power behind the throne at Constantinople. The tribes near Aden, and the entire South Coast, including Oman with Muscat, are in one way or another under subsidy or 'protection' by the English, who rule the Gulf, and have a voice at Busrah and Bagdad. Wide, wild Nejd bends to the iron sceptre of the greatest Arab of our day, Ibn Rasheed, the Ameer of Jebel Shommar. For the rest, nomads roam the free desert, acknowledging no Sultan save the sword; they hold the parliament of war or peace in the black tents of Kedar. Thus, within the last fifty years have the schisms of Islam, the turmoil of Arab rebellion, and the diplomacy of English commerce, burst the barriers of the land of Ishmael for the All-conquering Son of Isaac; the very cradle of Islam is almost unveiled for the heralds of the Cross." To which I may add that Bahrein, the name given to two islands which lie just off the coast of El Hasa, and are the centre of the pearl fishery, has in a remarkable manner been preserved from Turkish aggression, and is ruled by an Arab Sheikh under the control of the British Resident at Bushire. The islands have a large population, are the nearest point along the coast to Nejd and all Central Arabia, and are therefore of the utmost importance as a mission station for an advance in that direction. In all these political arrangements we clearly trace the overruling hand of God, curbing Turkish aggression, suppressing Wahabee fanaticism, and so preparing the way for His Gospel. There is not room to dwell here upon other influences which have told in the same direction, such as the extension of commerce and intercourse with India, and the spectacle of the beneficent results of the British Government in that country, in Aden, and in Egypt.

But of yet greater interest is the question of the present religious condition of the Arab races. Does Islam retain its hold upon them as firmly as ever? How does their present mental attitude toward it, and toward the Christianity which it once supplanted, compare with that of the past ages and with that of the Arabs of North Africa? The question can only be lightly touched upon here. To treat of it at all satisfactorily would need a wider and fuller acquaintance than we yet possess, not only with the extent to which the outward forms of their religion are observed, but also with the inner thoughts and life of the people. Arabia is an immense country, about three fourths the size of India. Vast portions of it have as yet been unvisited except by a chance traveller passing hastily through, and having little real intercourse with the inhabitants. There may be lying, deep below the surface, phases of religious thought in parts of it with which we are wholly unacquainted. Has Christianity quite died out in the course of ages, or are there still faint memories and traditions of it which have influenced the religious ideas of the present day? We know not. It is certain, however, that in another country which might be named such a survival of as remote a past has actually taken place, and may yet prove a powerful factor in the conversion of its inhabitants. In general terms, however, it may perhaps be said that the influences of

time have told less unfavorably, from the Christian point of view, upon the Arabs of Arabia than upon the scattered but probably equally numerous portions of the race in North Africa. Romanism with its idolatry, on the one hand, and the scepticism and atheism which are the reaction from it, on the other, are the only forms of religious opinion, under the general name of Christianity, which the Arabs of North Africa have been acquainted with. The one they contemptuously reject, but the other is secretly spreading among the more cultured classes, especially in Algeria and Tunis, where French education is rapidly extending, and the state of mind it produces is even more unfavorable to the reception of the truth than the most fanatical forms of Mohammedanism.

The isolation of Arabia has to a great extent preserved it from these forms of error, while there has been nothing within the borders of the peninsula itself to strengthen or resuscitate faith, or effectually to counteract the disintegrating forces of sectarian division, Persian speculative thought, and, more perhaps than either, the indifference to all religious questions, which seems, according to some authorities, to be a characteristic of the race, and which in the case of the Bedouin is said to have led even Mohammed to despair of their conversion. In point of fact, Islam from the very first seems to have taken far less hold upon the Arabs than might be supposed. Immediately after the death of its founder a general revolt from his teachings took place, and for centuries the popular religion seems to have been little more than semi-paganism. Wahabeeism, which was an attempt to reinstate the religion of the prophet by his favorite weapon, the sword, has failed egregiously, and is now in the last stage of decay. The Arabs remain Mohammedans simply because they know of nothing better ; fanatical in some parts, doubtful and bewildered in others, not because they have rejected the Gospel, but because they have never heard it. The Bedouin, constituting perhaps a fourth or fifth of the population, are for the most part Mohammedan only in name, observing the prescribed forms in the neighborhood of towns, but speedily casting them aside on regaining the desert. Yet there are men among them not without reverent thoughts of the Creator, derived from the contemplation of His works, thoughts which, according to Palmer, take sometimes the form of solemn but simple prayer. A missionary who some years ago spent more than two months with one of these tribes, living with the Sheikh, and accompanying them in their wanderings from pasturage to pasturage, found them willing though not particularly interested listeners, and singularly amenable to the Word of God as the one authority in matters of faith. The Sheikh, seeing that the missionary disliked travelling on the Sunday, inquired the reason, and willingly accepted the word of the Book as decisive upon the point, and indeed upon every other point, and from that time the tribe never marched upon the Sabbath. How sad it seems that so few of the race have as yet come under the sound of the Gospel !

In the cities and towns there is, of course, a more rigorous observance

of the outward forms of Mohammedanism, but there is also among the upper and middle classes, especially on the eastern coast, widespread doubt. A missionary writes: "There are very plain indications of an undercurrent of scepticism and free thought. Indeed, to any one who knows the Mohammedans intimately, it is scarcely an *under*current at all. I know men in the most learned Mohammedan society of B—— who, judged by their dress and outward appearance, would be taken for bulwarks of the Mohammedan religion, and who yet have no more belief in it than Professor Huxley has in Christianity. One of these men astonished me by his expressions of downright loathing of the religion of which he is a professed teacher."

It would be foreign to the special object of this paper, and altogether beyond its scope, to give any detailed description of the doctrines and practices of Islam. It may suffice to say with regard to them all, that holiness of heart has absolutely no place in the religion of Mohammed, and that just as polygamy, unlimited concubinage, and divorce, being regarded as of Divine sanction, are not in the least degree revolting to the moral sense of its votaries, so there is no connection, either in fact or in popular estimation, between the most rigorous observance of the outward forms, which are of its very essence, and a holy life.

Arabs are not in the least deceived by what they know to be merely outward and ritual, and wholly without effect upon the heart; they draw, in fact, an unfavorable inference from much outward show of religion. In North Africa they have a saying, "Shun a man who has made a pilgrimage to Mecca once; live not in the same street with one who has performed it twice; and reside not in the same country with one who has visited the Kaaba thrice." I once myself formed one of a circle of some twenty guests in the house of an Arab gentleman, who (excepting myself), when the evening *adtham*, or call to prayer, sounded forth from the mosque, joined the host in the most solemn and impressive recitation of the prayers, with the prescribed genuflexions and prostrations, but of whom he afterward privately declared that every one was a thief, handing me at the same time the key of a room where he had had my baggage locked up, and warning me to be on my guard. The true Christian idea of prayer appears to be wholly wanting, though in times of great distress short ejaculatory prayer will be put up. The intercession of saints is much resorted to; prayer is offered at their tombs. At times the poor people, failing to receive an answer to such prayers, resort in their despair to necromancy.

In Arabia the women "pray." "At home," says Mr. S. M. Zwemer, "a larger proportion observe the times of prayer than do the men." (This is not the case in North Africa.) In the towns girls seldom, and boys never, "pray," until they are over twelve years of age. Women are seldom or never allowed to attend the public prayers in the mosque. Few of the Arabs can read, perhaps not above 10 per cent of the dwellers

in towns, and only some of these understand what they read of the Koran. The Bedouin are wholly illiterate. Slaves are imported *via* Jeddah and the Persian Gulf, they are sold in Busrah privately, and doubtless in other towns, being brought from Mecca as merchandise by the returning pilgrims. Polygamy is practically universal among the well-to-do classes, and divorce, almost unlimited, with its attendant horrors of cruelty and suffering, takes its place among the poorer. Thus, with polygamy, slavery, and divorce (all sanctioned by their religion) the state of Arab society may be imagined. Happily space does not permit me to enlarge upon this terrible subject.

So, with fasts and prayers and pilgrimages, hoping in his good works, the mercy of God, and the intercession of the Prophet (such intercession being wholly unauthorized by the Koran), the poor Arab wends his way down through life, is laid to rest at last with his face toward Mecca, and passes into eternity with a lie in his right hand. One thing he never knew, that gracious message that was intended to be familiar as a household word to every member of the human race, that God loved him as God only can love, that Christ died for him, and that a free pardon and full salvation awaited his acceptance. He knew it not because he was never told, and he was never told because for ages the Church lost the blessed truth, and since it recovered it has neglected the one great duty, to proclaim it to every creature. Thank God those times of ignorance are nearly over. Through the tender mercy of our God the day-spring from on high has visited Arabia. And may we not hope that the churches which have taken the lead in this great movement will spare no effort, neither men, nor life, nor money, to carry it on to the destined consummation.

Thus far we have traced the rise and progress up to the present time of the Arabian missions. A few brief remarks as to the future may not inappropriately conclude this paper.

1. It will be seen from what has been said that all the western and southern sides of Arabia are still without a missionary. The Free Church of Scotland Mission at Aden is doing an important work, and there is a wide field for extension before it. Not, however, being acquainted with its plans for the future, I do not venture to say anything on the subject here. Jeddah, however, the port of Mecca, might afford a base where, in spite of the intense jealousy and watchfulness of the Turk, a work might be begun. Asir and Yemen may not be accessible just at this moment, but they soon will be so.

2. As to the rest of Arabia, including the eastern, central, and southern provinces, in fact quite one half of the peninsula, I am indebted to the Rev. S. M. Zwemer for the following sketch, the result of four years' study of the subject on the spot, of a missionary scheme, such as the Church which sent him and his fellow-laborers out can hardly stop short of. I give this sketch only in very abbreviated form. Such a scheme would