

Missionaries to Muslims League

News and Notes.

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SOME MUSLIM VILLAGE WOMEN I HAVE MET

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In the large district called the Jhang Bar, where I work amongst our thousands of Christians brought in by the mass movement, I come in contact in nearly every village with Muslim Jat women. In talking to them, visiting them in their homes, listening to and treating their ailments as they come crowding to the tent, there is every opportunity of getting to know their mind and outlook, and of telling them of the Saviour of the world.

Their Attitude Towards the Message

The women, if not interfered with by the men, usually listen with the utmost simplicity and eagerness to the story of the love of Christ. In many cases they call me to their houses simply to hear the message, and directly I arrive they ask for a hymn, without even going through the usual preliminaries of enquiring my age, number of brothers, how much my clothes cost, etc.!

I was in a village sitting in the Christian quarter teaching the women, and several Muslims were also squatting around listening, when a message came from the Lambardani that she would like a visit. After finishing our Christian meeting my Biblewoman and I went to see her, followed by a swarm of children. She was not a very intelligent woman, and seemed simply to have called us for the sake of the "tamasha," but from among the crowd another woman called out—"Come to my house, Miss Sahib, we want to hear what you have to say." I am afraid I thought at first it was but a trap to lead us into useless argument, and when we arrived at the house and saw a number of men inside I at once said, "If you have called us simply to ridicule the words we preach or to argue uselessly I will not sit down." "No, no," she assured me, "we really do want to hear." The men were weaving at one end of the room, and a whole crowd of women assembled round the bed they placed for us at the other end. During the hymn and simple telling of man's need of a Saviour and of the redemption Christ has brought, they all drew closer and listened with the greatest intentness. Afterwards the woman of the house said, "Have you no books in which we can read about this for ourselves?" I produced

some Gospels and the men eagerly bought them. Then the woman led us to another house, saying, "They must hear this story there too." It was almost pathetic the way they listened there, and at the end exclaimed, "Why haven't we known this before? You know all these things, but we have no one to help us live a good life."

I find in every crowd of women there is a great desire among them for goodness and for purity of life, but when one speaks of the power of Christ to deliver them from sin they are incredulous.

Their Appreciation of Goodness

During the singing and preaching in a far off-village one day, I noticed the face of a certain woman standing in the crowd at the back. She gradually edged nearer and nearer, and at last pushed right through and came and squatted down in front of me. "They are good words that you say," and turning to the others, "we ought to lead better lives, it is only by goodness we shall reach God." I tried to tell her that if she prayed for the Holy Spirit He would give her the power to overcome sin. She asked us to sing another bhajan, and during the singing she quietly slipped a two-anna piece into my hand. Afterwards I said to her, "Why do you give me money. I am not a Pir, and I cannot bestow merit upon you nor fulfil your desires." She said, "I give it to God because you tell us the way to Him."

The Appeal of Prayer

On Sunday afternoons some of my girls and I walk over the fields to preach in the nearest villages. One Sunday, after the service with the Christian women, we were called to see an old sick woman in the Muhammadan Lambardar's house. I found her in a stuffy room moaning with fever. After some conversation with the daughter-in-law, and impressing upon her to be sure and send for medicine the next day, I turned to the old woman and spoke very simply to her of Christ. Then I said, "Mother, if you will pray in the name of Jesus, God will surely give you rest, for He has so promised." Very feebly she raised her hands, and joining them together said, "Oh God, in Jesus' name, give me rest." A fortnight passed, and no one came for medicine for the old soul, so I concluded she must have died. But the very next time we went to that village whom should we meet but that old woman walking along the street! She greeted us, and I said, "Mother, how quickly you have recovered!" "Yes," she answered happily, "your Jesus cured me!"

Prejudice Against Christianity

But though the women listen gladly to the message, and are usually most friendly, they have absolutely no thought or desire of becoming Christians. Many have a hunger in their hearts for spiritual comfort and peace, they acknowledge the goodness of our message, and they see in Him a power which they have not got, but no Muslim woman in all our district has definitely accepted Christ. In fact, the thought of becoming a Christian raises the greatest bitterness and antagonism in

their hearts. This may be because the great mass of Christians known to them are Chuhras, and so their class prejudice prevents their thinking of Christianity as anything but an alliance with what are to them "the scum of the earth."

The Lambardani in a certain village, which I visit pretty regularly, welcomed me eagerly to her house. She could read, and after several visits I had a long talk with her, comparing the lives and characters of Muhammad and Christ. She seemed very much impressed and took a Gospel to read. But the next time I went I found the door of the house closed against me; they said she was out, though I knew all the time it was only an excuse. Then the Christians told me plainly, "The men have forbidden her to see you or read with you any more, they are afraid of her becoming a Christian." Since then I have often met the woman, for she does not keep purdah, but her attitude and interest have completely changed. She tried to make a disturbance in the Christians' meeting one day, calling them all sorts of abusive names, and saying to me, "Ah, you thought you would make me a Christian, but I am a Muslim for ever!" The last time I saw her she was quite friendly, and accepted a pamphlet which she promised to read.

How we need sympathy and love, that the prejudice of such as these may be broken down.

The Janglis

There are a large number of these wandering gipsy tribes all over the Jhang Bar. They are the original inhabitants of the desert, and have customs and speech quite distinct from the Panjabis. They used to be very lawless, but since Government has opened up the country by canal irrigation and villages have sprung up they have settled down to a pastoral life, and keep great herds of camels and flocks of sheep and goats. They are all Muhammadans, but very ignorant even of their own faith. Many of the women whom I have met do not even know the name of their Prophet. Here is a great field for evangelisation, if only the workers were forthcoming. At present no definite work is done among these people.

May there soon come a great breaking down of the Muslim prejudice and antagonism to Christianity, that these women may recognise and openly confess the Christ, whose principles and teaching appeal to them, and whom many dimly seek to follow, though as yet they know not His glorious Person and Power.

The Rev. G. E. Brown, writing on the use of "Isa Nabi," says: "In Hyderabad we usually speak of Khūdāvand Yēsū Masih, merely using the well-known Muslim expressions to make it obvious to whom we refer. 'Yēshū' may be more correct etymologically, but is not familiar even to Christians. One feels that the form, 'Yēsū,' will become permanent."

THE FAKIR MOVEMENT

[Last month we published an article by the Rev. John Reid, of the Baptist Mission, on the interesting work among the Fakirs. We now quote from an article in the "Gleaner," by the Rev. E. T. Butler, M.A., telling of the same movement, but over the border in the C.M.S. field.—Ed.]

Humniapota (where the movement has developed) is a village about nine miles from Ranaghat. Here the Pir lives. He has a patriarchal appearance and his strong personality and manifest sincerity of mind at once strikes the new comer..... He was drawn to Christianity because he found much of his teaching endorsed by that religion. He specially mentions non-existence of caste, name of Muhammad not to be mentioned in prayer, prayer to be uttered turning in any direction, union with God to be acquired not through works but through a change of heart, the Spirit of God which is Jesus dwelling in the heart. The book called *Mirror of the Heart* with its teaching greatly struck him.

For the months of January and February we formed a big party in the Pir's garden. Every night at evening prayers the Fakirs who were living there came to the tent. They were taught two simple Catechisms, and the Gospel of St. Mark was read with and expounded to them. They sang our hymns and joined us in prayer. In this way simple teaching on sin, need of repentance and New Birth, Salvation, Jesus the Saviour, the Divinity of our Lord, and integrity of the Christian Scriptures, the life of Jesus Christ, etc., etc., were imparted in simple language. While this was going on the Pir and his disciples confessed themselves as Christians. Many of the Pir's disciples from a distance visited him and these always attended our prayers. One day two women arrived, one of whom was under deep conviction of sin, produced by the singing of a Christian hymn which her husband had learnt partly in our tent and at Ulashi.

As time went on it occurred to us that it would not be fair to the taught, nor faithful to our duty, if we broke up camp without baptising those who were prepared and desired it. We were in this matter led by our Brother, Babu Bidhu Bhusan Chowdhury. He consulted those who were chiefly concerned, and February 22nd was fixed for the day on which they were to be baptised. Three brethren came up from Calcutta, and a band of Christian workers and Dr. Flint from Ranaghat. With our new brethren we numbered fifty-two as we sat down to breakfast at mid-day. One of the three from Calcutta was a Muhammadan enquirer, a Maulana Sahib, *i.e.*, an orthodox Muhammadan religious teacher, whose testimony did much to confirm the faith of the brethren. The baptisms took place in the tank at 4 p.m. The first part of the service with hymns and three short addresses was taken in the verandah of the Pir's house. We then proceeded, singing, to the bathing ghat. Here one by one the party were baptised by the Rev. Rakkhal Chandra Biswas, who took the service. The names and ages and relationship of the baptised is stated below:—

1. Tomijuddin Shaha, aged 64, the Pir Sahib.
2. Porishonunisha Bibi, the 2nd wife of 1, aged 50.
3. Dinali Shaha (Koka), aged 20, son of 2.
4. Jerphanali Sheikh, aged 36, servant of 1.
5. Jerphanali Mandal, aged 26, ,, ,,
6. Shirajuddin Sardar, aged 16, ,, ,,
7. Putia Mandal, aged 20.
8. Ekkabar Sheikh, aged 30, servant of 1.
9. Elihibux Sheikh, aged 45, disciple of 1.
10. Sardaruddiu Sheik, aged 16, } sons of 9.
11. Bodoruddin Sheik, aged 9, }

After the baptism we returned to the verandah, where the service was concluded and another address given. At the close we all sat in the verandah, with the newly baptised in the centre, and they sang a hymn which they are very

fond of, the chorus of which is, "We have taken refuge in Jesus Christ. What further anxiety need we have."

A crowd of the villagers came round to witness the ceremony. All our hearts were greatly cheered at being thus privileged to form a little church of believers away in the jungle. We trust that they will form a nucleus to which many others will gather. We are also confident that the baptism of the Pir will enable his disciples throughout the Jessore and Khulna districts to come to a decision.

It is possible that there may be difficulties with regard to the Pir's retention of his houses and land, as the land was granted to him, in the first place, as a Musulman Fakir, and hence is "Pirotto" land. Also the relationship between the old Pir and his disciples cannot be the same in the future as in the past, for now they can no longer look upon him as the means whereby they are to acquire salvation. It will require a tactful leader to readjust the relationship so that the old gentleman may still receive respect and honour, while disclaiming all claims to Mediatorship between God and man. Much prayer is needed that whatever is done may be for the benefit of the whole movement.

As both ourselves and the Baptist Missionaries are in touch with the movement, it will be necessary for the two Societies to decide upon some definite united policy to work on, so that nothing may be done to hinder the progress and growth of Christ's Kingdom. This will be quite possible, as the relationship of those principally concerned is of the most friendly and harmonious type.

NEWS FROM FAR AND NEAR

Arabs emancipated from Turkish misrule are making progress. A recent cable tells of their cutting communications on the railway between Damascus and Medina.

Bogra, Bengal.—Mrs. Cover writes: "Yesterday we attended a prize distribution of a new high English school, where over 300 Muhammadan boys read. There is another new high school where the majority of the boys are also Muhammadan, and much of the money for land and buildings was given by cultivators of moderate means and not by one or two rich men. I believe this is the first school in the district where most of the money was given by ordinary Muhammadan peasants.

"Within the last 15 or 20 years the number of high schools has increased from three to thirteen, and the number of girls' schools from a score to five hundred. These girls' schools are mostly Muhammadan, taught by Muhammadan men. These are surely signs of an educational awakening, and a great opportunity for us as missionaries to distribute the printed Word far and wide, also all kinds of clean religious books and leaflets. As a rule we find the rural people glad and anxious to get the books and tracts.

"There are some fine Muslim women teaching in the district. They have suffered some persecution at the hands of their orthodox relatives and neighbours, but the marriage of one of them recently to a man of good standing in our town has relieved the situation, as the parents were told no one would marry their daughter.

"Our zenana work in town and village is interesting. We daily use the large Sunday school picture rolls and the simple Bengali life

of Christ for Muslims, called *Kush Khabar*, to help the women to get a quick and clear idea of the Story of the Cross."

London.—The members of the League know full well how intensely interested Dr. Weitbrecht is in the work of winning the Muslim world to a true knowledge of Christ. They will be interested to hear that he has added his wife's family name to his own, and will be known as H. U. Weitbrecht Stanton. Writing recently, Dr. Weitbrecht Stanton said:—

"I am told that the Woking Muslims have cut connection with Lord Headley, on account of the scandal in which he was involved, but so far they still advertise his book. I do not know whether London Muslims are using him for forwarding the mosque building scheme. One hears nothing about it nowadays. One woman pervert at Woking recently received a letter from her husband, who was on military service at Cairo. He wrote that, having seen Islām as it was in Egypt, he had lost all taste for it and would have nothing more to do with it, and hoped she would do the same.

"At the mosque services apparently they now discourage questions for discussion of any kind, as what has taken place in that way has undermined their influence. You may have noticed that in the *Islāmic Review* latterly there has been no further 'notes of converts.' I am told that this indicates for the present a cessation of perversions."

Islam Has Its Miracles.—Last month, at a place twelve miles from Brahmanbaria, a festival was held at a tomb of a famous Pir. It is called the tomb of "The body-less Pir." The tradition is that some three centuries ago the village was inhabited by a poor caste of Hindu fishermen, who, when dragging their nets, found the head of a Pir that spoke to them and commanded them to accept the faith of the Prophet, which they did, and then buried the head in the place where a brick monument now stands. In commemoration of the event from 700 to 1,000 low class Muhammadans, both men and women, assemble and give themselves up to a merry mood. They have feasting, dancing and the singing of any songs the muscians, who are professionals, may happen to know, including those which deal with the amorous doings of Krishna.

Among other so-called miraculous practices applauded at the festivals is the placing of an earthen vessel of cooked rice on the head of one of the custodians of the tomb, while another will smash it with a stick, and thus cause the rice to dribble down the man's body to the ground. The people then scramble to pick up as much as possible, believing that to eat the rice will prevent sickness for a whole year.

Urdu Tracts For Muslims.—It will be remembered by some how, in the first numbers of *News and Notes*, we gave considerable space to tracts published by the Rev. H. J. Smith, M.A., of the C.M.S., Aurangabad, Deccan. Having recently returned from England he has been urged to take up again the work of production and publication. He writes: "No. 25, entitled the First and Second Adam, was published recently. Through my absence on furlough I have got out of touch

with some of those who used to make use of my efforts in this direction, and I hope that through *News and Notes* I may again get into communication with those, and also find new friends. The price is, however, higher, on account of the rise in paper, and I now sell at—1,000 for Rs. 7,500 for Rs. 3-8, and smaller quantities at 12 as. per 100, carriage and postage extra in all cases. I hope soon to have several new issues written by well-known Muslim missionaries, who have promised me MSS. I am also hoping shortly to republish several former tracts for Zanana use, and shall be glad to hear from any Zanana workers who would like to have them.

“I must also mention a new step which has recently been taken to supply the need of literature for Gujarati-speaking Musalmans, who dwell in Surat and Gujarat. One tract has been translated into Musalmani-Gujarati as a beginning, to be followed by others if a demand arises. These will be useful for distribution amongst Bohras and Khojas everywhere, as well as among the Musalmans generally who inhabit the country named. The Rev. John Lampard, of Godhra, Panch Mahals, will gladly supply these Musalmani-Gujarat Tracts for Musalmans, on receipt of enquiries.”

BOOK REVIEWS

Miss Haroun Al-Raschid.—This is one of the most fascinating stories we have read for a long time. It is a first prize novel gained in “Hodder and Stoughton’s One Thousand Guineas Prize Novel Competition,” and was written by Jessie Douglas Kerruish. The scene of the book is Mesopotamia, “a golden country, a country with a past of gold and a future that may yet be golden. Ah, my land of the two great rivers where all life and time began.” We are treated to wonderful word pictures of life and adventure in Kurdistan, Mosul, Van and Biffa. We are told of the intrigues of the Turks, the persecution of the Christian Armenians and Chaldeans, and the romance of Assyriology. Every page displays an amazing knowledge of the people and intricacies of Islām.

Here is a sketch of Muslims at prayer. “He drew three fingers over his boots by way of purification, and made some mystic passes about the exposed parts of his person with the aid of a bowl of water from which the cats had been drinking. The other Muslims, out of consideration for the temperature, merely passed their forefingers over their ears and told themselves they had encountered nothing defiling since their last ablutions. Then, under the officer’s lead, they all faced the west end of the north wall, where some travelling Mullah had chalked up the information that in that direction Mecca lay, and said the Prayers of the Closing In of the Night.”

There is a very realistic picture given of the Muharram and “Constantinople’s contribution to the annual unchaining of the hysteria of the Shiah world.”

The Religion of Islám, by F. A. Klein. We are glad that this most valuable work has been made available to the missionary world in a cheap edition. It is now obtainable from the C.L.S. at Re. 1-8-0. It is a paper cover issue of the original edition struck off by the S.P. C.K. Press, Madras, in 1906, and sold at 7s. 6d. It has 241 pages and is beautifully printed. It is scarcely necessary to say that a copy of this book should be in the library of every worker among Muslims. Dr. Zwemer selected it as one of the twenty best books for a working library on Islám. Its chapters on Doctrines and on Fiqh (religious and legal duties) are excellent. The constant citation of original authorities enhances its value.

PRAISE AND PRAYER

Bogra, Bengal.—Please help in prayer for the seed-sowing. Last year our sale of books was over 13,000, and we hope to surpass that number this year. Pray for a Muslim convert who lives with his Muslim parents in a remote village, that he may remain firm.

After-the-War Problems.—We need to pray that all Missionaries be prepared for the opportunities that will surely open up to the Church after the war. The Rev. Dr. Anderson, of Rawal Pindi, writes—"I feel that after the war the work among the Muslims will take on new aspects, and we should help one another to study these aspects and to solve the problems which must surely arise."

Sylhet, Assam.—Miss Davies, M.B., asks prayer for two young men, converts from Islám, recently baptised.

Bangalore.—Miss Potter asks prayer "For the mother of two of our Muhammadan boarders, who came up to visit them this week and expressed her desire to become a Christian, but at the same time saying she must wait till her son comes home from the war to ask his opinion. The son is now a prisoner in the hands of the Turks, and she has not heard of or from him for some months. We should like prayer that she may be really sincere in her desire, and that her son while he is a prisoner may in some way be drawn to a loving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ."

NEW MEMBERS

232. MISS FRY, C.M.S., Aligarh, U.P.
233. MISS HOBBS, C.E.Z.M., Jandiala, Punjab.

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

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