

NOTES ON CURRENT TOPICS

The Original of the Koran?

Some months ago a notice appeared in the Cairo press, that the British Museum had acquired some ancient bones on which were written verses from the Koran. This announcement caused a considerable stir in eastern quarters, where it was hailed as a confirmation of Moslem Tradition that the revelations of the Prophet were at the time written down on scraps of all sorts of available writing material, including the bleached bones of camels. Some even went so far as to claim that here we might even have some of the original material used by Zaid ibn Thabit in his first collection of the Koran.

Through the kindness of Dr. Stanton, of London, however, I have been able to secure the report of the experts of the British Museum on these bones. The report states that the bones are of quite recent origin, that besides verses of the Koran, they contain charms, etc., and were evidently buried by some villager in the belief that they possessed certain magical properties. This is not an uncommon form of superstition, and is well known here in Egypt. The bones have thus not the slightest value for critical purposes.

A. J.

A Moslem Convert in East London

An interesting story was printed in the Indian magazine, *Dnyanodaya*, for July 17, 1924, regarding a Moslem convert in London, which we share with our readers.

"Some years ago an English missionary at the Wesleyan High School in Kandy, Ceylon, put his hand in a friendly way on the shoulder of a Mohammedan youth named Kamal Chunchie, the latter instantly running off to the tap in the grounds to wash away what he felt to be a defiling touch. Education and the Spirit of God, however, accomplished their own work, with the result that four years ago he became a disciple of Christ, and today Mr. Kamal A. Chunchie is known as a cultured Mohammedan working in connection with the Wesleyan Mission for Seamen in East London."

Says the special correspondent: "I found this young ex-Mohammedan not only a total abstainer, but a most thorough-going opponent of the drink traffic. The stories he tells of his work in the streets and public-houses and hospitals of our East End and its sodden underworld are well-nigh incredible. He is brimful of a courageous gaiety of spirit and cares for no man—or woman either—and he told me that though at first the publicans were very hostile to him, their attitude is changing, as they come to recognize his sincerity and manliness, and also, it may be shrewdly added, his intimate knowledge of our licensing laws. One evening last summer, returning from the cricket-ground at Leyton,

and having his cricket-bag with him, he felt led to hold a meeting outside a public-house. Putting his bag down beside him, he started to proclaim the Gospel. Soon patrons of the public-house gathered round him, some to jeer, some to listen, and some to throw beer over him, which they actually did. Undismayed, and without betraying the least signs of anger, Mr. Churchie continued his preaching, and then a young fellow, full of admiration for the combination of pluck and calmness exhibited, and with a glass in his hand, advanced and shook hands with Mr. Churchie, declaring that if a 'nigger' could stand what he had just witnessed, there must be something in the religion he preached. . . . Continuing his 'confession,' Mr. Churchie told me he is a frequent visitor to the Police Courts on behalf of colored men who get into the hands of the police, and he also visits the colored patients in the hospitals at Canning Town and Greenwich. These patients, many of whom understand scarcely a word of English, are always most pleased to be visited by one speaking their language, and, as Mr. Churchie can speak freely in Singhalese, Tamil, Malay, and, in addition to good English, has a useful knowledge of two or three other languages, his visits to the sick-beds are always welcome. I have heard that the eyes of these folk light up in a wonderful fashion as the cheery-faced Churchie approaches their beds, . . . and, before leaving, speaks a word for the Master."

The Modern Egyptian Woman

Lady Drummond Hay, writing in *The Near East* on the education of the modern Egyptian woman says:

"Encouraged by King Fuad, and liberally supported by the State, during the last few years women's education in Egypt has received an eager response from all classes of the nation. The education of children, though not yet compulsory, is freely offered to all girls and boys, who can enter Government schools at the age of five years to be educated until they reach the standard to be teachers themselves if they so wish.

"The many elementary girls' schools in Egypt (some two hundred in all) provide the education for the masses. For the nominal fee of 15 piastres a month (approximately 3s.), girls between the ages of five and twelve years receive sound instruction in Arabic, arithmetic, needlework, nature study, and domestic economy, the last two subjects being given special attention. The main object of these schools is not to educate the girls beyond their station in life, but rather to equip them to deal with such circumstances as will inevitably fall to their lot, and at the same time to broaden and refine their minds.

"The girls who wish to continue their studies at the expense of the State pass from the elementary schools to a higher elementary school for examinations, and from the age of fourteen are eligible for admission to one of the training colleges.

"The daughters of the bourgeoisie attend the numerous primary schools, where for from £9 to £12 per annum they can be educated from four to fourteen years. The kindergarten course (on the Montessori system) lasts two years. The primary school curriculum consists of Arabic, arithmetic, geography, nature study (all classes),

English (first year); history and domestic economy (third year); hygiene, baby culture, and first aid (fifth and sixth years). Many girls leave school at the age of fourteen, but aspirants to the profession of teacher pass from the various primary schools to the training colleges.

"At the present time there is only one secondary girls' school in Egypt. It contains about eighty pupils, ranging from thirteen to twenty or twenty-one years of age, who are prepared for examinations, the final one of which corresponds to the London matriculation. The girls, mostly of the upper middle class, pay £30 a year, a fee including instruction, books, and the midday meal. In this school it is a case of learning for learning's sake, and the girls are not prepared to be teachers; for that they must transfer at the age of fourteen to one of the training colleges, of which the two principal are the Boulac Training College and the Sanieh Training College. The former draws its pupils more from the elementary schools, and the latter from the primary schools, especially from the Sanieh Girls' School, but both offer free education, and during a three or four years course the students are provided with board, lodging, clothes, books, and a first-rate education. Christians and Moslems work side by side, religious instruction being provided for both without prejudice."

The Importance of the Persian Gulf

Sir Arnold Wilson contributes to the *Edinburgh Review* a study of the position in the Persian Gulf. He believes the importance of the gulf is growing, both commercially and politically. Apart from the considerations which formerly justified British control—the suppression of savagery and of piracy, and the general maintenance of order—Sir Arnold Wilson enumerates the advantages that have accrued from the opening up of the Persian oil fields. Over 3,000,000 tons of oil were shipped from Abadan last year, and the production is increasing. This means that some 3,000,000 tons of shipping, required for oil transport alone, traverse the gulf in both directions each year, in addition to about 2,000,000 tons of ordinary mercantile shipping. Moreover, the advent of the oil industry has improved telegraphic communications, and traffic over the Indo-European Telegraph Company's cables has increased tenfold. In addition, this growth of commerce has led to the lighting and buoying of the Persian Gulf which, twenty years ago, was unprovided with even a single harbor light. Thus, while the old dangers still threaten the passage of the Gulf, its narrow waters have now become one of the great highways for the passage of the world's supply of oil. Sir Arnold Wilson adds:

"India alone now consumes 300,000 tons of Persian fuel oil annually, and has no other sure source of oil supply. Many cotton mills in Bombay are dependent on oil; so also, to a large extent, are the railway systems terminating at Bombay and at Karachi. Large quantities of oil are required for the use of the Royal Navy and of merchant ships at Aden, at Mombasa and at Colombo, and the necessary supplies are drawn from the Persian Gulf. New oilfields will be presently discovered on the Persian shore; new ports will come into being, others will be improved. Within a few years the Shatt al Arab bar will have been dredged sufficiently to admit into the river almost any

ships capable of passing through the Suez Canal. These and other developments we must watch."

Moslem Missionaries to China

We learn from the *Indian Social Reformer* that three Mohammedan missionaries have been sent from India to the Malay Islands and to China for the purpose of counteracting "the daily increasing influence of Christian missions in these distant Moslem lands." The article goes on to state: "It is a well-known fact that Christianity is taking away hundreds of Moslems annually in the Malay Islands, and about fifty thousand Moslems have already been lost to Islam there, and Moslem China is also becoming the center of attraction for Christian propaganda work. It was the bounden duty of Moslems to help their brethren in these eastern lands in fighting for the defence of the faith of Islam. The three missionaries were given a send-off at the Lahore railway station by a large number of the members of the society which is sending them out. They are commended as setting a noble example to young men by answering the call of duty to Islam in preference to building up their own fortunes at home."

A Challenge to the Bahais

In *The Review of Religions* the leader of the Ahmadiya movement has been attacking the preachers of Bahaism in India. In a recent number he challenges them to answer the following questions. So far the challenge has not been met.

"(1) Will any Bahai let us know at his earliest convenience the names of all the printed works (including letters, etc.) of The Bab, Baha' Ullah, and Abdul Baha along with their following particulars:

- (a) Date when the book was first written or revealed.
- (b) Date when manuscript copies of the book were first published.
- (c) Date when the book was first printed.
- (d) Date when the printed copies of the book were first published.
- (e) Name of the press where the book was first printed.
- (f) Names of the printer and the publisher of the first edition.
- (g) Size and number of the pages of the first edition.
- (h) The present price of the book.
- (i) From where is the book procurable? If it is out of print, from which library or person can one borrow it for study?
- (j) (1) How many manuscript copies were there between the date when the book was first written or revealed and the date when the book was first printed?
(2) Where and with whom were these copies?
(3) What arrangements were made to ensure that the original text should remain intact?
- (k) Language in which the book was originally written or revealed.
- (l) Has the book been translated into any other language? If so, into which and by whom?
- (m) Date when the book was translated.

- (2) (a) Are there any works (including letters, etc.) of the three above mentioned personages which are not as yet printed?
 (b) If so, which are they?
 (c) Why have they remained so?
 (d) How many manuscript copies of such works are there?
 (e) Where are they and with whom?
 (f) What arrangements have been made to ensure that their original text should remain intact?"

Hindu-Moslem Riots in India

The following letter which appeared in *The Muslim Herald*, Madras, throws much light on the Hindu-Moslem situation in India. The writer is, of course, a Mohammedan.

"In almost every Hindu-Moslem riot, it goes without saying, the provocation is from the side of the Hindus. They play music before mosques or they adopt measures to prevent Mohammedans from eating beef or for some other reason akin to it which is an insult to their religion or a challenge to their honor. Mohammedans generally are a stupid lot. They do not use their brains where they ought to. They use their arms where they ought not. They lend a deaf ear to prudential counsels, for the sake of their religion. They take the law into their own hands. They rush with *lathis* and foolishly caper before the carbines of the police and military who shoot them down. Then begins a period of terror. Scores of arrests are made and hundreds leave their homes and fly away to avoid these arrests. They are landed before courts, while evidence is easily manufactured and several go to jail while their wives and children starve at home.

"The indirect effects are much greater. The Hindus boycott the Mohammedans. They refuse them credit, so that the petty Mohammedan trader is ruined. At Delhi last year the feeling ran so high that for two or three months the Hindus boycotted the poor Mohammedan milk-sellers and vegetable stall-keepers. Even Hindu barbers and washermen boycotted their Mohammedan customers. In fact a Hindu Moslem riot means nothing but bloodshed, imprisonment, exile, disaster and ruin to the Mohammedans of the locality, whereas the Hindus guided by their cunning lawyers and aided by their rich merchants grow more prosperous after each such event. If at all their losses amount to anything they consist in a few injuries or a shop or two looted. Outrages on women are falsely reported as a matter of course just to paint the Mohammedans in the blackest dye.

"I consider these Hindu-Moslems riots nothing short of an insidious religious persecution of the Mohammedans in India. It would appear that these things will never cease until the Mohammedans give up eating beef or praying silently in Mosques; in fact until they give up their religion and become the pariahs of Hindu Society. These riots are often the index of the political and economical conditions of the locality. Whenever there is a lull in the political agitation against the Government, the rich and powerful Hindus divert their pent up energies in trying the mettle of the Mohammedan minority and in teasing and suppressing them. Whenever a few Mohammedan clerks get into office or a Mohammedan magistrate is posted to a locality, or a Moham-