

Missionaries to Muslims League

News and Notes.

Series VI, No. 12.

April, 1918.

THE MOSQUES OF CAIRO

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No visitor to Cairo should neglect to visit some of the principal of its three hundred odd mosques. In this brief article we can only touch upon the chief features of two or three of the most important. For the missionary visitor, no mosque can compare in interest with the renowned Al Azhar; and, next to it, probably that founded by Amru, the Muslim conqueror of Egypt, will claim his closest attention. The most beautiful mosques, however, are more modern, and date from the time of the Mameluke Sultans of Egypt. Most of the articles of interest, such as ancient manuscript copies of the Qur'an, have now been removed from the various mosques, and placed together in the Sultania Library. The oldest of these manuscripts is said to be nearly 1,200 years old. One, written during the Mameluke period, is written entirely in gold characters, and occupies thirty volumes. The whole collection is wonderfully interesting, and contains, in addition to illuminated manuscript copies of the Qur'an, ancient Arabic documents written on papyrus parchment and bones.

The mosque known as Al Azhar was originally built by Gauhar, about 973 A.D. It has, however, been so altered and added to since that date, that it is questionable whether much of the original building still remains. The whole mosque embraces an enormous area, the *liwán*, or covered cloister, where most of the instruction is given, alone covering an area of 3,600 square yards. One finds it difficult to describe the plan of the Azhar. Briefly one may say that it consists of a large open court, roughly paved with stones, at the eastern side of which is the *liwán* mentioned above, whilst on the other sides are various courts and rooms devoted either to teaching, or for the residence of foreign students. The *liwán* furnishes a picture never to be forgotten. The vast proportions of the building with its nearly 400 pillars, many of them of marble stolen from Christian churches, the pulpit from which the Qur'an is recited or sermons delivered, and the *kibla*, or sacred niche, which indicates the direction of Mecca: all these make a

deep impression on the visitor. Al Azhar, however, is more than a mosque: it is a university; and it is this fact which gives it its fascination for the missionary visitor. For here are gathered men from China and India, Mongolia, Turkestan, and from the East Indies and from the wilds of Africa, all intent on the study of the Qur'an, pledged to go back and spread the faith of Muhammad to the ends of the earth. It has been the writer's privilege to stand beneath the great dome of St. Sophia in Constantinople, and to gaze on the piece of naked rock under the dome of the Mosque of Omar in Jerusalem, but neither moved the very depths of his being more profoundly than did the sight of those hundreds of Muslim students in Al Azhar, many of them grey-headed men, preparing to go forth as apostles of the greatest lie the world has ever seen. The sight is as unique as sad, and the writer will not soon forget those groups of men seated on the matted floor of Al Azhar, gathered round some scores of teachers, who were expounding Muslim theology, jurisprudence, logic, rhetoric, poetry, etc. It is difficult, however, to believe that the students number 12,000. It is doubtful whether one-tenth of that number were present during the writer's visit, which was timed to catch the students at their work. A visit was paid to the Shaikh in charge of the Indian *riwák*, or College. The writer found him a native of the Maldivé Islands, knowing neither Urdu nor Bengali, so conversation had to be carried on in Arabic. The Shaikh had been nine years in the Azhar, and volunteered the information that he contemplated visiting India after the war. There is a large library connected with the mosque, in which may be seen an interesting collection of manuscript copies of the Qur'an.

The Mosque of Amru has the distinction of being the oldest mosque in Egypt. The original building, of which, however, little remains, was erected by Amru Bin As, the Muslim conqueror of Egypt, in the middle of the seventh century of the Christian era. It is of enormous size, and somewhat resembles the Azhar, with its great open court and *líván*, containing six rows of marble columns, most of them obviously taken from earlier buildings. The tomb of the founder is in one corner of the building. Near the entrance are two columns of the great colonnade, built so closely together that only with difficulty can a moderate-sized man squeeze between them. The tradition is that only men of the highest integrity, in other words those fit for heaven, can pass between. These columns are now surrounded by an iron railing, placed there, we are told, by a certain ruler whose portly form would obviously fail to pass the test! A curious well is shown whence water for ablutions is drawn, and the writer was gravely informed by a Muslim present that it was connected by an underground passage with the well, Zemzem, in the great mosque at Mecca! So one could drink Zemzem water in Cairo without the perils and discomforts of a journey to the metropolis of Arabia!

Next to the Mosque of Amru, that which carries the name of Ibu Tulun is the oldest in Cairo. Ibu Tulun was the founder of the

Tulunide Dynasty, which existed in Egypt from 868 to , and the mosque was built in 879 A.D., so that it, too, is more than a thousand years old. It was designed by a Christian architect, and is said to be an exact reproduction of the great mosque at Mecca, without, of course, the Kaaba. Instead of the Kaaba, the centre of the huge courtyard, some six acres in extent, is occupied by an elaborate fountain for ceremonial ablutions. This courtyard is surrounded by colonnades which give the whole a most imposing appearance. The mosque, however, is in a very ruinous state, and at the time of my visit was absolutely bare of worshippers. Indeed, the two oldest mosques of Cairo are practically deserted by the people in favour of the modern and more beautiful mosques erected by later rulers. In fact, the writer was told by his guide that the mosque of Amru is seldom used except on Fridays!

The finest mosques of Cairo, from an architectural point of view, are those built between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries. Not a few of them are adorned with marble columns from earlier Roman and Byzantine buildings, and one, at least, boasts a magnificent bronze gate, brought as a trophy from a Crusader church at Acre: a gate which Stanley Lane-Poole remarks, would "not be out of place in Salisbury Cathedral." Some of these mosques are richly decorated with fine inlaying of marble, tortoise-shell, mother of pearl, and other precious materials, and not a few of the pulpits are beautiful specimens of the carver's art. Many of the minarets, also, which are such a conspicuous feature of Cairo mosques, are well worth inspection.

Many of the great mosques of this period are also tombs, and cover the remains of their royal builders. The mosque of Sultan Hasan, built in the fourteenth century, is a typical sample. The outer walls of this stately building are nearly 100 feet high, and they are capped by a cornice 13 feet high, projecting six feet. The massive gateway is itself 60 feet high, whilst the minaret measures 280 feet from the ground to the summit. The body of the Sultan lies in a mausoleum beneath a dome nearly 200 feet high. These figures will give the reader some idea of the massive proportions of the Muslim mosque. Not a few of the older mosques are falling to ruins, fit emblems, may we not hope, of the great system which they represent. "The educated classes of Egypt do not pray or go near the mosques," was the remark of a native of Cairo made to the writer; and with this striking reflection we must close.

We have mentioned more than once the *Qadiani Commentary on the Qur'án*. We are glad to receive copies of the Rev. Canon Sell's English pamphlet on the subject. As we send a copy to each member with this issue, there is no need of a review.

THE TURKS' RETURN TO ASIA

[Lloyd George, in his speech on January 5th, said, "While we do not challenge the maintenance of the Turkish empire in the homelands of the Turkish race, with its capital at Constantinople, . . . Arabia, Armenia and Mesopotamia are, in our judgment, entitled to the recognition of their separate national conditions."]

We question whether this will be any news to the Turks. For many years they themselves have thought that the evil day must come, the time when Turkey in Europe will be no longer regarded as "the homelands of the Turkish race." This is brought out most clearly in a striking poem, written over fifty years ago, by Lord Houghton. It is entitled, *The Turk at Constantinople to the Frank*. Houghton was not drawing so much upon his own imagination as upon that of the Turks' of his day. In the poem he depicts an old Turk musing, with fatalistic calm, on the banishment of the Turks from Europe as a sure conclusion. He is made to say that they are nothing more than a nomadic people, mere tent-dwellers, here to-day and gone to-morrow.

"The just successor of the Khaleefate
Still on his brow the sign of empire wears ;
We hold our wealth without reserve or fear ;
And yet we know we are but tented here.
Millions of Christians bend beneath our rule,
And yet these realms are neither theirs nor ours,
Sultan and subject are alike the tool
Of Europe's ready guile or banded powers ;
Against the lords of continent and sea
What can one nation do, one people be?"

There is no hope, no peace, no safety except in a return to Asia:—

"Therefore, regardless of the moment's shame,
Of wives' disdain, and children's thoughtless woe,
Of Christian triumph o'er the Prophet's name,
Of Russia's smile beneath her mask of snow :
Let us return to Asia's fair domain,
Let us in truth possess the East again !

Men of the West ! Ye understand us not,
We you no more : ye take our good for ill ;
Ye scorn what we esteem man's happiest lot—
Perfect submission to creative will ;
Ye would rejoice to watch from us depart
Our ancient temperance—our peace of heart.

Aping your customs we have changed e'en now
The noble garb in Nature's wisdom given,
And turban that, on every Muslim's brow,
Was as a crown at once for earth and heaven :—
The sword with which the sire Byzantium won
Sleeps in you deep unwielded by the son.

Let us return ! across the fatal strait
Our fathers' shadows welcome us once more ;

Back to the glories of the Khaleefate,
 Back to the faith we loved, the dress we wore,
 When in one age the world could well contain
 Haroon Er-Rasheed and your Charlemagne "

WILL INDIA HELP CHINA?

In response to the paragraph in the January issue of *News and Notes*, in regard to the sending of a deputation to China, we have received the following:—

The Rev. H. A. Walter writes: "Mr. Rhodes talked with me in China last summer about the possibility of a converted Muslim from India coming over to China for a time, and I encouraged him to hope that something of the kind might be accomplished. I was in Japan in the spring of 1910 when, in connection with the World's Christian Student Federation Conference, delegates from other lands joined in a series of evangelistic tours through the empire, and I remember the profound impression made on the Japanese mind by this evidence of the universal character and wide spread of the Christian religion. When the war came tentative plans were being discussed for something of the kind in India, which I hope will come to fruition at a later date.

Mr. Rhodes' plan would utilize this method of Christian apologetic for the Chinese Muslims, just at a time when they are coming to a new self-consciousness, but before visits of Muslim deputations have solidified them in an antagonism toward Christianity which does not now exist. Such a deputation would certainly receive a hearing in the larger Muslim centres of China—if only through curiosity—and I believe it would be in many cases a *sympathetic* hearing, and that the results might be fairly astonishing, if plans are carefully and prayerfully made, and carried through with the co-operation of all interested parties in both India and China. I wish it might have come last year, when Dr. Zwemer and I were in China, but it may be even better a little later.

With regard to ways and means this has occurred to me. Every summer at Kuling, China, a Conference is held at which a part at least of the expenses of the principal speaker is paid, I believe by the China Continuation Committee, though I am not sure. I was wondering if our delegate might not go to China in that capacity—making a novel change in the character of the Kuling speakers—and putting in all his time, save for those few days, in visiting the chief Muslim centres, in company with Mr. Rhodes or Mr. Ogilvie and a strong Chinese convert from Islâm, if one is available. The China Continuation Committee and the Y.M.C.A. National Council might *both* contribute, and if more were needed I am sure many of us in the League would be delighted to contribute to a fund which might be opened in *News and Notes*.

In a later letter Mr. Walter, writing in regard to a European missionary going as a delegate to China asks, "I wonder if we have a single missionary in India who can *preach* in Arabic, so as to meet the requirements outlined by Mr. Rhodes."

As Mr. Walter is now touring a great deal in different parts of India, we have asked him to try and get into touch with workers who could take this trip and be a real help to our friends in China. If God gives us the man, or men, the ways and means, we believe, will be easy.

NOTES

In the December number of *Record of Christian Work*, reference is made to the German Catholic Missions of the United States and to a book recently issued by one of their workers, entitled *The Most Vital Mission Problem*, dealing with what the author describes as "the acute present danger of missionary work, namely, the success of Protestant effort." He continues, "I do not fear to miss the mark if I say that the most far-reaching and characteristic manifestation of modern Protestant mission life is the systematic and thorough study of every phase of present actual mission problems." Dr. Schwager mentions the revived interest with which the Protestant Societies are attacking the problem of Muhammadanism, and remarks: "That there is even one Catholic priest who is engaged solely with the work of converting Muhammadans cannot be stated. Without doubt there are mission projects of greater importance and more promising than converting the Muhammadans. At all events this is a good proof of the intensity of Protestant, and particularly Anglo-Saxon mission life, that the Muhammadan mission work is taken in hand by Protestants with such fiery energy."

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Mr. Upson sends the following translation from an Arabic paper in Cairo—

From the *Mukattam*, of 15th of January, 1918:—

"The Mashyakha of Al Azhar have written three sermons for the mosque pulpits:

"(1) Forbidding reading of the Qur'an in the streets.

"(2) Forbidding the 'Zar,' and also the impudence of women.

"(3) Forbidding wailing at funerals.

"They have sent these three Khutbas to the mosques which are in the Ministry of Wakfs, and also to the preachers of all other mosques, through the Provincial Governors, in order that they may be preached in succession, and afterwards repeated from time to time."

In a covering note Mr. Upson says, "I don't see *why* they forbid the Qur'an in streets exactly! The impudence of women is *Tabarruz*

and means 'display of ornaments or of person' (in order to attract men's glances)."

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One of our members sends a note which will not be approved by all. He writes:

"Baptism among Muhammadans:

"Behold I send you as sheep among wolves;

"Be ye therefore wise as serpents, but harmless as doves!"

"The Muhammadan convert's position is comparable to that of the early Christians at Rome. The catacombs remain to show us that the Spirit guided them to hide from certain death, as a serpent hides. Following those words of our Lord and that early example, we may confidently administer private baptism to Muhammadans in the midst of Muhammadans. We learn from history that Cæsar's palace was honeycombed with Christians unbeknown. So St. Paul sends greeting to them of the household of Cæsar."

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The Editor of *The Star of the East* writes, "The story of these months can never be told, but we who have seen a trifle of massacre and relief in 1895 have a faint conception of what it has meant to the missionaries in Turkey who have remained at their posts. We who know the Orient in the interior of Turkey beg of you to pray most earnestly for the handful of workers, most of them women, who in these days refuse to leave the stricken peoples whose only hope they have become."

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The Rev. E. T. Allen, of the American Presbyterian Mission at Urumiah, writes of the treatment of the Syriac Christians by the Muhammadans. They have robbed them as clean as a dog picks a bone, taking especial delight in destroying books, and chiefly Scriptures. "As I went about the country I saw the Syriac literature of the whole nation torn, scattered, buried in filth, or burned, and the first love of this nation was and is the Bible. There are 5,500 families in the plain, and I think no less than 4,000 families are readers. They were all provided with copies of the Scriptures before these troubles. Now there are hardly a dozen Bibles there."

The Turks' War Prayer.—The Turkish War Office has issued a specially prepared prayer for the Turkish soldiers, who are under obligation to recite it every night. It is rather striking that it neither quotes the Qur'án nor mentions the Prophet. There is no savour of Islám about it at all. The white wolf mentioned is an idol which the Turks used to worship before their conversion to Islám.

"Almighty God! Grant to the Turks health.

And unite all the brethren in the benevolence of the Sultan.

That Thy power may be glorified grant by the favour of the White Wolf.
 Thou young Turan, thou beloved Fatherland,
 We beseech thee to show us thy path.
 Our great ancestor Aghouz calls us.
 Almighty God, shed upon the Turks the blaze of Thy light.
 That the path of Turan may be plain and dwellings be illuminated
 In every place and corner with a rosy glow."

PRAISE AND PRAYER

*"Do not pray for easy lives; pray to be stronger men.
 Do not pray for tasks equal to your powers; pray for powers
 equal to your tasks.
 Then the doing of your work shall be no miracle, but you shall
 be the miracle."*—PHILLIPS BROOKS.

China.—*Pray* that guidance may be given in the matter of a deputation to China; that the right man or men may be sent.

Cairo.—*Prayer* is requested for eight converts and one enquirer (one from Judaism, eight from Islām), working in various capacities at the Nile Mission Press.

Palestine.—*Pray* that Britain and the Allies may be strong enough to give the Jews their due. Before Jerusalem was taken an appeal of more than 250 Jewish organisations throughout Great Britain was made to His Majesty's Government "in favour of the reconstitution of Palestine as the national home of the Jewish people." Jewish national hopes have never been nearer realisation since the dispersion.

Omdurman, Sudan.—"This place is quite one of the most promising I have worked in, the land is dry and thirsty and knows it, therefore why not expect times of refreshing from the Lord. Hearts are wonderfully open." Prayer is requested. F. W.

Kishorgang, Bengal.—*Pray* for a high school boy, who has been interested for some time but feels that he could never love his enemies. L. M. G.

*The Annual Subscription to the League is Rs. 2-8-0 (3s. 4d.).
 Members are requested to send news and requests for prayer to*

Brahmanbaria, Bengal.

JOHN TAKLE,
 Hon. Sec., M.M. League.