

**GEORGE BURY**

PAN-ISLAM

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**Pan-Islam**

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# George Wyman Bury

## Pan-Islam

### PREFACE

I have written this book to present the main factors of a many-sided problem – political, social and religious – in a form which the general public can easily grasp.

Modern democratic principles tend to give the public increasing control of international and inter-racial affairs, and therefore any contribution to public knowledge on such questions is in the interests of sound administration.

The book is not intended to advise those who actually handle these affairs: I give such advice, when required, in more detail and not through the medium of a published work.

"Pan-Islam" is an elementary handbook, not a text-book – still less an exhaustive treatise, but the questions it discusses are real enough. My qualifications for writing it are based on a quarter of a century's experience of the subject in most parts of the Moslem world, and I have studied the question in areas which I have not actually visited through intercourse with pilgrims from those parts.

I have no axe to grind or infallible panacea to advocate; I merely lay the result of my researches before the public for its information, as failing health has warned me to "pass the ball when collared," and I would like to think that the land where most of my life's work has centred will not be mishandled by cranks and opportunists after I have left the game.

An arm-chair is a sorry substitute for an Arab pony, and a garden plot for the highlands of Arabia Felix, but the human mind is not necessarily confined by such trammels, and if my environment is narrow I hope my book is not.

*G. Wyman Bury.*

Helouan, 27th July, 1919.

## CHAPTER I

### ITS ORIGIN AND MEANING

Much has been written about Christianity and Islam, so I hasten to inform my readers that this is not a religious treatise, nor do I class them with the globe-trotter who searched Benares brass-bazar diligently for "a really nice image of Allah" and pronounced the dread name of Hindustan's avenging goddess like an effervescing drink.

I presuppose that Christians or Moslems who read this book have got beyond the stage of calling each other pagans or *kafirs*, and it will have served its purpose if it brings about a friendlier feeling between the two great militant creeds whose adherents have confronted together many a stricken field.

Most people have heard of the pan-Islamic movement, especially during the War. Some of us have called it a political bogey and some a world-menace, but these are extremist views – it is really the practical protest of Moslems against the exploitation of their spiritual and material resources by outsiders.

Pan-Islam (as its name implies) is a movement to weld together Moslems throughout the world regardless of nationality. The ethics and ideals of Islam are more attainable to ordinary human beings than those of Christianity: whether it is better to aim high and score a partial success or aim lower and achieve is a matter of personal opinion and need not be discussed here, but one tangible fact stands out – that Islam, with its easier moral standard and frequent physical discipline of attitudes and observances connected with obligatory prayer, enters far more into the daily life of its adherents than Christianity does with us. Hence pan-Islam is more than a spiritual movement: it is a practical, working proposition which has to be reckoned with when dealing with Moslems even in secular matters.

Pan-Islam is no new thing – it is as old as the Hejira, and then helped to knit together Moslem Arabs against their pagan compatriots who were persecuting them. In the palmy days of the Abbaside Caliphate it was quiescent enough, and men of all creeds were welcomed at Baghdad for their art, learning, or handicraft when we were massacring Jews in London as part of a coronation pageant.

Medieval Moslems never fanned the movement into flame as long as they were let alone, and even now tribes living beyond the scope of missionaries and traders prefer the Christian traveller whom they know to the Moslem stranger from the coast whom they usually distrust, and who, to do him justice, seldom ventures among them, unless compelled by paramount self-interest, generally in connection with some European scheme or other.

Hitherto pan-Islam had been an instinctive and entirely natural *riposte* to the menace or actual aggression of non-Moslems; it assumed the character of a definite organisation under the crafty touch of that wily diplomat Abdul Hamid, once called by harsh critics "the Damned," though his efforts in that direction have been quite eclipsed by more recent exponents.

In extreme evangelical circles it used to be frequently urged that pan-Islam was a bugbear discovered, if not created, by one of India's most eminent Viceroy's, whose remarks thereon are said to have given Abdul Hamid the hint. This method of eliminating a danger by denying its existence has been discredited, since 1914, as completely as the somewhat similar one (attributed to Mississippi engineers) of sitting on the safety-valve just too long for safety. Moreover, in view of Abdul's undoubted ability, he probably discovered for himself its efficacy as a weapon of reprisal when hard pressed by pertinacious and inquisitive Ambassadors, for he often found himself much embarrassed in his dealings with Armenia and other domestic affairs by the intrusions of the more formidable Christian Powers.

Great Britain naturally felt the point of this weapon most as governing wide Moslem territories, and one can imagine some such interview as this:

"Frontier rectifications, my dear Sir Nicholas? By all means – and, talking about frontiers, I do hope affairs are quite quiet now on your north-west frontier; I take such an interest in my East Indian correspondence."

And those Britons who have handled Oriental affairs for the last twenty years can appreciate the extent of that interest when we remember that even while Yamen Arabs were fighting the Turks, their neighbours on the Aden side of the frontier were praying in their mosques that the Sultan and his troops might be victorious "by land and sea."

All this, however, was merely playing with intrigue as a political counterpoise; it remained for a Christian nation to put pan-Islam on a business footing. First we have polite bagmen calling at Stamboul with German guns and a German military system. Then "our Mr. William" of the well-known Potsdam firm of Hohenzollern and Sons made his great advertising campaign in the Near East; many of us remembered his theatrical visit to Saladin's tomb and the tawdry wreath with its bombastic inscription, "From the Emperor of the Franks to the Emperor of the Saracens – Greeting."

That astute "pilgrim" made himself especially affable to the American Protestant missionaries in the Holy Land, preached to a small but select congregation at the church of the Holy Sepulchre, and posed alternately as a pious but militant Moslem (when Hajji Guiyaum rode in military pomp into Jerusalem) and as a prince of peace. That the hospice of Kaiserin Augusta Victoria on the top of the Mount of Olives was loop-holed for musketry and mounted a searchlight in its tower that could signal with Haifa was possibly due to some wayward caprice of the builder, but it came in very useful later on. So did the scholarly researches of eminent Germans in Sinai, assisted as they were by maps which the Anglo-Egyptian authorities courteously placed at their disposal, and which formed a basis for a more detailed survey of wells and routes.

But the old firm at Potsdam excelled itself in its representatives on the Palestine coast. There was, for example, the German Consul at Haifa famed for his culture and diplomacy (the Teutonic brand), who also spoke Arabic, Turkish, French and English fluently. This gifted official frequented native cafés, where he fraternised with the local Arabs and conducted a vigorous verbal propaganda against the Entente. Then there was the German engineer who wrecked the British railway scheme to connect Haifa and Damascus and re-naturalised as a German citizen after being American Consul. The Belgian Vice-Consul too, that merry Hun, who was also agent for our Khedivial mail line. When the Turks came in against us this good and faithful servant danced on the Belgian and British flags and threw himself heart and soul into pan-Islamic propaganda.

Nor must we overlook that reverend pastor and Koranic scholar who distributed anti-Christian and more especially anti-British propaganda by means of native emissaries. Last but not least, the Herr Direktor of the Hejaz Railway, who was collecting railway material for Sinai before war broke out. Some time before the Turks came in he imported, for the alleged use of the Jewish technical school, so great a quantity of high explosives that it caused a panic in Haifa. Yet it did not sufficiently impress our Levantine Vice-Consul there for him to report it, though the German Consul's remarkable activity to get the stuff landed might have given him the hint.

At Jeddah our Khedivial Mail Agency, under the good old English name of Robinson, was a perfect nest of Germans and pro-German Dutchmen when I called there in 1912. They were very active early in the War, but had wisely disappeared before my last visit, when Jeddah fell to our blockade and bombardment.

As for Hodeidah, the chief port of Yamen, it was the happy hunting-ground of a great German firm, and the American Consul was himself a German.

Decidedly, for people who believed that they had a monopoly of Divine assistance, they had taken a lot of pains that their Holy War should be a success.

To grasp the world-wide conspiracy which hatched out so many formidable events during the War and to appreciate the causes which contributed to its final collapse we must take a comprehensive glance at the Ottoman Caliphate and how it came about.

Remember, the Ottoman Turks are not Semitic, as is the bulk of the Moslem world. Tradition derives them from Turk, son of Japhet, and they are a Turco-Mongol blend which most people agree to call Tartar. Their language is closely allied to Mongolian, though written in Arabic, or rather Persian, character, and its Arabic words are pronounced unintelligibly to an Arab. A true Turk learns Arabic with difficulty, and a far higher percentage of Britons in India speak Hindustani than Turks do Arabic in Turkish Arabia.

Then, again, look at their early history. Their Mongol-Turkish ancestors were driven westward because they made Mongolia too hot for them, and we hear of Turks smelting iron for their Mongol masters in what is now Eastern Turkestan until they threw off the Mongol yoke in A.D. 552, when Turkish history begins.

At the dawn of Islam (A.D. 632) Turks and Mongols were harrying each other all over the Caspian countries like rival wolf-packs, sometimes combining for a raid on their neighbours and then fighting over the loot. That is why you find racial Turks in such outlandish places as Merv, Khiva, Samarcand, Bokhara and Cabul, for the Turkish race is not confined to Asia Minor and Turkey in Europe, but is scattered over parts of Russia and China and Afghanistan.

Now to consider the Ottoman Turks, with whom we are chiefly concerned. They were superior to their Mongol fellow-wolves in that they could smelt iron and had some idea of constructive enterprise. They had also adopted Islam, which was a great advance from the Shamanistic wizardry and totem-worship they used to practise, and their contact with the Arabs who raided them and afterwards accepted their military service to the Caliphate had civilised them considerably. Their Seljouk cousins were already ruling in Asia Minor, whither they had been driven by the Mongols when a wandering Turkish band sought similar asylum there in the earlier part of the thirteenth century and intervened most opportunely to help the Seljouks repulse a Mongol raid; in return, the Seljouk Emperor gave them a grant of land in Bithynia.

In 1300 the Seljouk Empire was finally smashed by the Mongols, who withdrew eastward without occupying the country, for they were merely predatory and destructive and had no gift or desire for permanent colonisation. So it came about that the Ottoman Empire began in 1326 under Othman I in Bithynia and grew by absorption and lack of effective opposition until, in 1517, we find it spreading under Selim I (the Magnificent) to the gates of Vienna and extending from Germany to Persia and from Arabia to the Atlantic.

The benign sun of the Arabian Caliphate, under which learning and industry flourished securely, had long since set in blood under circumstances of treachery and murder which have hardly been surpassed even in the late war.

Under the later Abbasides, when the glories of the Caliphate were waning, there were bitter dissensions between Sunnis and Shiahs (the main orthodox and schismatic sects of Islam) which culminated in fierce rioting at Baghdad in 1258. The then Caliph was foolish enough to appeal for assistance against the schismatic seditionists to his Mongol neighbours. It had been done before under similar conditions, and even in these days such a manœuvre seems still to appeal to some types of religious fanaticism, judging by certain passages between our sister isle and the modern Hun. On the above occasion, however, it was practised once too often. Hulaku Khan, the fierce Mongol chief, had long had his eye on Baghdad as holding princely loot in all too slack a grip, for the Caliphate had been relying on Tartar mercenaries for years.

He approached that queen of cities, as she then was, with a great host, lured the Caliph out to meet him by the promise of an alliance, and murdered the whole party, the Caliph being trampled to death. Then Baghdad was given over to sack and massacre for more than a month, by which time 1,800,000 people are said to have perished.

The Caliphate was transplanted to Cairo, where it dragged out an anæmic existence until Selim I seized it, with the person of the then Caliph, by right of conquest, and it has been an appanage of the Ottoman reigning house ever since.

Selim the Magnificent may be called the Turkish top-note. After him the Ottoman Empire gradually declined. It has generally taken advantage of disaster or dissension to extend its borders – a precarious method of empire-building unless consolidated by benevolent and sound administration, which is not a feature of Turkish rule. Add to this the facts that Turks are slack Moslems, that the national party which ousted Abdul Hamid (himself most orthodox) is not religious at all, with all its barbarian, totemistic nonsense of the "White Wolf," and that they *would* pose as conquerors on insufficient grounds, and we begin to see why they have been kicked out of their Asiatic empire bit by bit.

If Turk and Mongol had been capable of dynastic evolution and co-ordinate policy they might have shared most of the Eastern Hemisphere between them. We have seen the high-water mark of the Ottoman Empire; Marco Polo has told us of Kubla Khan's Chinese Empire, and the Moguls did much for India in their prime. But the wolf-taint was in their blood, and just as a pet wolf gets fat and degenerate, so it has been with these Tartars. Their undoubted soldierly qualities are sapped by luxury, and they possess no constructive gifts which peace and prosperity might develop. Hence it is that every empire they have founded has risen to a culminating point of conquest and then dwindled away in sloth and corruption.

The Turk is not fit to be put in charge of any race but his own, for he is at heart a bitter wolf who will turn and rend without ruth or warning. I have met Turks who have shown tact, humanity, and ability under trying conditions, and I have met well-mannered wolves in captivity, but would not trust the pack ranging in its native forest. I once heard a member of our Ottoman Embassy who has unique experience of the Turk size him up as follows: "The Turk can be a suave and cultured gentleman till his time comes, and then he will tear your guts out and *dance* on them." It was the Seljouk Turks whose persecutions caused the Crusades. Before them, Arab rule in Palestine was tolerant enough, and the Caliph Omar was scrupulously careful when he entered Jerusalem as a conqueror to respect Christian prejudices and the monuments of our creed.

So it came about that their empire was dropping from them piecemeal even before the War, for a race that can no longer conquer and has never learned to conciliate must draw in its borders or cease to exist as a State.

When war broke out Turkey was just hanging on to the last scrap of her empire in Europe and had lost all but the shadow of sovereignty in Egypt, while Arabia was seething with discontent, where not in actual revolt, and regarded the belated efforts of local officials to govern tactfully as signs of weakness.

The colossal brigandage of Germany appealed to her freebooting instincts, although it took a corrupt, self-seeking Government and a final push from the "Goeben" and the "Breslau" to plunge her into war against her best friends.

To proclaim a *jihad* was her obvious course, if only to keep Arabia moderately quiet, apart from its value as a weapon against her Christian foes. We will now see how she fared in the "Holy War."

## CHAPTER II

### ITS BEARING ON THE WAR

Quite early in the War those of us who had to deal with pan-Islamic propaganda realised that the widespread organisation which Germany had grafted on to the original Turkish movement must have existed some time before the outbreak of actual hostilities.

For example, there was a snug, smooth-running concern at San Francisco which spread its tentacles all over the Moslem world, but specialised in a seditious newspaper called *El'-Ghadr*, which means treachery or mutiny. This was particularly directed at our Indian Army, but Egypt was not forgotten. A gifted censor sent us an early copy, but had, unfortunately, lost the wrapper, so our earnest desire to make the addressee's closer acquaintance was thwarted.

Stamboul was naturally an active centre, and, before the Turks entered the War, Turkish officers in full uniform, and sometimes even wearing swords, permeated Cairo cafés with espionage and verbal propaganda, trying to fan into flame the military ardour of Egyptian students and men about town. This last activity was wasted effort, as anyone who knew the type could have told them; the effendis abstained from the crudities of personal service and confined themselves to stirring up the town riffraff, who wanted a safer form of villainy than open riot, and the *fellahin*, who wanted a safe market for their produce and easy taxation, both of which they stood to lose by violence. Many a *fellah* still believes that the War was a myth created by the authorities to put prices up. Even Teuton activity failed to stimulate these placid folk, and the glad tidings preached by the madder type of German missionary that the Kaiser was the Messiah left them unmoved.

When the Turks came in against us, and the ex-Khedive, safe among his new-found friends, threw off the mask, the Cairene effendis became tremendously active. Forgetting how they had disliked Abbas II and called him a huckstering profligate, they mourned for his deposal by wearing black ties, especially the students. Some of these enthusiastic young heroes even went so far as to scatter chlorate of potash crackers about when their school was visited by poor old Sultan Husein (who was worth six of his predecessor), and he got quite a shock, which was flagrantly and noisomely accentuated by asafœtida bomblets.

The ex-Khedive did not share their patriotic grief. He was quite comfortable while awaiting the downfall of British rule, for, with shrewd prescience that almost seems inspired, he had taken prudent measures for his future comfort and luxury before leaving Egypt on his usual summer tour to Europe. He had mortgaged real estate up to the hilt, realised on immobile property as far as possible, and diverted his fluid assets through various channels beyond the reach of his sorrowing subjects and the Egyptian Government. When an official inventory was taken in Abdin Palace at the accession of the late Sultan Husein, it was ascertained that the famous inlaid and begemmed coffee-service, which, like our Crown jewels, was not supposed to leave the country, had been sent after the ex-Khedive to his new address – truly a man of parts. I have often wondered whether his Hunnish friends got him to disgorge by means of a forced loan or war-bonds, or something of that sort. If so, they achieved something notable, for he has left behind him, beside his liabilities, the name of being a difficult man to get money out of.

When the Turco-Teuton blade was actually drawn in Holy War I was down with enteric, which I had contracted while working in disguise among seditious circles in the slums of Old Cairo. I just convalesced in time to join the Intelligence Staff on the Canal the day before Jemal Pasha's army attacked. His German staff had everything provided for in advance with their usual thoroughness. From the documents and prisoners that came through our hands we learnt that the hotel in Cairo where the victors were to dine after their triumphant entry had actually been selected, and some enthusiasts went so far as to insist that the menu had been prepared. If so, they omitted to get the

Canal Army on toast, and for want of this indispensable item the event fell through. All the same, it was a soldierly enterprise, and if the Senussis had invaded in force or the population risen behind us, as they hoped would be the case, the result might have been different.

As it was they put up a very good fight and their arrangements for getting across the Sinaitic desert were excellent. For the last ten miles they man-handled their pontoons to the edge of the Canal. These craft were marvels of lightness and carrying capacity, but, of course, no protection whatever against even a rifle-bullet, and they had not fully reckoned with the Franco-British naval flotilla, which proved a formidable factor.

The morning after the main fight a little Syrian subaltern passed through my hands. He had been slightly wounded in the leg and still showed signs of nervous shock, so I made him sit down with a cigarette while I questioned him. He had been in charge of a pontoon manned by his party and said that they had got halfway across the Canal in perfect silence when "the mouth of hell opened" and the pontoon was sinking in a swirl of stricken men amid a hail of projectiles. He and two others swam to our side of the Canal, where they surrendered to an Indian detachment.

Our Indian troops on the Canal were naturally a mark for pan-Islamic propaganda reinforced by Hindu literature of the *Bande Mataram* type, – a double-barrelled enterprise to bag both the great creeds of India. The astute propagandists had a pamphlet or two aimed at Sikhism, which they seemed to consider a nation, as they spoke of their national aspirations, though an elementary study of the subject might have taught them that it was a religious and secular movement originally intended to curb Moslem power in India during the sway of the later Moguls. Anyone but a Moslem can be a Sikh.

Naturally I was on the *qui vive* for signs of pan-Islamic activity on the enemy's side, and I questioned my little Syrian very closely to ascertain how far the movement was used as a driving force among the troops engaged against us. He, personally, had rather a grievance on the subject, for the Indian Moslems who took him had reproached him bitterly for fighting on the wrong side. "I fought," he said, "because it was my duty as an officer of the Ottoman Army. I know that men were invited to join as for a *jihad*, but we officers did not deceive ourselves. *Par exemple*, I think myself a better Moslem than any Turk, but what would you?" I consoled the little man while concealing my satisfaction at the feeling displayed against him. An extraordinarily heterogeneous collection of prisoners came dribbling through my hands directly after the Turks were repulsed. Most were practically deserters who had been forcibly enrolled, given a Mauser and a bandoleer, and told to go and fight for the Holy Places of Islam. As one of the more intelligent remarked, "If the Holy Places are really in danger, what are we doing down this way?"

They came from all over the Moslem world. There were one or two Russian pilgrims returning from Mecca to be snapped up by the military authorities at Damascus railway station when they got out of the pilgrim train from Medina. There were cabdrivers from Jerusalem, a stranded pilgrim from China, several Tripolitans who had been roped in on the Palestine seaboard while trying to get a passage home, a Moor who tried to embrace my feet when I spoke of the snow-crowned Atlas above Morocco City (Marraksh) and told him that he would be landed at Tangier in due course – Inshallah. Of course we released, and repatriated as far as we could, men who were not Ottoman subjects and had obviously been forced into service against us. A few days later, when Jemal Pasha's army was getting into commissariat difficulties out in the Sinaitic desert (for the Staff had relied on entering Egypt), we began to get the real Turks among our prisoners.

I was very curious to ascertain if they had been worked up with pan-Islamic propaganda or carried any of it on them, for there was not even a Red Crescent Koran on any of the Arabic-speaking prisoners. A search of their effects revealed a remarkable phase of propaganda. There was hardly any religious literature except a loose page or two of some pious work like the "Traditions of Muhammad," but there were quantities of rather crude (and very lewd) picture-cards portraying soldiers in Turkish uniform outraging and murdering nude or semi-nude women and children, while corpses in priestly garb, shattered crucifixes, and burning churches indicated the creed that was being so harried and

gave the scene a stimulating background. From their appearance I should say these pictures were originally engraved to commemorate Balkan or Armenian atrocities, but their possessors, on being closely questioned, admitted that the impression conveyed to them was of the joyous licence which was to be theirs among the Frankish civilians after forcing the Canal. One Kurdish gentleman had among his kit fancy socks, knitted craftily in several vivid colours, also ornate slippers to wear in his promised palatial billet at Cairo. There were some odd articles among the kit of these Turkish prisoners, to wit, a brand-new garden thermometer, which some wag insisted was for testing the temperature of the Canal before immersion, and a lavatory towel looted from the Hejaz railway. Still, nothing was quite so remarkable as a white flag with a jointed staff in a neat, compact case which had been carried by a German officer. Among his papers was an indecent post-card not connected, I think, with propaganda of any sort, as it portrayed a bright-coloured female of ripe figure and Teutonic aspect, wearing a pair of long stockings and high-heeled shoes, and bore the legend "Gruss von München."

A certain coyness, or possibly an appreciation of their personal value, kept most of the German officers from actual contact with our line. Only one reached the Canal bank, and he is there still. The German touch, however, was much in evidence. There were detailed written orders about manning the pontoons, not to talk, cough, sneeze, etc., and for each man to move along the craft as far as feasible and then sit down. They seem to have relied entirely on surprise, and ignored the chance of its occurring on the wrong side of the Canal. The emergency rations too which we found on the earlier batches of prisoners had a distinctly Teutonic flavour – they were so scientifically nourishing in theory and so vilely inedible in practice. They were a species of flat gluten cake rather like a dog-biscuit, but much harder. An amateur explosive expert of ours tested one of these things by attempting detonation and ignition before he would let his batch of prisoners retain them, which, to do their intelligence justice, they were not keen on doing, but offered any quantity of the stuff for cigarettes. We ascertained from them that you were supposed to soak it in water before tackling it in earnest, but as the only supply (except the runlet they still carried on them) was in the fresh-water canal behind our unshaken line, such a course was not practicable; the discovery of a very dead Turk some days later in that canal led to the ribald suggestion that he had rashly endeavoured to eat his ration. Our scientist laid great stress on its extraordinary nutritive properties, but desisted, after breaking a tooth off his denture, in actual experiment.

German influence, too, was apparent in the relations between officers and men. A Turkish *yuzbashi* was asked to get a big batch of prisoners to form two groups according to the languages they spoke – Arabic or Turkish. It was not an easy task in the open on a pitch-black night, but he did it with soldierly promptitude and flung his glowing cigarette end in the face of a dilatory private. As a natural corollary it may be mentioned here that one or two of our prisoners had deserted after shooting officers who had struck them.

For some days after the battles of Serapeum and Toussoum we expected another attempt, but they had been more heavily mauled than we thought at first. The dead in the Canal were kept down by the weight of their ammunition for some time, and the shifting sand on the Sinaitic side was always revealing hastily-buried corpses on their line of retreat.

Jemal Pasha hurried back to Gaza and published a grandiloquent report for Moslem consumption, to the effect that the Turks were already in Cairo (as was indeed the case with many hundreds), and that, of the *giaour* fleet, one ship had sunk, one had been set on fire, and the rest had fled. Two heavy howitzers, as a matter of fact, had managed by indirect fire from a concealed position to land a couple of projectiles on the "Hardinge," which was not originally built for such rough treatment, being an Indian marine vessel taken over by the Navy. She gave more than she got when her four-point-sevens found the massed Turkish supports.

A great deal of criticism has been flung at this first series of fights on the Canal, mostly by Anglo-Egyptian civilians. They asked derisively whether we were protecting the Canal or the Canal

us. The answer is in the affirmative to both questions. Ordinary steamer traffic was only suspended for a day during the first onslaught, and the G.O.C. was not such a fool as to leave the Canal in his rear and forgo the defensive advantage. There are some who, in their military ardour, would have had him pursue the enemy into the desert, forgetting that to leave a sound position and pursue a superior force on an ever-widening front in a barren country which they know better than you do and have furnished with their own supply-bases is just asking for trouble. Our few aeroplanes in those days could only reconnoitre twenty miles out, and there was no evidence that the enemy had not merely fallen back to his line of wells preparatory to another attempt. We had not then the men, material, or resources for a triumphant advance into Sinai; it was enough to make sure of keeping the enemy that side of the Canal with the Senussi sitting on the fence and Egypt honeycombed with seditious propaganda.

Anyone at all in touch with native life in Cairo could gauge the extent of propagandist activity by gossip at cafés and in the bazars. The Senussi was marching against us. India was in revolt and the Indian Army on the Canal had joined the Turks. The crowning stroke of ingenuity was a tale that received wide credence among quite intelligent Egyptians. It was to the effect that the Turks had commandeered an enormous number of camels and empty kerosene tins. This was quite true so far, but the yarn then rose to the following flight of fancy: These empty tins were to be filled with dry cement and loaded on camels, which were to be marched without water for days until they reached the Canal, when the pangs of thirst would compel them to rush madly into the water. The cement would solidify and the Faithful would march across on a composite bridge of camel and concrete. Our flotilla was to be penned in by similar means.

There must be something about a Turk that hypnotises an Egyptian. His country has suffered appallingly under Ottoman rule, and a pure-blooded Turk can seldom be decently civil to him and considers him almost beneath contempt. This is the conquering Tartar pose that has earned the Turk such detestation and final ruin in Arabia, but it seems to have fascinated the Egyptian like a rabbit in the presence of a python. Quite early in the Turkish invasion of Sinai a detachment of Egyptian camelry, operating in conjunction with the Bikanirs, deserted *en masse* to the enemy. It was at first supposed that they had been captured, but we afterwards heard of their being fêted somewhere in Palestine. On the other hand, an Egyptian battery did yeoman service on the Canal; I saw a pontoon that looked like a carelessly opened sardine-tin as a result of its attentions.

The most tragic aspect of this spurious and mischievous propaganda was its victims from Indian regiments. The Indian Moslem as a rule has no illusions about the Turks, and will fight them at sight, but there will always be a few misguided bigots to whom a specious and dogmatic argument will appeal. There is no occasion to dwell on these cases, which were sporadic only and generally soon met with the fate incurred by attempted desertion to the enemy.

We looked on the movement as an insidious and dangerous disease and did our best to trace it to its source and stop the distributing channels. After events on the Canal had simmered down, I was seconded to Cairo to help tackle the movement there: to show how little hold it had over the minds of thinking Moslems. I may mention that my colleague was a Pathan major who was a very strict Moslem and a first-rate fellow to boot.

We both served under an Anglo-Indian major belonging to the C.I.D., one of the most active little men I have ever met. There were also several "ferrets," or Intelligence agents, who came into close contact with the "suspects" and could be trusted up to a certain point if you looked sharply after them. This is as much as can be said for any of these men, though some are better, and some worse, than others. On the Canal we employed numbers of them to keep us informed of the enemy's movements and used to check them with the aerial reconnaissance – they needed it. It did not take us long to find out that these sophisticated Sinaites had established an Intelligence bureau of their own. They used to meet their "opposite numbers" employed by the enemy at pre-arranged spots between the lines and swop information, thereby avoiding unnecessary toil or risk (the Sinaitic Bedouin loathes both) and obtaining news of interest for both sides. It was a magnificently simple scheme; its sole

flaw was in failing to realise that some of us had played the Great Game before. We used to time our emissaries to their return and cross-check them where their wanderings intersected those of others – all were supposed to be trackers and one or two knew something about it. Of course they were searched and researched on crossing and returning to our outpost line, for they could not be trusted to refuse messages to or from the Turks. It was among this coterie that the brilliant idea originated of shaving a messenger's head, writing a despatch on his scalp, and then letting his hair grow before he started to deliver it. I doubt if any of our folk were thorough enough for this, but we tested for it occasionally, and an unpleasant job it was. Generally they would incur suspicion by their too speedy return and the nonchalant way in which they imparted tidings which would have driven them into ecstasies of self-appreciation had they obtained such by legitimate methods. Then a purposely false bit of information calculated to cause certain definite action on the other side would usually betray them. Some purists suggested a firing party as a fitting end for these gambits, but that would have been a waste. Such men have their uses, until they know they are suspected, as valuable channels of misinformation. No doubt the enemy knew this too, and that is how an Intelligence Officer earns his pay, by sifting grain from chaff as it comes in and sending out empty husks and mouldy news.

But to return to Cairo. We netted a good deal of small fry, but only landed one big fish during the time I was attached. He was a Mesopotamian and a very respectable old gentleman, who followed the calling of astrologer and peripatetic quack – a common combination and admirably adapted for distributing propaganda. He came from Stamboul through Athens with exemplary credentials, and might have got through to India, which was the landfall he proposed to make, if his propagandist energy had not led him to deviate on a small side-tour in Egypt. Here we got on his track, and I boarded the Port Said express at short notice while he and the "ferret" who had picked him up got into a third-class compartment lower down. As the agent made no signal after the train had pulled out, I knew our man had not got the bulk of his propaganda with him, otherwise I had powers to hold up the express, for it was more important to get his stuff than the man himself. At Port Said he had a chance of seeing me, thanks to the agent's clumsiness, and I had to shave my beard off and buy a sun-helmet in consequence, for I was travelling in the same ship along the Canal to see that he did not communicate with troops on either side of the bank, and on the slightest suspicion he would have put his stuff over the side. All went smoothly and he was arrested in Suez roads by plain-clothes men with a sackful of seditious literature for printing broadcast in India. Of course they arrested the "ferret" too, as is usual in these cases. I went ashore with them in the police-launch as a casual traveller and was amused to hear the agent rating the old man for not having prophesied this mishap when telling his fortune the night before.

The propagandist was merely interned in a place of security – it was not our policy to make martyrs of such men, especially when they were *bona fide* Ottoman subjects.

I was rather out of touch with the pan-Islamic movement during the summer of 1915, as my lungs had become seriously affected on the Canal, and the trouble became so acute that I had to spend two or three months in the hills of Cyprus. Before I had been there a week the G.O.C. troops in Egypt cabled for me to return and proceed to Aden as political officer with troops.

I was too ill then to move and had to cable to that effect. My chagrin at missing a "show" was much alleviated when I heard what the show was. As it had a marked effect on the pan-Islamic campaign by enhancing Turkish prestige, it is not out of place to give some account of it here.

While I was still on the Canal in February (1915) a "memo" was sent for my information from Headquarters at Cairo to say that the Turks had invaded the Aden protectorate at Dhala, where I once served on a boundary commission.

I noted the fact and presumed that Aden was quite able to cope with the situation, as the Turks had a most difficult terrain to traverse before they could get clear of the hills and reach the littoral, while the hinterland tribes are noted for their combatant instincts and efficiency in guerilla warfare, besides being anti-Turk. I had, however, in spite of many years' experience, failed to reckon with Aden

apathy. True to the policy of *laissez faire* which was inaugurated when our Boundary Commission withdrew some twelve years ago, Aden had been depending for news of her own protectorate on office files and native report, especially on that much overrated friend and ally the Lahej sultanate. The Turks knew all about this, for the leakage of Aden affairs which trickles through Lahej and over the Yamen border is, and has been for years, a flagrant scandal.

The invasion at Dhala was a feint just to test the soundness of official slumber at Aden; the obvious route for a large force was down the Tiban valley, owing to the easier going and the permanent water-supply.

Our border-sultan (the Haushabi) was suborned with leisurely thoroughness all unknown to his next-door neighbour, that purblind sultanate at Lahej, unless the latter refrained from breaking Aden's holy calm with such unpleasant news.

In May Aden stirred in her sleep and sent out the Aden troop to reconnoitre. This fine body of Indian cavalry and camelry reported that affairs seemed serious up the Tiban valley; then inertia reasserted itself and they were recalled. Also the Lahej sultanate, in a spasm of economy, started disbanding the Arab levies collected for the emergency from the tribes of the remoter hinterland which have supplied fine mercenaries to many oriental sultanates for many centuries.

The watchful Turk, with his unmolested spy system, had noted every move of these pitiful blunders, and, at the psychological moment, came pouring down the Tiban valley some 3,000 strong with another 5,000 Arab levies. They picked up the Haushabi on the way, whose main idea was to get a free kick at Lahej, just as an ordinary human boy will serve some sneak and prig to whom a slack schoolmaster has relegated his own obvious duty of supervision. To do that inadequate sultanate justice, it tried to bar the way with its own trencher-fed troops and such levies as it had, but was brushed aside contemptuously by the hardier levies opposed to it and the overwhelming fire of the Turkish field batteries. Then a distraught and frantic palace emitted mounted messengers to Aden for assistance like minute-guns from a sinking ship.

Aden behaved exactly like a startled hen. She ran about clucking and collecting motor-cars, camel transport, anything. The authorities dared not leave their pet sultan in the lurch – questions might be asked in the House. On the other hand they had made no adequate arrangements to protect him. Just as a demented hen will leave her brood at the mercy of a hovering kite to round up one stray chick instead of sitting tight and calling it in under her wing, so Aden made a belated and insane attempt to save Lahej.

The Aden Movable Column, a weak brigade of Indians, young Territorials, and guns, marched out at 2 p.m. on July 4, *i. e.* at the hottest time of day, in the hottest season of the year and the hottest part of the world. Motor-cars were used to convey the infantry of the advanced guard, but the main body had to march in full equipment with ammunition. The casualties from sunstroke were appalling. The late G.O.C. troops in Egypt mentioned them to me in hundreds, and one of the Aden "politicals" told me that not a dozen of the territorial battalion remained effective at the end of the day. Many were bowled over by the heat before they had gone two miles.

Most of the native camel transport, carrying water, ammunition and supplies, – and yet unescorted and not even attended by a responsible officer – sauntered off into the desert and vanished from the ken of that ill-fated column.

Meanwhile the advanced guard of 250 men (mostly Indians) and two 10-pounder mountain-guns pushed on with all speed to Lahej, which was being attacked by several thousand Turks and Turco-Arabs with 15-pounder field batteries and machine-guns. They found the palace and part of the town on fire when they arrived, and fought the Turks hand-to-hand in the streets. They held on all through that sweltering night, and only retired when dawn showed them the hopeless nature of their task and the fact that they were being outflanked. They fell back on the main body, which had stuck halfway at a wayside well (Bir Nasir) marked so obviously by ruins that even Aden guides could

not miss it. Shortage of water was the natural result of sitting over a well that does not even supply a settlement, but merely the ordinary needs of wayfarers.

This well is marked on the Aden protectorate survey map (which is procurable by the general public) as Bir Muhammad, its full name being Bir Muhammad Nasir. There are five wells supplying settlements within half an hour's walk of it on either side of the track, but when we remember that the column's field-guns got no further owing to heavy sand, and that the aforesaid track is frequently traversed by ordinary *tikkagharries*, we realise the local knowledge available.

The column straggled back to the frontier town of Sheikh Othman, which they prepared to defend, but Simla, by this time thoroughly alarmed, ordered them back for the defence of Aden, and they returned without definite achievement other than the accidental shooting of the Lahej sultan. This was hardly the fault of the heroic little band which reached Lahej; that ill-starred potentate was escaping with his mounted retinue before dawn and cantered on top of an Indian outpost without the formality of answering their challenge. He was brought away in a motor-car and died at Aden a few days later – another victim to this deplorable blunder. Any intelligent and timely grasp of the enemy's strength and intention would have given the poor man ample time to pack his inlaid hookahs, Persian carpets, and other palace treasures and withdraw in safety to Aden while our troops made good the Sheikh Othman line along the British frontier. I am presuming that Aden was too much taken by surprise to have met the Turks in a position of her own choosing while they were still entangled in hilly country where levies of the right sort could have harried them to some purpose, backed by disciplined, unspent troops and adequate guns. What I wish to impress is that the Intelligence Department at Aden must have been abominably served and organised, for I decline to believe that *any* G.O.C. would have attempted such an enterprise with such a force and at such a time had he any information as to the real nature of his task. As it was, the British town of Sheikh Othman, within easy sight of Aden across the harbour, was held by the Turks until a reinforcing column came down from the Canal and drove them out of it, while the protectorate has been overrun by the Turks and the Turco-Arabs until long after the armistice, and the state of British prestige there can be imagined.

Official attempts to gloze over the incident would have been amusing if they were not pathetic. Needless to say they did not deceive Moslems in Egypt or the rest of Arabia.

Here is the most accurate account they gave the public:

## "TURKS AND ADEN

### "ENGAGEMENT AT LAHEJ

"The India Office issued the following *communiqué* last night through the Press Bureau:

"In consequence of rumours that a Turkish force from the Yamen had crossed the frontier of the Aden Hinterland and was advancing towards Lahej, the General Officer Commanding at Aden recently dispatched the Aden Camel Troop to reconnoitre.

"They reported the presence of a Turkish force with field-guns and a large number of Arabs and fell back on Lahej, where they were reinforced by the advance guard of the Aden Movable Column consisting of 250 rifles and two 10-pounder guns.

"Our force at Lahej was attacked by the enemy on July 4 by a force of several thousand Turks with twenty guns and large numbers of Arabs, and maintained its position in face of the enemy artillery's fire until night, when part of Lahej was in

flames. During the night some hand-to-hand fighting took place, and the enemy also commenced to outflank us.

"Meanwhile the remainder of the Aden Movable Column was marching towards Lahej, but was delayed by water difficulties and heavy going. It was therefore decided that the small force at Lahej should fall back.

"The retirement was carried out successfully in the early morning of July 5, and the detachment joined the rest of the column at Bir Nasir. Our troops, however, were suffering considerably from the great heat and the shortage of water, and their difficulties were increased by the desertion of Arab transport followers. It was therefore decided to fall back to Aden, and this was done without the enemy attempting to follow up.

"Our losses included three British officers wounded: names will be communicated later. We took one Turkish officer (a major) and thirteen men prisoners."

Aden seems to have made no attempt to stem the tide of Turkish influence while she could. The best fighting tribe in the protectorate stretches along the coast and far inland north-east of Aden, and its capital is only a few hours' steam from that harbour. The Turks made every effort to win over this important tribal unit, which might have been a grave menace on their left flank. Its sultan made frequent representations to Aden for even a gunboat to show itself off his port, but to no purpose. After the Turks had succeeded in alienating those of his tribe they could get at, or who could get at them, a tardy political visit was paid by sea from Aden. The indignant old sultan came aboard and spoke his mind. "You throw your friends on the midden," he said bitterly, and departed to establish a *modus vivendi* on his own account with the Turks.

The situation at Aden has had a marked effect in bolstering up the Turkish campaign of spurious pan-Islamism, and those of us who have been dealing with chiefs in other parts of Arabia have met it at every turn. It is idle to blame individuals – the whole system is at fault. The policy of non-interference which the Liberal Government introduced, after the Boundary Commission had finished its task and withdrawn, has been over-strained by the Aden authorities to such an extent that they would neither keep in direct personal touch themselves nor let anyone else do so.

As an explorer and naturalist whose chief work has lain for years in that country, I have made every effort to continue my researches there until my persistency has incurred official persecution. The serious aspect of this attitude is that at a time when accurate and up-to-date knowledge of the hinterland would have been invaluable it was not available. The pernicious policy of selecting any one chief (unchecked by a European) to keep her posted as to affairs in her own protectorate has been followed blindly by Aden to disaster. The excuse in official circles there is that the Haushabi sultan had been suborned by the Turks without their knowledge and he had prevented any information from getting through Lahej to them. Can there be any more damning indictment of such a system?

The Aden incident is similar to the Mesopotamian medical muddle, both being due to sporadic dry-rot in high places which the test of war revealed. The loyalty of its princes and the devotion of its army prove that there is nothing fundamentally wrong with British rule in India to command such sentiments, but some of those mandarins who have had wide control of human affairs and destinies have ignored a situation until it was forcibly thrust upon them and have fumbled with it disastrously. It is difficult to bring such people to book, for they shuffle responsibility from one to the other or take refuge in the truly oriental pose of heaven-born officialdom. Such types should be obsolete even in India by now, but this war has proved that they are not, and when their inanities fritter away gallant lives and trail British prestige in the dust they need rebuke. I hope some day, if I live, to deal faithfully with Aden's hinterland policy.

In the autumn of 1915 I was fit enough to join the Red Sea maritime patrol as political officer with the naval rank of lieutenant. Our duties were to harry the Turk without hurting the

Arab, to blockade the Arabian coast against the Turk while allowing dhow-traffic with foodstuffs consigned to Arab merchants and steamer-cargoes of food for the alleged use of pilgrims to go through. Incidentally we had to keep the eastern highway free of mines and transportable submarines, prevent the passage of spies between Arabia and Egypt, and fetch and carry as the shore-folk required.

Taking it all round, it was not an easy job, but I think the blockade presented the most complex features. You knew where you were with spies – anyone with the necessary experience could spot a doubtful customer as soon as the dhow that carried him came alongside; and irregular but frequent visits at the various ports soon put a stop to the mine-industry and prevented any materialisation of the submarine menace except in reports from Aden which caused me a good many additional trips in an armed steam-cutter to "go, look, see."

But the problems presented by the blockade required some solving with very little time for the operation, and if your solution was not approved by the authorities on the beach they lost no time in letting you know it – usually by wireless, which was picked up by most ships in the patrol by the time it reached you.

The basic idea was that if in doubt it was better to let stuff through to the Turks than pinch Hejazi bellies and get ourselves disliked. In theory this was perfectly sound, for we wanted the Hejaz to like us well enough to fight on our side, and only the Huns think you can get people to love you by afflicting them. In practice, however, we soon found that the Hejazi merchants were selling direct to the Turks and letting their fellow-countrymen have what was left at the highest possible price. On top of it all India started a howl that her pilgrims in the Hejaz were starving, and we had to defer to this outcry. I have never had to legislate for highly-civilised Moslems with a taste for agitation, but I have always sympathised with those who have, and could quite appreciate India's position in the matter. Still, after comparing her relief cargoes with the number of her pilgrims in the country and finding that each had enough to feed him for the rest of his natural life, I ventured to ask that this wholesale charity might cease, more especially as these big steamer-cargoes were dealt with much as the dhow-borne cereals and chiefly benefited the Turks and local profiteers.

As regards dhows, our rule was to allow coastal traffic from Jeddah and empties returning there, as it tended to distribute food among the Arabs and get it away from the Turks. Dhows bringing cargo from the African coast or from Aden were permitted, provided they did not carry contraband of war; this permitted native cereals, such as millet, but barred wheat and particularly barred barley, which the local Arab does not eat for choice, but which the Turks wanted very badly for their cavalry.

In this connection a typical incident may be mentioned as illustrating the sort of thing we were up against.

The ship I was serving in at the time lay off Jeddah and had three boats down picketing the dhow-channels leading in to that reef-girt harbour, for which dhows were making like homing bees. In such cases my post was usually on the bridge, while the ship's interpreter and Arab-speaking Seede-boys went away in the boats. The dhows were reached and their papers examined, then allowed to proceed if all was in order. Otherwise the officer examining signalled the facts and awaited instructions. Usually it was some technical point which I could waive, but on this occasion one of the cutters made a signal to the effect that barley in bulk had been found in one dhow. I was puzzled, because all the dhows were from Suakin or further south, quite outside the barley-belt, except on very high ground which rarely exports cereals. However, the signal was repeated, and I had to have the dhow alongside. Meanwhile the "owner" was anxious to get steerage-way, for we were not at anchor and in very ticklish soundings; so I slid off the bridge and had a sample of the grain handed up to me: it was a species of millet, looking very like pearl-barley as "milled" for culinary purposes. I shouted to the *reis* to go where he liked as long as he kept clear of our propellers, which thereupon gave a ponderous flap or two as if to emphasise my remarks, and he bore away from us rejoicing. In the ward-room later on I rallied that cutter's officer on his error. "Well, it was just like the barley one sees in soup," was his defence.

In the southern part of the Red Sea, which was handled politically from Aden, the problems of blockade were even more complex, for there even arms and ammunition were allowed between certain ports to meet the convenience of the Idrisi chief, who was theoretically at war with the Turks, but rather diffident about putting his principles into practice, especially after the Turkish success outside Aden.

This meant that the sorely-tried officers responsible for the conduct of the blockade in those waters had frequently to decide on a cargo of illicit-looking rifles and cartridges, not of Government make, but purchased from private firms and guaranteed by a filthy scrap of paper inscribed with crabbed Arabic which carried no conviction. All they had to help them was the half-educated ship's interpreter, with no knowledge of the political situation, for Aden had not an officer available for this work. To enhance the difficulties of the position, some of these coastal chiefs were importing contraband of war to sell to the Turks for private gain. Up north there were no difficulties with illicit arms; we allowed a reasonable number per dhow, provided that they were the private property of the crew, and when rifles were dished out to our Arab friends the Navy delivered the goods, which were all of Government mark and pattern.

The political aspect of the blockade required delicate handling anywhere along the Arabian littoral of the Red Sea, but especially so on the Hejazi coast. We were at war with the Turks but not with the Arabs, whom it was our business to approach as friends if they would let us. The Turks, however, used Arab levies freely against us whose truculence was much increased on finding they could make hostile demonstrations with impunity, as the patrol only fired on the Turkish uniform, since few people can distinguish between a Turco-Arab gendarme and an armed tribesman at long range unless they know both breeds intimately.

The general standard of honour and good faith at most places along the Arabian littoral is not high, even from an Oriental point of view, and is nowhere lower than on the Hejazi coast. Frequently an unattached tribesman would take a shot at a reconnoitring cutter on general principles and then rush off to the nearest Turkish post with the information and a demand for bakshish, and there were several attempts (one successful) to lure a landing party on to a well-manned but carefully hidden position. As for the actual levies, they would solemnly man prepared positions within easy range of even a 3-pounder when we visited their tinpot ports, relying on us not to fire, and telling their compatriots what they would do if we did.

Even when examining dhows one had to be on one's guard, and it was best not to board them to leeward and so run the risk of having their big, bellying mainsail let go on top of you and getting scuppered while entangled in its folds. African dhows could generally be trusted not to resist search, for when a *reis* has got his owners or agents at a civilised port like Suakin he likes to keep respectable even if he *is* smuggling. Our chief difficulty with such craft, before we tightened the blockade, was due to the nonchalant manner in which they put to sea and behaved when at sea. Their skippers had the sketchiest idea of what constituted proper clearance papers and why such papers must agree with their present voyage. Their confidence too in our integrity, though touching, was often embarrassing. One of our rules was that considerable sums in gold must be given up against a signed voucher realisable at Port Sudan. I was never very brisk at counting large sums of money, and one day when hove to off Jeddah there were five dhows rubbing their noses alongside, with about £800 in gold between them and very little time to deal with them, as we were in shoal water with no way on the ship. My operations were not facilitated by the biggest Croesus of the lot producing some £400 in five different currencies from various parts of his apparel and stating that he had no idea how much there was but would abide by my decision. I believe he expected me to give him a receipt in round hundreds and take the "oddment," as we call it in Warwickshire, for myself. As it was, I was down half a sovereign or so over the transaction, having given him the benefit of the doubt over two measly little gold coins of unascertainable value.

Some of them were just as happy-go-lucky in their seamanship, though skilful enough in handling their outlandish craft. Early one morning, about fifty miles out of Jeddah, I boarded a becalmed dhow and found them with the dregs of one empty water-skin between a dozen men. Not content with putting to sea with a single *mussick* of water, they had hove to and slept all night, and so dropped the night breeze, which would have carried them to Jeddah before it died down. We gave them water and their position, but I told the *reis*

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