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News and Notes

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Series XII

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1st April = 25th Sha'ban (8th mo.) April 6th = 1st Ramzan (9th mo.) 1342, A.H.

Stir Me, Oh Lord !

“**S**TIR me, oh ! stir me, Lord, I care not how,
But stir my heart in passion for the world !
Stir me to give, to go—but most to pray ;
Stir, till the blood-red banner be unfurled
O'er lands that still in heathen darkness lie,
O'er deserts where no Cross is lifted high.
Stir me, oh ! stir me, Lord, till all my heart
Is filled with strong compassion for these souls ;
Till Thy compelling Word drives me to pray ;
Till Thy constraining love reach to the poles
Far North and South, in burning deep desire,
Till East and West are caught in love's great fire.
Stir me, oh ! stir me, Lord, for I can see
Thy glorious Triumph-day begin to break !
The dawn already gilds the Eastern sky :
Oh ! Church of Christ, arise ! awake ! awake !
Oh ! stir us, Lord, as heralds of that day,
For night is past —our King is on His way ! Amen.”

MRS. ALBERT HEAD.

A Muharram Gathering.

MISS E. M. MITCHELL.

I WAS admitted to a very interesting gathering today. Numbers of Moslem women of the Shi'a sect were assembled in one of the mosques of this city. All around the mosque and grounds was erected a high screen of canvas to enable the purdah women to be hidden from the public view. These women come once a year to

worship, and to mourn and bewail the untimely deaths of the martyred saints Hasan and Hasain. Around the porch of the mosque were a number of quite young girls with sad and earnest expressions on their faces, singing the story of the lives of these saints, and at stated intervals they stopped to beat upon their breasts and cry "Hasan, Hasain," "Hasan, Hasain." "Listen" said one woman to me, "Our girls are taught when quite young to sing and wail in remembrance of this, and then they will never forget the story when they grow up. This great mourning will go on for ever, till the day of judgment."

One woman I noticed was busy lighting small lamps in the door of the mosque. Women and girls were crowding round jostling each other. Women in bright coloured saris, yellow and green predominating. They were in their best clothes to-day, and were combining sorrow with pleasure, seeing their friends and chanting the elegy.

The noise of much chattering was rather deafening, for there was some bargaining going on as well with the women sweet venders and fruit sellers. There, on sale too, were many queer shaped and wonderful toy creations. The women wanted to show me everything, and as several wanted to explain the why and wherefore of all that was going on and all wanted to speak at once it was somewhat confusing.

One woman pointed to the iron spearheaded banner such as were carried in battle in olden days, which was erected inside the building and on which were hung many garlands of marigolds, and said, "That 'alam (banner) sprung up out of the ground just there, and whenever the banner comes up out of ground like that, it is a sign that a mosque must be built on that place. So this mosque was built here." "Such is the power of God" said she, and as she spoke she looked towards the group of women and girls and beating her breast joined in the mourning and wailing.

Trying to turn her thoughts, I began to tell her how we too remember the death of Jesus Christ with sorrow, and how he gave His life to save us all and that although He died, and was put into the grave, God raised Him up out of the grave and He is alive, and so our sorrow is turned into joy when we remember that He is not in the grave any longer but alive and with us always. Before I had well begun to speak about Christ her eyes dropped and she became apparently deaf to all I was saying. She took no further interest.

How strange it is that although Indian women are naturally curious and eager to hear any new story, and are usually polite and attentive under ordinary circumstances, yet the fanaticism of these Shi'a Moslem women overcomes their curiosity and their politeness when Christ's name is mentioned.

It is so difficult to obtain a hearing, and to get the truth in somehow seems an impossibility. One feels at once the friendly attitude of the women change into a strange and indescribable aloofness.

I noticed one woman engaged in tying bits of thread and string

on the banner, and I was told that that bit of string registers a vow of some woman who wants some great desire fulfilled, and as she ties that bit of string on the banner she makes a vow that if her wish is granted during the year she will come again and make a special offering in the mosque to show her gratitude to God.

It was a very interesting sight. Some of the women came from quite a distance in bullock gari covered with some coarse material to act as a purdah and hide the travellers from all and sundry. It was a day's outing for them. They have little pleasure or change in their secluded lives, and the yearly gathering which brings many of them together is looked forward to with great delight.

Some Interesting Modern Positions in Islam

M. T. T.

2. *In Social Reform.*

THE father of the reform movement in Indian Islam, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, published a periodical known as "Tahzib ul Akhlaq" or the Reform of Morals. It undoubtedly served a most useful purpose; and though this great leader is gone, yet "his works do follow him."

One of the present day social reformers is Professor A. M. Maulvi, M.A., a professor in the Dharwar College, who has of late been contributing some articles to the *Indian Social Reformer* on the Status of Woman in Islam, which deserve our earnest attention. Much could also be written about the efforts of Her Highness the Begum of Bhopal, to improve the condition of her Moslem sisters in India; but for the moment we shall give our attention to the aims and spirit of the advanced school of social reformers represented by Professor Maulvi.

One of the commonest non-Moslem views regarding Islam is that it is "set"; the moulds have grown cold, and there is nothing for it, but to go on with things as they are, until the end of time. This idea is, to Professor Maulvi and his school, utterly repugnant and according to him, utterly unfair to the real Islam which he declares should be sought for in the Koran. He apparently cares little for the "Traditions" and the "guidance" of the "priests." He quite freely admits that the Moslem community holds many practices and beliefs that are retarding it, and are a disgrace to it. He declares that "our fanatic priests—have done more harm than good to Islam;" for they "being in the habit of learning and teaching everything in the form of do and don't show a positive aversion to reasoning in religious matters and breaking away from traditions." He would also have us make a very clear distinction between Islam and the life of Moslems. He is no champion of the latter, for he writes, "but to say that Islam is responsible for the misdeeds of Muslims is as erroneous as to believe that God is responsible for the spreading of evil in the world!"

This last statement indicates that he is no proponent of the *Jabarian* doctrine of predestination, but is an out and out *Qadari*, or believer in the free-will of man.

Having admitted the existence of serious evils in the social life of Moslems, Professor Maulvi takes them up singly and seeks to suggest solutions, which he declares to be entirely consistent with the spirit and principles of the true Islam, as found in the Koran. First of all, he would inform us that "in Islam, she (woman) holds a unique position, quite as high as her sisters can boast of, in Christianity or any other religion." As a girl she has as much claim to the care and affection of parents as a boy. According to the Koranic texts which he cites, Islam declares equality between the married parties to be the regulating principle of domestic relationships."

As for divorce, he admits that it is a one-sided power; "but one should not lose sight of the institution of the doer, which is a great check on the divorcing power of the husband." He is also inclined to believe that it is not such a bad thing after all; for, "if the husband and wife do not agree, it is much better that they should separate and be allowed to remarry at their choice, than that they should live in perfect misery."

While polygamy is permitted in Islam, yet his idealism leads him to state that, from the verse, "It is not within your power to do justice between women; it is quite evident that the Koran is not in favour of marriage with more than one wife." This, he is certain, is the true ideal of Islam; and undue advantage seems to have been taken of the verse permitting polygamy "by some of the licentious men of our community who have supplied the non-Muslim with materials to scandalize Islam." . . . And "the system of perfect seclusion . . . is one of the evil consequences of the misrule of some of the voluptuous Moghul kings, who never were ashamed to multiply their harem by marrying any girl who was reported to be unusually handsome."

He is especially anxious to see the purdah system abolished, which is NOT an indispensable part of the law or polity of Islam. "To suppose," he remarks, "that the purdah system in Islam is based on the degraded position to which woman is doomed by the laws of the prophet, is to ignore or totally misunderstand the spirit of his mission. To presume that the recommendations of the Prophet regarding the privacy of women were meant to assume its present inelastic form, is another error which advanced study of Islam alone can cure." This "advanced study" will enable one to see that the institution of the use of the purdah and the practice of seclusion of women was but to meet a temporary need in the social life of a country which was not at an advanced stage of civilization. The aim and object is to preserve the chastity of women; and where conditions are such that women can be admitted to society without harm or danger to their chastity it is clearly the duty of Moslems to allow this freedom to their women. For, he declared, "to exclude woman from society which is at an advanced stage of civilization, and which gives not only sufficient guarantee for the safety of womankind, but has a definite code of etiquette recognising the right of woman to a high social respect, is to set at naught the very teachings of Islam."

He pleads with his fellow Moslems to give serious thought to the problems of reform, and asks them to consider their present position. "Are Islamic laws," he would have them consider, "in such social matters, really so inelastic that no human agency can bend them and make them more adaptable to the varying needs of the present society? Is there

no hope for remedying the evil and diverting the current of public opinion in these matters? He is alive to the present dangers attending the apathy to reform in this modern, progressive, moving world; and one of his articles closes with this plain, strong statement:—"It is high time for my co-religionists to realize that, unless we give woman her true and legitimate place in society, unless we give her the full benefits of modern civilization, unless we keep pace with the quick march of humanity by elevating the social position of woman, the religious, spiritual, social and political ascendancy of our faith is doomed. I have pointed out that it is no use blaming others and forgetting ourselves. The best way in which we can serve Islam is to blame ourselves, and be alive to the necessity of producing a better specimen of Muslim men and women."

Surely, we have here an indication of a movement slowly developing in Islam in India which is worthy of the sympathy and support of all who love this land. We may not agree with the writer's interpretation of the Koran; and some of his assumptions might be subject to severe criticism from the legalists; but his aim and spirit are of the best. He is not afraid to face facts and conditions as they are; and he is willing to seek a remedy, even if he has to fly in the face of orthodox priests and their unreasoning followers. He sees clearly the only way out for Islam, in the midst of trying and cruel circumstances; and his final statement is that it must bend or break. This, too, is the verdict of the Ages.

(concluded.)

Notes

What is your Experience?—The editor of "News and Notes" would much appreciate communications for publication which will throw light on the question raised by one of our members. "In the November number of the 'Record of Christian Work' there is an article by Dr. Paul Harrison on problems of work among Mohammedans. In it he makes the statement:—

"I have been in Arabia twelve years now and once in that time I met a Muhammedan who had a conscious spiritual need in his heart—once—. How many times I have talked with men and hunted to see if I could find one little corner in their spiritual nature, where there was an intensified longing. Never, never but once."

"I should very much like to know whether the experience of workers among Mohammedans in India bears out this statement."

Dr. Farquhar Retires.—Dr. Farquhar with whose unique contribution to Christian Literature in India all the members of the League are no doubt well acquainted, has recently been compelled to retire owing to ill health. His literature program has included studies of the Moslem situation in India, and already "The Ahmadiya Movement," by our late lamented Secretary, H. A. Walter, has been printed, while another volume on "Islam in India" is being planned. It is very unfortunate that he has had to leave the work at this juncture, as he is so conspicuously well fitted for carrying it on. It has been felt by his co-workers and friends that a memorial to his work should be established, and an appeal signed by V. S. Dornakal,

H. D. Griswold, L. P. Larsen, S. C. Mukerji, and W. Paton is herewith presented. We trust it will meet with success.

"We wish to suggest, as an appropriate memorial of Dr. Farquhar's work, the establishment of a studentship, in the study of Indian religion to be held by an Indian Christian of approved merit, under conditions on which Dr. Farquhar himself would perhaps be the best guide. A total of Rs. 10,000 would probably be sufficient to endow such a studentship, and for this amount we now appeal to those who know and have learnt to value Dr. Farquhar's work. The appeal has the warm support of the Metropolitan of India and of other leading missionaries and Indian Christians.

Donations may be sent to: The Treasurer 'Farquhar Fund,' 5, Russell Street, Calcutta. We shall welcome even the smallest sums."

Dr. Zwemer's Visit to India.—The latest advice received from Dr. Zwemer is to the effect that he will hold a Conference in Baghdad and another in Bahrein following the Jerusalem Conference, and will arrive in Bombay about May 20th. From there he will proceed to pay short visits to the following Moslem centres:—Lucknow, Aligarh, Delhi, Lahore and Qadian. He will be in Mussoorie from May 31st to June 9th where he will be the chief speaker at the annual Convention for the Deepening of the Spiritual Life. June 11th to 18th he will be in Naini Tal and will address the Convention daily. From there on his engagements will be as follows:—Calcutta, June 20th—24th. Dacca, June 25th—30th. Hyderabad, Deccan July 2nd—6th. Madras, July 7th—12th. Vellore, July 14th—17th. Madura, July 18th—20th. Bombay, July 23rd—30th. Let us all rally to these gatherings and make the visit of Dr. Zwemer count for much in arousing us in India to prayerful and determined effort.

Study on Furlough.—That missionaries to Moslems can make good use of their furlough time by devoting some of it, at least, to study is emphasized by two letters just received. One is from a member from Baghdad who writes, "I wish all the members of the League might have the privilege we are enjoying of sitting at the feet of Dr. D. B. Macdonald. His courses in Islam are wonderful, and I marvel at the minute and thorough knowledge of all things Mohammedan on the part of one who has had so little actual contact with the field. If we as missionaries in daily contact with Islam were as zealous in the acquisition of the mind of the Moslem people as he has been with a much smaller opportunity, I am sure it would show in our approach to our Moslem brothers."

Another member now a retired missionary tells of the new missionaries he is preparing for Moslem lands: He writes, "I have had this year two Arabic students who expect to go to India, three going to Malaysia, one to North Africa, and one to North China, besides others who are studying Islam, but not Arabic. Several whom I have started in their Arabic" and Malay languages are already on the field and working among Moslems. This retired missionary, would not to-day be in a position to prepare others if he had not used his time while on furlough to further his knowledge in Arabic and Islam.

Work among Moslem Leaders.—A member of the League who has been doing some special visiting among the Moslem leaders of the cities of North India has found them very easy to approach, and appreciative of the visits, and is convinced that more effort must be made to reach this class by personal visits to their houses. They are not the kind of men who listen

to Bazar preaching, or who attend public lectures. After a visit to the noted Maulana Abdul Bari of Faringhi Mahal, Lucknow, and after promised Christian books and tracts had been despatched the Maulana sent the following communication, "I desire to thank you for the tracts you have so kindly sent me, and the perusal of them has really given me much pleasureI rarely get chance to meet missionaries whose ideal is brotherhood, and love, and show my feelings which I cherish for such persons. I am exceedingly glad when I get a chance to meet religious men. I am grateful for your prayers, and I hope you will surely come again " Are we doing our duty by the men who are moulding the average Moslem mind of India ?

Coptic Christians becoming Moslems.—The following extract from "The East and the West" of January last has been sent to us with a request for special prayer. "The Eastern Churches have fallen on evil days, while they cling tenaciously to their old traditional forms which at one time enshrined life-giving truths, but which now lack vitality. This opinion is not born of the misunderstanding or the ignorance or the prejudice of the Western mind, but it is the frank expression of some of their own bishops, priests, and laymen. It is a fact that more than two hundred Coptic Christians become Moslems in Egypt every year."

A New Book by Dr. Zwemer.—We have pleasure in giving the advance notice of "The Apostate" a Synopsis of which we have just received. In this new volume Dr. Zwemer purposes to answer the question "Why there are so few converts, from Islam," and to give examples of their moral courage, and martyrdom.

The Abolition of the Khilafat.—As we are preparing these notes for the Press the telegrams bring the not altogether unexpected announcement that the Angora Assembly has abolished the Khilafat, banished the Khalifa and his family, and that the Khalifa has already fled for Switzerland. Consternation reigns in the Khilafat camp in India; and Indian Moslems are reported to feel keenly this attitude of the Turks, for whom and the Khilafat together they have raised so much money, and aroused so much enthusiasm, and now by whom they have been made to appear ridiculous in the eyes of the whole world. We are hoping to be able to print a full consideration of this important subject in our next issue.

A Double Number of News and Notes in June.—Owing to the fact that the Acting Secretary of the League has to be absent from India attending the Jerusalem Conference at the time the May number of News and Notes should be gotten out, it has been thought desirable to omit the May issue entirely and, to put out a double number in June which shall be known as the Jerusalem Conference Number. The editor hopes, therefore, that this special indulgence will be granted him by the members of the League, and that the Jerusalem Number will more than make up for the absence of the single May number in the file.

FOR PRAISE AND PRAYER

PRAISE for the recent baptism of six converts from Islam in North Bengal.

PRAYER is asked for a young Mohammedan graduate. He is convinced that he should become a Christian, but his father, a wealthy landholder, will disinherit him if he is baptized. He therefore hesitates to take this step until he obtains employment.

PRAY for the Coptic Church of Egypt that it may be so vitalized that instead of losing converts to Islam, it may become an evangelizing power.

PRAYER is again asked for the Jerusalem Conference which meets April 3rd; and also for the visit of Dr. Zwemer to Iraq., Arabia and India which has already been announced, that the workers who attend these conferences may be greatly quickened.

NEW MEMBERS.

7	Rev. G. B. Thompson	M. E. Mission	Karachi
39	Rev. W. G. Shellabear	M. E. M. (Retired)	Madison, N. J.
71	Rev. H. P. Thomas	M. E. M.	Bombay
95	Rev. T. S. Howie	B. M. S.	Calcutta

The annual subscription to the League is only Rs. 2-0-0 (English about 3s.) The Secretary will be glad to send spare copies of this issue to addresses mentioned by members with a view to securing new subscribers. News and requests for prayer will always be welcome and should be sent early in the month to the Officiating Hon. Secretary:—

Rev. Murray T. Titus,
*Methodist Mission,
 Moradabad, U.P., India*

