

Confidential.

Not to be reproduced without
permission of the Secretary.

News and Notes

A Monthly Paper printed for the private use of the
Members of the Missionaries to Muslims League.

Series XIV

No. 9.

September, 1926.

9th September = 1st Rabi'ul Awwal (5rd mo.), 1345, A.H.

Hindus and the Muharram

A CORRESPONDENT to the *Statesman*, Calcutta, writing from South India by way of comment on the recent outbreak of hooliganism in Calcutta on the occasion of the celebration of Muharram, has such an extraordinary story to tell (by way of contrast) of the fraternising of Hindus with Muslims in his district that we cannot refrain from reproducing the main portion of his letter for the benefit of our readers.

He writes :

'Hindus of all castes, (save Brahmins,) have incorporated the Alums, which they call *Pirs*, into that wonderful heterogeneous pantheism which comprises modern Hinduism. The three Alums have their names, that of Ali being apparently always known as Lal Sahib, and considered the head of the trinity, whereas the other two go under various names such as Vendi Sowar (Silver Rider), Ankus Sowar, Tuli Sowar (Mother Rider), Syed Upar Sowar, and Tangalur Sowar. *Tangalur* is the little shrub with a yellow blossom whose bark is used for tanning, and which abounds on all sterile lands on the Deccan. What the origin, or underlying significance of these names is, I have yet been unable to learn, but it is obvious that they are looked upon and treated with the same reverence as the village Goddesses.

'During the course of the year, in case of sickness or distress, vows are made to the *Pirs*, which have to be fulfilled at Mohurram. Childless women vow that if they can only get their dearest wish, the child, male or female, shall be dedicated to the *Pirs*. During Mohurram, childless women throw themselves down before the Alums to be beaten by the presiding Mohammedan with the peacock *chauri*, in the hopes of attaining their desire. Should a child arrive, in the case of males they receive names such as Hoosanna, Husseinna,

Fakira, Sailu Sahib, and in the case of girls Fakiramma, Fatima Bhai, Syamma, Nanchiamma, seem the commonest.

'These children are to all intents and purposes dedicated to the *Pirs*, and annually during the time of Mohurrum fulfil their parents' vow, and are called for the time *Fakirs*.

'A boy of the weaver caste, a servant of a member of my staff, was a Fakir this year, and his story seems to fully illustrate the underlying beliefs and the ceremonies entailed. He tells me that many years ago his grandfather was suffering from acute rheumatism, and he made a vow to the *Pirs* that if he was cured he would give a present at the forthcoming Mohurrum. The grandfather, so Sailu, the grandson, tells me, at once obtained relief, but unfortunately when the time of Mohurrum arrived, owing to financial stress he was unable to fulfil his vow. At once the rheumatism returned, but renewed vows removed the pains. On the following Mohurrum he was able to complete his vow, and ever since then, one member of his family has been deputed annually to become Fakir during the Mohurrum time. I gather from Sailu that this year, at the cost of the family, he prepared three pots of panakum, (jagari syrup), and one pot of rice. Other *Fakirs*, both male and female, not blessed with sufficient of this world's goods, would don the saffron robe, and beg the material for the fulfilment of the vow from house to house, which is readily given with that wonderful generosity that characterizes the Indian poorer classes.

'Sailu tells me that this food is then taken to the *asshur khana* and after suitable *pūja* being done before the *Pirs*, two pots of the panakum, and half the rice is given to the Mohammedan in charge of the *asshur khana*, the remainder is distributed amongst the Hindus present, the syrup being poured into open expectant mouths with a spoon. On the 10th day of Mohurrum the Alums are carried in procession to the tank. This year they passed within 50 yards of my hut so I had every chance to watch the proceedings. Lal Sahib, the central crescent-surmounted Alum, had his pole fixed to a palanquin, whereas his subordinates Vendi Sowar, and Syed Upar Sowar were carried, all by Hindu *Fakir* chokras. The five Mohammedans (all Sunnis) who comprise the total of two villages, accompanied the procession, headed by the *chamar* drummers, in their best clothes.

'As the procession was approaching, I saw the presiding Mohammedan gyrating in a somewhat unsteady manner before the Alums. He was the local policeman, and spotting me stopped, which was a pity.

'Sailu tells me that on reaching the tank the *Pirs* were *undressed* (sic), the poles and the emblems washed, and the whole paraphernalia put in a box to await the next festival. The box was carried back in procession and deposited in the *asshur khana*.

'There is no doubt in my mind that the Hindus reverence the *Pirs* and claim them as part of their religion, and during Mohurrum look upon the Mohammedans as presiding priests of those deities.

'On the 13th night of Mohurrum (which finished the show, thank goodness, as the endless tom-tomming was getting on my nerves), the Mohammedans hold a *Jharat*, which means that they have a huge feed of *pillau*, the material for which has been supplied with the utmost goodwill by their Hindu neighbours; and the box containing the Alums is removed from the *asshur khana*, and according to Sailu, hidden till next Mohurrum, there being no mosque in the village.'

Glimpses into the Work of Colporteurs

From a batch of recent reports presented by colporteurs employed under the Nile Mission Press we quote the following:—

A. said:—"A man at the station of Shebin el Kom asked, Have you a Gospel? I said, If you want a Gospel I will sell you one. The true Gospel? said he. Is there a true Gospel and a false Gospel? I asked him. He said, Yes. I said to him, I did not expect such a statement from you, but let me ask you, Is it possible for you to bring an accusation against me without proof? He said, No. What words are they then that have been changed, I said, and who was it that changed them, and at what time? He was ashamed, and made no reply."

B. reported as follows:—"I went about at the Maulid of ed Desequi selling books in the the tents. I found a certain sheikh-student and people sitting around him, and said to him, 'Will you allow me to enter the tent?' The sheikh said, 'Welcome! only put off your shoes from your feet.' So I went in and offered the books to the people present. The sheikh said to me, 'Why do you deceive the simple people, and teach heresy, and make Jesus, the Son of Mary, into God? The people present applauded him.'"

Then there arose a controversy between the colporteur and the sheikh on this subject. They would not be convinced, and some of them struck the colporteur and reviled him. Then a policeman came up and resolved the difficulty. He said, 'This is not a time for selling books.' Said the colporteur to the policeman, 'I ask to be allowed to go to the Head Office with these people who have struck me.' The sheikh said, 'Why is this? Did not Christ say, If one smite you on the one cheek, turn to him the other also?' When the policeman heard this verse, he said, 'It is true that these people do work for God freely!' And the colporteur said to the sheikh, 'For Christ's sake I forgive you.' After that he bought 10 books, and the policeman 10 books, and each one went his way.

C. said:—"Once while I was visiting and preaching and distributing the word of God I met with a party of our Muslim brethren. After saluting them, with my case in my hand, one of them said,

'What is it you have there?' I answered that I had a very valuable treasure, not to be equalled by all the treasures of the world. He was amazed at that and asked me hastily, 'Can you show it to us?' Immediately I opened my case and offered a book to each. After they had looked at them and examined them, they laughed but one of them said, 'It is quite true. His words are appropriate, for there is nothing more valuable than the word of God, and the Christians are very keen about their religion, all others are agreed about that.' Then said the first one, 'Suppose we each buy one of his books and study it, for knowledge of a thing is better than ignorance of it.' Thanks be to God for His opening the way for preaching and the distribution of books!"

Mosque Prayers in Turkish

A Correction

THE Editor of the Ahmadiya paper, *The Light*, loses no opportunity to score a point at the expense of *Mullas* on the one hand, and Christian missionaries on the other. In a recent issue he makes reference to a question very much to the fore at the present time, viz: Turkey and a reformed Islam (see also an article on this subject in *The Moslem World* for July).

He says: "Ever since the abolition of the Khilafat there has been a distinct tendency among the *Mullas* and their dupes here in India to a look askance at the Turk as a 'black sheep.' And the Christian missionary has been feeling right jubilant at the so-called revolt of the Turk against Islam. We have never had any misgivings. Every time we heard of a reform introduced by the Turk it went to raise him in our estimation. We knew what he was up against. It was *Mulla-ism* and *darveshism*, two cankers eating into the vitals of Islam, that he wanted to purge his land of. The nation builders of modern Turkey knew their business and they set about it like men.

"Only once we took exception to a measure concerning the Turkicising of daily prayers. We are immensely relieved, however, to learn that in that particular too, better counsels have prevailed and the idea has been abandoned once for all. An announcement by the President of the Religious Department of Angora—who, by the way is not a *Mulla* with an outlook limited to the length of beard or trousers, but a man with an intelligent grasp of the inner spirit of Islam who has a brilliant record of war services to his credit, and who for his manly character enjoys the esteem of the Ghazi Pasha himself—an announcement by him should allay all anxiety on that score. Says he:

'Prayers cannot be offered in Turkish. Even when the authentic translation of the Quran has been made into Turkish, prayers shall continue to be made in Arabic. The rendering of the Quran

into Turkish and the offering of prayers in Turkish are two different affairs having no connection with each other.'

* * * * *

NOTE:—The reader is referred to our issue of December last, where we quote the letter of a Constantinople correspondent to a Muslim paper in India, on this very subject. We should be grateful if one of our members in Turkey would indicate the exact position in this matter at the present time. *Eb. M. & M.*

The Kabyles

REV. FRANCIS Brading, at the recent Annual Meeting of the Nile Mission Press, in London, spoke on the possibilities of the work of the N.M.P. in the Barbary States. He had just returned from a visit to Algiers and in the course of his address gave the following interesting account of the Kabyles:

'The Kabyles are the original inhabitants of Algeria. They are akin to the Copts and the Abyssinians. The Coptic and the Abyssinian Churches are the only two original Christian Churches of North Africa in existence. They are unreformed, but they are nominally Christian. When the Arabs came over from Arabia these people were driven back, but the Arabs were not able to force Islam upon them. The Amhars (Abyssinians) at all events stood firm, and went into the fastnesses of Abyssinia; the Copts were driven up the Nile, but they never embraced Islam. The Kabyles of Algeria were driven by the Arabs into the mountains and forced to adopt Islam. They then passed on into Morocco, and there encountered the Riffs, and in the south of Morocco the Sus, and Mohammedanism was at last forced upon them all, and in many of their mosques to-day, especially in South Morocco, these people pray with a sword before them to remind them that the religion they now possess was forced upon them at the point of the sword, and they ask God to forgive them for worshipping Him in this way. These people were all at one time Christians.'

Rationality and Islam

DR. CHARLES R. Watson, President of the American University at Cairo, discusses modern Nationalistic Tendencies in Islam in a sympathetic article in *The Moslem World*. We venture to quote his closing paragraphs which emphasize the serious disabilities with which Moslem peoples are beset when they desire to carry out national programmes of advance to-day. He says:

'Most of these nations of the Moslem World come to their hour of national privilege cruelly handicapped by the absence of a public conscience. Truth, honesty, justice have been sadly travestied in Islam. Nationalism calls for higher moral qualities in a people than does absolutism.

'Again, illiteracy and ignorance, appalling and almost universal, clog the steps of national progress, interrupt intercommunication, block material development, increase disease and mortality, and discourage the ardent patriot at every turn.

'Once again, narrow mindedness and jealousy make difficult the task of preserving national unity. Trained to bitter religious antagonisms in the school of Islam, such nations find it difficult to compose the rivalries of race and religion, especially if within their national boundaries are such diverse groups as Turkey possessed. . . .

'Courageous leadership is also a serious lack in lands emerging from a civilization which has never emphasized individualism. Again and again in the development of these lands, splendid qualities of culture, intelligence, education and pure motive have been unavailing, for lack of qualities of courageous leadership.'

* * * * *

We have been reading Canon Sell's valuable little books on the history of Islam in different ages and countries. They afford graphic illustrations of the points brought out by Dr. Waston. We strongly recommend our readers to secure these booklets while they may. See our review last month.

The Muslim Year

Rabi-ul-Awwal

THE third month of the year is notable for the fact that the prophet Muhammad was born on its 12th day. Apparently his death, in the eleventh year of the Hijra, also took place on that same day, though Muslims observe the day as a festival to commemorate his birth (*maulidu' l nabi*) rather than as a day of mourning.

The Muslims of every town as a rule hold a public meeting with great pomp in celebration of the prophet's birthday and invite scholars and eloquent preachers to recite the excellence and virtues of Muhammad. Lane in his "Modern Egyptians" gives the following account of such a recital:

"O God, bless our lord Muhammad among the latter generations and bless our lord Muhammad in every time and period, and bless our lord Muhammad amongst the most exalted princes, unto the Day of Judgment; and bless all the prophets and apostles among the inhabitants of the heavens, and of the earth, and may God (whose name be blessed and exalted) be well pleased with our lords and our masters, those persons of illustrious estimation, Abu Bakr, and 'Umar, and 'Usman, and Ali and with all the other favourites of God. God is our sufficiency, excellent is the Guardian; and there is no strength nor power but in God, the High, the Great. O, God, O our Lord, O Thou liberal of pardon, O Thou most bountiful of the most bountiful, O God. Amin."

* * * * *

But as Rev. Ahmad Shah reminded us some years back, "It is deplorable that modern educated but voluptuous Muslims have reduced these functions into occasions for the gratification of their sensual passions. Attractive singers, who are themselves the very incarnation of falsehood and wickedness, are often selected for reciting the nativity song."

Change of Address

To avoid delay and disappointment in the receipt of this paper kindly notify us of any change of address due to furlough or transfer.

The Moslem World

July Number

CONTENTS

The Nubians in Egypt	...	J. Enderlin
Can Islam be Reformed?	...	
The Revolution in Turkey	...	E. Stanley Jones
Islam in America	...	Mary C. Holmes
The Village Mohammedans of Bengal	...	R. C. Das
The Approach to Moslems	...	Walter T. Fairman
The Feminist Movement in Egypt	...	Daisy G. Philips
For Egypt's Childhood	...	Stephen V. R. Trowbridge
Current Topics		Book Review
Survey of Periodicals	...	Hollis W. Hering.

Published by Missionary Review Publicity Co.,
156 Fifth Avenue, New York City.

AGENTS IN INDIA,

The Association Press, 5 Russell St. Calcutta.

Notes

Alshari'ah Alvashid, or the Brigand's Story. 72 pp. 7 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 4 $\frac{7}{8}$ ".
American Christian Literature Society for Moslems.

All Christians who are in touch with Arabic reading men and women will welcome a story throbbing with human interest and the message of Christ's love. Written by Miss Amy Wilson Carmichael, published originally in India, Miss C. E. Padwick and her fellow-workers in Egypt have now made it available for all who read the Arabic language. It can be obtained for (2 piastres Egyptian, 6d English) from C.M.S. Buildings, Boulac, Cairo. Missionaries to Moslems should not fail to get a copy of it and use it in their work.

W. WILSON CASH.

* * * * *

Cleanliness, a feature of Islam.—The editor of *The Light*, Lahore, has been advocating the use of the *miswak*, or Muslim toothbrush, in the children's column of that paper. He says "Beware of dirty teeth . . . decomposed matter becomes the breeding ground of germs . . . injurious germs also enter your system with the air that you breathe in through your mouth . . . Islam was the first to declare that cleanliness is next to Godliness."

Elsewhere in the same issue in answer to the question, 'Does the ceremony of *tayammum* clean the body and make it fit for prayer?' he defends the use of sand and soil, thus: 'In *tayammum* the effect is only psychological. *Tayammum* gives the desirable turn to our mind. Besides,

dust is symbolic of humility and therefore when applied to the hands and face, it induces a humble mood—the right mood in which to approach God.'

The italics are ours. *Dust!* what about the germs in dust? But the editor of *The Light* is not concerned to be consistent!

* * * * *

A Request.—Notwithstanding the customary footnote appearing on the last page of each issue of our paper, surprisingly few people send us in notes on their work or topics for praise and prayer. Have you not had some experience worth passing on for the encouragement or guidance of others: some perplexity for which a solution may be found in securing the prayers of those who understand and can sympathize?

The Editor will be grateful for assistance month by month.

New Member

461. Miss Slater, B.M.S. Agra.

The annual subscription to the League is only Rs. 2-0-0 (English 3s. od.). 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 Hon. Secretary:—

Rev. L. Bevan Jones,
Baptist Mission,
Dacca, Bengal, India.



Edited and published by Rev. L. Bevan Jones, Dacca, Bengal, and printed at the Orissa Mission Press, Cuttack, by Rev. R. J. Grundy, Superintendent.