Many of the public remained for tea which followed. The usual prayers were offered at the appointed hours, and the last function of the day was dinner, served in the Memorial House. Many speeches were made, and Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din was wished a safe and happy voyage when he leaves in a week or so to make the pilgrimage to Mecca and a short visit to India.

The whole day was apparently one of complete happiness, a noticeable feature being the way in which English people — Muslims and non-Muslims — volunteered their aid in the performance of various duties.

We are asked to say that the heartiest thanks are due to the host, Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din, to whose wide popularity and work for Islam the large gathering is accounted a tribute. ”

The Present War and the Prophet of Islam

Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din delivered a lecture at the Woking Mosque under the above title on 9th August 1914. This was in the Woking Mosque Sunday Lecture Series which had begun earlier that year. We quote this lecture below from the *Islamic Review*, September 1914, p. 384–386:

“ The other day, only a few weeks ago, when I was speaking of the Holy Prophet Muhammad and his life as the best specimen of humanity, I was asked, in after-lecture questions, if Muhammad as a warrior was also a desirable model for human imitation? The grim development of the events of the last fortnight have amply supported what I then said in reply. The mad dogs of war are unchained, and the world unfortunately is going to see the most disastrous havoc ever wrought upon humanity since its creation. No one desires the state of war. It retards civilisation, and cripples human advancement. It creates misery, and endangers all comfort and happiness. Yet, with all our boasted civilisation and refined ideas, we

are today within the iron clutches of war. We may blame the Kaiser or the Tsar as the immediate cause of this Western conflagration; but can one, even with a semblance of honesty, find fault with the action the British Government has been compelled so reluctantly to adopt in this unfortunate situation? We cannot admire Sir Edward Grey [Foreign Secretary] too much for all he did to avert or to localise the War; but he failed in all his noble efforts, and the events were so electric in their speed that within forty-eight hours a nation averse to war was dragged into it. The Foreign Secretary could not do better than to advise the course now so reluctantly adopted by the nation. It is in self-defence and for self-preservation, and could not arouse censure from any quarter. Even those members of the Cabinet who did not see their way to support Sir Edward were not so keen in their disapprobation of his measures. The Socialists have also seen the necessity of militarism at this juncture. It is a necessity: a question of life and death. It is an urgent call for a duty of sublimest character.

Could religion say anything against the noble response which the English nation has given by resorting to arms? A creed is not worthy the name if it teaches otherwise. The Church is here alive to the situation. The clergy come forward in unison with the laity to help the furtherance of national existence, and bless the arms with their benediction, though perhaps at the cost of their Christian conscience. Was not the Holy Prophet Muhammad placed under similar and more unfavourable circumstances when he was driven to arms in order to protect his life and that of his followers? For fully thirteen years they were subjected to the direst kind of persecution, which they bore with marvellous meekness and patience. A plan was started then to murder the Prophet, and, to thwart this heinous scheme, the Prophet fled from his native city. He found refuge in Medina for himself and his followers, but the enemy would not leave him even there. They wanted to pursue him to death. They came with arms towards Medina. They inflicted their first blow while the Prophet was at Mecca, and they came with the second after him. The “right cheek” had already

been struck, and the left one was aimed at. Should he remain inactive, and turn his left cheek to the enemy? Protected under the happy wings of peace, one perhaps might not realise the situation of the Prophet when the enemy had finished nine days out of twelve days' journey from Mecca in their march against Medina, where the Prophet's clan lived; and he was thus forced to leave his city with his little band to meet the enemy at some distance from the city.

But the present war perhaps supplies us with an apposite illustration. The Germans did not leave Berlin to invade England, nor as yet have they reached the English seas. If they violated Belgian neutrality, it was done to work out their strategy to attack France from the north-side. And yet all this has been thought — and very rightly — to endanger English safety. A step to secure self-preservation has been thought to be necessary. It has been taken with the whole nation's support. It meets the approval of the Church as well; but is it consistent with the teachings of Christ, either in words or in spirit? I say no. History has repeated the events of thirteen hundred years ago, and the English nation has retraced the footsteps of the Holy Prophet of Islam. The Blue Book has been laid down on the table of the House of Commons in justification of the present step, and Sir Edward Grey and the Prime Minister, in their historic speeches to vindicate their actions, have simply vindicated the Holy Prophet Muhammad (glorified be his name!). Mr. Asquith, with all his Nonconformist conscience, has been forced to put the Sermon on the Mount behind his back and follow the Lord of Islam. Yes, it is a truism that to wage war in self-defence and for self-preservation is a necessity, an essential virtue and true righteousness. Religion is practice and not theory. Human vitality is the only criterion as to the sanity of its teachings.

That Muhammad fought in self-defence when all other peaceful means to preserve his very existence became impossible appears from the verses of the Quran under which he first took to arms by the order of God. The verses run thus:

“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 forth from their homes wrongfully, only because they say ‘Our Lord is the God.’ And if God had not repelled some men by others, cloisters, and churches, and oratories, and mosques, wherein the Name of God is ever commemorated, would surely have been destroyed.” —
The Quran 22:40,41.

Muhammad and his followers “had been driven forth from their homes,” they had “suffered outrages,” their only crime being that they believed in one God. God must repel some men by others if the former intend to destroy the life and the property of the other. The very locality of the first three battles between the Prophet and his enemies decides this vexed question, and shows that the militarism of the Prophet was of a defensive kind and a necessity. The first battle took place at Bader, which stood at three days’ journey from Medina, the seat of the Prophet, and nine days’ journey from Mecca, the city of the enemy. The second battle was at Ohud, at one day’s journey from Medina and at eleven days’ journey from Mecca. The third was at Medina itself. The enemy came from Mecca while the Prophet was at Medina. Is it, therefore, difficult to ascertain who was the aggressor and who the defender?

It is all very well to preach passive morality from the pulpit, but it is a dead letter if it has not seen practice. We need not impeach the soundness of what has been taught in the name of Christ. Suffice it to say that His followers never cared to obey Him in His teachings. Christianity was meek and gentle when in serfs and slaves, but no sooner did she reach the very first step of the ladder to ascendancy through the royal conversion of Constantine than she forgot the teachings of the Master. But she could not do otherwise; what was taught was impossible, and, there being nothing as its substitute, she had to use her own discretion, and reaction followed. ”

Appeal to Women of the World

In the September 1914 issue, the *Islamic Review* comments on an appeal addressed to ‘Women of the World’, by one Katharine Halkett, published in London on 8th August 1914. It calls upon women of the world to arise and “demand that the war shall cease and that nations shall make a lasting peace”. Quoting this appeal, the *Islamic Review* comments as follows:

“ The sentiments thus beautifully expressed evoke our commendation; but, from the Muslim point of view, it was obviously necessary for Great Britain to declare war. Self-preservation is a natural instinct, and the very existence of England was threatened: thus we Muslims must support England to the utmost of our ability. Islam teaches that the use of arms in self-defence is perfectly legitimate, but not for aggressive measures. We invite the attention of Muslims and all others to the teachings of Islam upon these points. A Muslim must be loyal to the rulers, even should they be of a different race or creed. They are our natural guardians and protectors, they give us prosperity and security, and the free exercise of our religious beliefs; and therefore it is our bounden duty, as the Holy Quran has so eloquently pointed out, to support the Government to the utmost of our ability. ... Great Britain is the greatest Muslim Power of the present age, and is referred to as such by Muslim writers: therefore, in supporting Great Britain we support our own Muslim Government. ” (p. 395)

Maxims of War — Abu Bakr (First Caliph) and Lord Kitchener

Another article in the September 1914 issue of the *Islamic Review* (p. 396–398) quotes Lord Kitchener’s instructions to every soldier in the British army on conduct in war, such as “Be invariably courteous, considerate, and kind. Never do anything likely to injure or destroy property, and always look upon looting as a disgraceful act”. It then comments:

“ Commendable words, worthy of their author. A fine tribute to Islam and its whole maxims of war. One can easily trace the influence of Lord Kitchener’s touch with Muslim life. War is, after all, war. It has its justifications; though in rare cases, and man as yet has failed to banish it from the surface of the earth. We, however, do need some maxims to regulate martial activities, and Islam does not fail to supply them to us. Comparisons are not necessary, but for the enlightenment of our readers we are tempted to reproduce here the charge with which Abu Baker, the first Caliph, sent a Muslim campaign against Syria [in 7th century C.E.]. ”

Among the instructions of Abu Bakr reproduced in the article are:

“ If God should give you the victory, don’t abuse your advantages, and beware how you stain your swords in the blood of him who yields; neither touch ye the children, the women, nor the infirm old men whom ye may find among your enemies. In your progress through the enemy’s land cut down no palms, or other fruit trees; destroy not the products of the earth; ravage no fields; burn no dwellings; from the stores of your enemies take only what you need for your wants. Let no destruction be made without necessity, but occupy the city of the enemy; and if there be any that may serve as an asylum to your adversaries, them do you destroy. Treat the prisoners and him who renders himself to your mercy with pity, as God shall do to you in your need;... Let there be no perfidy nor falsehood in your treaties with your enemies; be faithful in all things, proving yourself ever upright and noble, and maintaining your word and promise truly. Do not disturb the quiet of the monk or hermit, and destroy not their abodes...”

The October 1914 issue of the *Islamic Review* contains several articles about the war, and also some news items. We quote below the first article from its beginning, and cut it short before the end for brevity.

The Present War — Civilisation and Religion

“Is ghar ko aag lag gai ghar ke chrag say”

“Oh, the house took fire from the very lamp burnt to light that house”.

“ How appositely this verse from Hindustani, which I have also translated into English, explains the present situation. It hints as to those factors which have chiefly created these heartrending conditions. The so-adored Civilisation, yes, and this very boast of the Western nations, inspired by Materialism, with no Divine Light to guide it, was sure to work out all that so grimly faces us today. Its seemingly rosy paths were leading us to this fiendish hell. They say that the German people have ignited this universal conflagration; but has not Germany for years stood head and shoulders above the other nations in the West in almost every branch of civilisation? Does not Europe owe a great debt to the people in Germany for all her recent advance in science, in art, and in philosophy? Yet the very home of material progress is today the hotbed of the most disastrous havoc that has ever visited humanity. What Europe took scores of years to build up under the propitious smiles of the so-called Civilisation is now going to be broken into pieces in days or even hours under the ominous grimaces of the same.

Religion, they say, creates fanaticism; but we do not find in the red annals of religion any parallel to this civilised madness and refined frenzy, which is going to rend the very bowels of the earth. I readily admit that religion in the past has for full fifteen years been knee-deep in blood; *Christian* Europe has seen ravines and rivulets of human gore in days past; but has religion anything whatsoever to contribute to the struggling out of this unthinkable deluge of the crimson life-fluid, with which civilised Europe will inundate the world? Wars have sometimes been waged in defence of religion, and have often been made a cloak to conceal political motives. But the present war is the greatest that the world has ever

seen, while the belligerents claim to be foremost in civilisation, with no zeal for religion. Though this war was electric in its speed, yet the different stages at which the various nations responded to the death-clarion establish the same fact. By comparison, the lower in civilisation showed the greater reluctance to take any part in the fateful drama. Many hold that the English nation is behind the others in art and culture; and that the Germans head the list; and here we see that Germany was the first and England the last to participate in hostilities. Is that a mere coincidence? Decidedly not. Material civilisation, devoid of those salubrious humanising influences which religion exerts on the human mind, bringing forth all that is noblest and best in man, could not fail to bring her votaries to this fatal pass. Are not these physical sciences, which one should rightly be proud to possess, chiefly responsible for making this war the most terrible, the most heinous, and the most devastating and bloodiest of all that have passed? Are not these the demons of civilisation — I mean those engines of war the possession of which inspires Germany to regard her position as invulnerable, and induces her to defy all the other nations? Calculate all that has been spent in the last quarter of a century on the manufacture of these weapons of war. Have not these instruments of human annihilation caused the heaviest drain on the exchequer of every nation in the West? And this all to bring us nearer to destruction and devastation.

We waged wars on the surface of the earth when we were ignorant and uncivilised: we became cultured and advanced in physical sciences, and airships and torpedoes came to add to our powers of destruction. These sciences, which, under the influence of a true religion from God, could be an immense blessing to mankind, have become a formidable curse to us, under the inspiration of a sordid materialistic philosophy. It is claimed that the present culture has equipped us with the best ideas of life: man has, after all, succeeded in these days of civilisation in finding out

the true philosophy of human life, which guarantees prosperity, happiness, and felicity. The theory of “the survival of the fittest” is the pride of materialistic philosophy. We cannot deny its strength; it is a truism and a useful theory of life. It should act as an effectual incentive to individual exertion to shake off lassitude and lethargy; but it has proved a most pernicious factor in the devastation of humanity. It created modern sordidness and inspired self-assertion, and has killed all those high sentiments of self-abnegation and self-restraint which make human life a real millennium. But while thought comes from heaven and not from earth, modern philosophy has received her inspiration from dumb, dead nature, which has produced most demoralising effects. In the vegetable kingdom they found every parasite, creeper and bramble eking out its existence through self-assertiveness at the expense of others; in the animal kingdom they found the lower species killed by the higher to feed and sustain it. Thus self-assertiveness was taken as the rule of life, and destruction of the inferior by the superior is thereby justified. This explains the extirpation of the Red Indian, and the gradual disappearance of very many races from the surface of the earth. This alone justifies the treatment meted out to the natives of the Congo and other tribes in European colonies!...

Yes, the theory of the survival of the fittest, misconceived and read in the light explained, could not fail to produce such dire results. It is solely responsible for the colour question, and to it racial differences owe their genesis. For more than fifty years past various nations in the West have claimed the right of the fittest against the rest of mankind; and is it to be wondered at if each of them in its turn tries to establish among themselves which is the fittest to survive, and uses the others as subservient to its own needs? That materialism had to create such conditions was a foregone conclusion: that material culture, with no Divine inspiration to bridle its activities, was to prove a dire curse to humanity, is after all an established fact. ” (p. 417–419)

Another article in the *Islamic Review*, October 1914 (p. 421–424), is by Lord Headley, from which we quote some extracts below.

Comrades in Arms by Lord Headley

“ We are now putting together a glorious page of history, which countless generations of our descendants will read with honest and grateful pride. ... If the spontaneous support forthcoming from all the British Colonies has elicited admiration, the equally spontaneous and affectionate outburst of loyalty and devotion from all parts of the Indian Empire has called into being a new consciousness of brotherly love.... There has been no hanging back, and the spirit which hundreds of years ago animated the Holy Prophet Muhammad when he was compelled to draw the sword in the cause of freedom, truth, and justice, now dominates all Britishers and Muslims who are fighting shoulder to shoulder in this war righteously undertaken in defence of right against the might of arrogant oppression.

The Muslims of the West are naturally proud of the efforts now being made by their Eastern Muslim brethren, and those sentiments have been fittingly expressed at a recent meeting of the British Muslim Society, when a resolution was passed congratulating those followers of Islam who are privileged to assist in carrying into effect those principles which characterised the life and dealings of the Holy Prophet...

One cannot help feeling intense thankfulness that we followed the example of the Holy Prophet, who always administered justice impartially, whether those appearing before him were Jews, Muslims, Christians, or Idolaters. We did the right thing, quite irrespective of any religious leanings or beliefs, and took just the very course Muhammad would have taken had he been with us....

Justice shall be done has often been a watchword of talismanic power in the East, and, thank God, it has been, and will, I hope, be our motto all through this war, in which Muslims, Christians, Jews and Hindus are all

showing the whole world that their moral sense of right and wrong is in no way warped or distorted by their particular religious views. ”

The Devotion of India

In the *Islamic Review*, October 1914 (p. 428–431), under the above title, there are several items of news relating to India’s participation in the war.

1. The King. The concluding part of the message from the King, George V, to the Princes and Peoples of India is printed, which relates specifically to India. In this message, the King said:

“ Among the many incidents that have marked the unanimous uprising of the populations of My Empire in defence of its unity and integrity, nothing has moved me more than the passionate devotion to My Throne expressed both by My Indian subjects, and by the Feudatory Princes and the Ruling Chiefs of India, and their prodigal offers of their lives and their resources in the cause of the Realm. Their one-voiced demand to be foremost in the conflict has touched my heart, and has inspired to the highest issues the love and devotion which, as I well know, have ever linked My Indian subjects and Myself. ”

2. The Viceroy of India. There is an extract from the speech of the Viceroy of India, Lord Hardinge, to the Viceroy’s Council, reported from Simla on 9th September, in which he announced:

“ It is no longer a secret that India has already despatched two splendid divisions of infantry to Europe and one cavalry brigade, while three more cavalry brigades will follow immediately. That we have been in a position to send over 70,000 combatants to fight for the Empire across the seas is a source of pride and satisfaction to India as a whole ... ”

He is also reported as having declared in Council:

“ It was, moreover, with confidence and pride that I was able to offer to his Majesty the first and largest military force of British and Indian troops for service in Europe that has ever left the shores of India. I am confident that the honour of this land and of the British Empire may be safely entrusted to our brave soldiers, and that they will acquit themselves nobly and ever maintain their high traditions of military chivalry and courage. ”

3. British Parliament. Announcements by the Secretary of State for India, Lord Crewe, and the Under-Secretary of State for India in the House of Commons, Charles Roberts, are quoted. The Secretary of State announced that, in addition to the offers of support made in India to the Viceroy, “offers have been received from Chiefs and others residing in this country”, and a list is given. The list contains the name of Mir Ghulam Ali Khan of Khairpur (a Muslim princely state, now in Pakistan) who offered “personal service in the field”.

Then a press report is quoted as stating: “On the reassembling of Parliament on September 9 both Houses were informed of the magnificent offers of service and money made in India to the Viceroy.”

A report of proceedings in Parliament, taken from *The Times*, is printed, from which we quote some passages below:

“ The House of Commons was aroused to a high pitch of grateful enthusiasm by the reading of the Viceroy of India’s telegram. The story which Mr. Charles Roberts had to unfold to the House was unlike anything which had ever been heard in the Imperial Parliament. ...

Mr. Roberts told how the rulers of the Native States, numbering nearly seven hundred in all, have offered their personal services and the resources of their States for the war. The Viceroy has selected many Princes and nobles for active service. ... Twenty-seven of the larger States in

India maintain Imperial service troops, and the services of every corps were placed at the disposal of the Government.

Several specially notable instances of the generosity and eager loyalty of the Chiefs were warmly cheered as the gallant recital continued. There were 50 lakhs of rupees, a third of a million pounds sterling from the Maharaja of Mysore, the hospital ship *Loyalty*, the Chief of Gwalior's offer of large sums of money and of thousands of horses as remounts, and promises of camels with drivers from the Punjab and Baluchistan. The Maharaja of Rewa has offered his troops, his treasury, and even his private jewellery for the service of the King-Emperor.

The House was profoundly moved by tidings of loyal messages and offers from Chitral and the Khyber tribes, and from the Nepal Durbar, beyond the borders of India. The most thrilling stroke came towards the end. The House heard with frank amazement, but with unbounded delight, that the Dalai Lama has offered 1,000 Tibetan troops for service under the British Government. The Viceroy added that lamas innumerable throughout the length and breadth of Tibet are offering prayers for the success of the British Army and for the happiness of the souls of all victims of the war. There was round upon round of cheers when an end was made of the reading of this unexampled document. ...

Lord Crewe read the dispatch in the House of Lords, together with the King Emperor's stirring message to the Princes and peoples of India, with its grateful recognition of "their prodigal offers of their lives and their resources in the cause of the Realm". "

A Resolution and a Prayer

A news item is published in the October 1914 issue of the *Islamic Review* (p. 421) under the title *A Resolution*. It is as follows:

“ At a meeting of the British Muslim Society held at the Mosque, Woking, on Sunday, September 20, the following resolution was proposed by its President, Lord Headley, seconded by Maulvi Sadr-ud-Din, and carried unanimously:-

WE DESIRE TO OFFER OUR WHOLEHEARTED CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR EASTERN BRETHREN NOW AT THE FRONT, AND TO EXPRESS OUR DELIGHT TO FIND THAT OUR CO-RELIGIONISTS IN ISLAM ARE FIGHTING ON THE SIDE OF HONOUR, TRUTH, AND JUSTICE, AND ARE CARRYING INTO EFFECT THE PRINCIPLES OF ISLAM AS INCULCATED BY THE HOLY PROPHET MOHAMMAD. ”

In the article by Lord Headley, *Comrades in Arms*, from which extracts have been quoted above, he also wrote:

“ In view of the terrible nature of the hostilities now going on all over the world, the following short prayer was added to those usually read at the Woking Mosque at the conclusion of the Sermon delivered by Maulvi Sadr-ud-Din on Sunday, September 20th:-

We beseech Thee, O God, to assist with Thy Almighty power, our brethren now engaged in a struggle in support of truth, justice, and honour. Do Thou help our soldiers, both Christian and Muslim, and be Thou a comfort to those who mourn the loss of relations and friends. ”

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