

A QUARTER CENTURY IN ARABIA ¹

On the 18th of October, 1902, I stood at the stern of the Anchor Line Steamship *Columbia* and watched the shores of America fade away. It seems only yesterday. Never once in all that quarter century that has elapsed have I felt one pang of regret at my decision to go to Arabia, nor once have I been conscious of sacrifice in so doing. Indeed, I have found everything and lost nothing. The only thing that bothers me is that, since by Jesus' own definition, discipleship must involve sacrifice, my discipleship may be lacking a vital element. I loved my country, and still always feel a lump in my throat when I see Old Glory again on each succeeding furlough. I loved my home, nor has ever a person been blessed with a better. And yet, not for anything in the world would I miss the exhilaration of the task, the broad sweep of new horizons, the fellowship of a peerless body of men and women, and the special presence of Christ, which have been my lot in this quarter century. And this is the first reflection.

The second is this: Twenty-five years ago I visualized myself as a knight of the Cross sallying forth to attack the citadel of Islam. I had bright and well-tried armour, sharp and shining weapons. It was to be a battle and a triumph. As the years went by, and I caravanned with Christ on shimmering noon-days, or sat with Him through breathless nights and learned to know and love the sons of Shem, His kinsmen; the ideas of battle and conflict, of strife and victory and vindication, have receded. I have discarded the old conception of citadels and arenas and all the imagery so foreign to Himself, and have tried to learn from Him His own method and

¹ Reprinted from "Neglected Arabia."

language, His thought and purpose, His ideas and ideals, and to measure success by what He approved. In the house of Simon the leper when the woman poured upon His head the alabaster cruse of precious ointment, the disciples murmured and said: To what purpose is this waste? In that hour Christ deprecated the measuring of success by pounds and pence, spent or saved, by figures and statistics. "She hath done what she could, she hath done a good work unto me," was the criterion He set, and a sufficient justification for her effort. Has the Arabian Mission been successful in its forty years of effort? It has in so far as it has done honor to Christ. I strike a match and blow it out. For a fleeting second it was aglow, and now in my hand remains only a charred stick. But the light it gave is speeding toward the sun and within eight minutes more will offer itself as its best tribute to its source. So no word or deed spent for Christ can be lost, for truth cannot be lost.

And this brings me to the third reflection: When I take a picture I can do several things. I can focus the camera and can place the plate or film in position and can time the shutter. But there is one thing I cannot do: I cannot impress the image on the film. Only the sun by its secret chemistry can do that. My chief function is to bring the two together, through a lens whose chief virtue is that it is perfectly clear and transparent. For the first several years of my missionary life with blunted pencil and awkward hand I tried to draw on the Arab's hearts *my* conceptions, *my* theology, *my* creed, and I wondered at *God's* failure. One day a proud and fanatical mullah came to cross swords with me in debate. I was weary in body and distressed in mind, so I took the Gospel of John and read him the story of Nicodemus without comment of my own. Then I read the parable of the prodigal son, and last the story of the crucifixion. When I raised my eyes again, tears were in the mullah's eyes. His blatant defiance was gone and he only asked me for a copy of the Gospel that he might study it. I

believe in the Atonement with all my heart, but I cannot teach it. Only Christ can do that, for only after an Arab has walked with Christ and seen His purity and his own need, can he feel the need of that Saviour. And so my message and my task have been: to get the Arab to walk with Christ, and to talk with Him, to love and trust Him. In the meantime, my chief concern is to keep the lens entirely clear and perfectly transparent.

The fourth reflection is this: That God is working today, and is this minute doing marvelous things in the Moslem world. At Stone Mountain near Atlanta is a colossal figure of General Lee. The artisan who carved that statue saw before him only square inches of rough granite, and perhaps no plan at all. But the multitude in the plain below from their point of vantage can get the whole ensemble, an ensemble planned in the first instance by the artist's mind. At the end of this quarter century I stand back a moment and look at the great granite wall of Islam and can see God's plan as He has been working it out through the years. For twelve years I labored under the Turkish régime in northern Arabia, five of these under the old Sultan Abdul Hamid. Man feared to speak with man above a whisper for fear of the ever present spies. To be a convert was treason to the state. The word liberty was anathema. The Sultan was the Caliph and almost the whole Moslem world obeyed his dictates. We missionaries walked in gloom and could only pray. Then came the war and in less than five years the Sultan was deposed, the Caliphate abrogated, the veil was torn from women's faces, education made compulsory, and Islam disestablished as the religion of the state. A student of current politics may account for these gigantic changes by the ordinary laws of cause and effect in the political world, but one who, like us, has entered to some degree into the minds and souls of the people, cannot account for these stupendous changes save by invoking some spiritual law whose workings are to us marvelous. If prayer is a creative act I account for the staggering

changes in Turkey by ascribing them to the prayer and faith and labor poured out for seventy years by the American Board. It is true the American Board directed its first effort to evangelizing non-Moslems, but an energy was thus loosed and a divine light thus diffused by whose chemistry only such changes could have been wrought. What to us seems a mere by-product may in God's economy be the main objective. The Samaritan woman was apparently not convinced by the Saviour's wonderful discourse on the water of life, but she capitulated before His passing remark that she had had five husbands. The church's sheer obedience and faith in preaching to Moslems may, and I think must, be the main ingredient in the fabric of the coming Kingdom. Today, everywhere in the Islamic world there are appearing cracks in the hitherto solid wall of Islam, cracks made by the impact of nationalism. Syria, Egypt, Iraq, Turkey, Persia, Afghanistan, Morocco are thinking and talking nationally and no longer Islamically.

The fifth reflection is the one that haunts me day and night. I see no answer to the challenge it presents, and it is this: When will the church at home be prepared to sacrifice for her Lord as much as the convert from Islam is called upon to sacrifice? Then and only then will there be no more deficits and will we all be united in the fellowship of His suffering.

Basrah.

JOHN VAN ESS.

CURRENT TOPICS

The Resurrection of Armenia

Under this title, we find in *New Armenia* (New York City) a striking tribute to this undying race, by Philip Whitwell Wilson, the well-known author:—

Five hundred years before Christ, there was Armenia. Two thousands years after Christ, Armenia will continue to amaze the historian. It is the same Armenia. Pagan, Christian, Turkish, Russian, whatever be the political sovereignty, this race, the Swiss of the Near East, remains eternal as Rome, and persistent as Jewry itself.

Of a tragedy thus terrible, of a triumph thus astonishing, the secret is the same. In the onward march of civilization, some people lag behind their neighbors; others lead the way; Armenia has always been the forward amid the backward, the higher amid the lower, the reason amid the ruthless, the mind amid the immature. It would be, perhaps, speculative to say that the Armenians were Greeks before Greece and Romans before Rome. But at least they were Christians before Christendom; and in art they were Greeks, in law they were Romans, long before such art and such law had penetrated, in so far as it did penetrate, into Persia and the East. The first nation as a nation to accept the Redeemer, Armenia became the outpost of the Western world against the inroads of the East. To this day, the garrison is loyal, and, in the citadel of enlightenment, the sentinels are on guard.

About the perpetuity of Armenia, there is a mystical certitude. These people are the only people on this planet who, surrounded by foes, have had to depend only on themselves. Not one treaty, signed for their protection, has proved to be other than a mere scrap of paper. Not one promise has been fulfilled as a pledge. Not one expectation has outlasted disillusion. Deserted by France, ignored by Britain, Armenia secured neither independence nor a mandate under the United States. Yet under Russia and as a Soviet Republic, there dwells what the past leaves as a remnant, what the future claims as a nucleus. Slowly and surely, a nation is recovering its nationhood, is returning to farms, to schools, to churches, is emerging from shadow.

It is not by the accidentals but by the fundamentals that nations, Turkish or Armenian, grow to their full stature. The man with a mind in his head can wear either a fez or a hat; and the woman, treated with respect, can be trusted to choose her veils.

The survival of Armenia is thus the guaranty of her revival. If this people had been destined to perish, it would have happened long ago. It is Turkey that is crumbling. A hundred years ago, here was a territory that stretched from Khartoum to Bessarabia and from Bagdad to Belgrade. Of these realms, nothing is left save an impoverished province in Asia Minor, a second Morocco.

The Turkish community, mutilated by the monstrous expulsion of Greeks and Armenians on the part of officials who wanted to loot their property, is coveted by Italy, now fortifying Rhodes. It was the Christian in Turkey who supplied the Sultans with brains, with banks, and with bazaars. To plunder the Christian and drive him into the sea, has been to leave Turkey in a prostration of stupid pride. She is an Esau without the genius of a Jacob.

Let Armenia alone and Armenia will accumulate prosperity. It is her instinct so to do. The only question is whether, for the future, that prosperity will be secure against the aggressor. Well, the pirates of the Barbary States once dominated the Mediterranean. Like a wasps' nest, Algiers was cleared out. If the Kurd and the Turk resume their raids on Armenian homes, and immolate thriving cities with massacre, we shall again see what we shall see. But it is at least possible to say that the British mandate over Mesopotamia extends to the frontiers of the region in question. Hitherto, Armenia has been surrounded by her enemies. To-day, she is not surrounded. The ring of fire is broken. The Turk is a mere shadow of his former self and no longer does he hold a political and military monopoly.

If Armenians are wise, they will work. Their work will be an antidote to waiting. Loyalty to the faith, devotion to the home, eagerness in industry, patience with the plough, skilful and honest economics, quiet and restrained politics, a genuine and profound culture, a steady pursuance of art and literature—these pave the path to the Armenia of to-morrow.

Hindu-Moslem Tension about the Cow-Question

The Moslem press reveals from time to time, its deep resentment toward the Hindus who object to cow-sacrifice on their great feast day. In a recent number of the *Sunrise*, the editor vents his feelings in this fashion:—

“We cannot for the life of us bring us to believe how the religious susceptibilities of the Hindus centring round the cow that lie dormant for the whole year burst forth in volcanic eruption on that day of days when the Moslem world celebrates their I'd of sacrifices. What a horror of horrors!

It cannot be purely for the love of the cow that the Hindus become so obsessed with the mania of slaughtering the Moslems on that day. For every day of the year *this sacred animal* is slaughtered by the thousands under their very eyes without exciting them so much as to cause them to raise a finger in its defence. Tons of indigenous beef is daily consumed both by Europeans and Indians to say nothing of the ship-loads imported from foreign lands at frequent intervals.

The thing is that the Hindus are always on the look-out for any pretence of eliminating their neighbors, the Moslems. So this cow-ticklishness is a mere camouflage. We know for a fact many of our Hindu friends who are very partial to the beef *kababs* and cutlets but whenever any opportunity offers itself they are the loudest in the condemnation of the poor Moslems on this very head.

It is a pity that the Moslems are not yet alive to the danger from the Hindu quarter. They still think that the Hindu is a meek and weak fellow. Gone is the day when he was as such. Thanks to the

Shuddi and Sangathan Movements and the Wrestling Akharas that have brought about a complete transformation in that so-called harmless gentleman. Outwardly he feels smooth and soft like the slimy skin of the snake but in his heart of hearts he is the very embodiment of a fiend. There are only two ways of dealing with a snake, either to charm him or to crush his head. In these days—to our bitter experience—a Hindu is a synonym for a deadly snake and should, therefore, be treated as such by the Moslems.”

Cross and Crescent in an Arab Mosque

North Africa, “the Land of the Vanished Church,” is strewn with Punic, Roman and Byzantine remains, Tunis being particularly rich in this respect. Some of the more massive structures, such as the colossal amphitheatre at El Djem and the imposing Libyan-Punic mausoleum at Dougga (seventy feet high), have resisted in a remarkable manner the ravages of time. But erosion and decay are not the only forces that make for disintegration: there are other and more serious factors. Carthage, Hadrumetum (Sousse), and many another city of a bygone age suffered destruction when the desolating invasion of the Vandals swept over North Africa at the beginning of the fifth century A.D. The churches whose arches once rang with the voices of Tertullian and Chrysostom, Cyprian and Augustine, shared the common fate. Such ruins have served as quarries for subsequent Arab builders, who have found in them materials ready to hand.

The outstanding feature in Roman architecture is the masterly employment of the column, the capital of which is the main decorative element, and, for us, the most interesting. Here at Kairouan, in the Grand Mosque alone there are over six hundred Roman columns; and their capitals, constituting in the aggregate a veritable museum, are wonderful in their diversity. The Arab builders of the mosques, with the architectural débris of Carthage, Hadrumetum and El Djem at their command, had no need of highly skilled masons: their only task was that of transport, and, with slave labor available, this was no difficulty either. The columns of the Grand Mosque, masterpieces in marble and porphyry, are as perfect as they were nearly two millenniums ago.

The two capitals I have photographed are of peculiar—even poignant—interest. They are to be seen at “the Mosque of the Prophet’s Friend” (also called “The Barber’s Mosque”). The left-hand (Roman) capital crowns a pillar just within the main doorway of the mosque, whilst the other (a quite modern capital, beautifully sculptured) is one of a series of identical capitals crowning the pillars of the colonnade upstairs.

So the “pillars of the churches” have become the pillars of the mosques: and an ancient, mutilated Cross—possibly unnoticed, but more probably ignored—is constrained to keep company with the Crescent; a crescent which gleams, too, upon the minarets and cupolas of a hundred mosques and *zaouias* in this “Holy City” of Islam.

If you will look again at this Roman capital you will observe that at either side of the Cross is the Eagle—the military standard of pagan Rome, afterwards adopted as the armorial bearing of the Holy Roman Empire. When the Cross has become a mere fetish, the might of the

Roman Eagle cannot save a decadent Church from destruction. For the Church of the Living God is built, not of marble columns, but of living stones; and the Cross itself takes its value solely from Him who hung and suffered upon it. And it is not by Crusaders of the Cross, but by ambassadors of the Christ, that any future spiritual reconquest of North Africa will be achieved.

Ultimately, inevitably, the Cross will triumph. The cross as a device may suffer destruction, but the Cross as a dynamic must prevail at last. In the very nature of things the Crescent is destined to suffer eclipse. For what is the Crescent? Physically, it is a curving rim of pale light—light reflected from a cold, dead world, the moon. As a symbol, the Crescent represents a religion which is also earth-born, lifeless, chill as death. The moon has no physical, Islam no spiritual, atmosphere. At the bottom of Islam is the great denial of the Divine Sonship and the vicarious sufferings and death of Christ: but one day, just as the pale new moon is eclipsed in a moment by the glory of the rising sun, even so will Islam be revealed by the rising of the Sun of Righteousness.

E. J. LONG in *North Africa*.

Has Turkey Divorced Islam?

Under this caption, there is a long article by *Sirdar Iqbal Ali Shah* in the *Islamic Review*, December, 1928. We quote three paragraphs:—

"The only course that lay before the Angora Nationalists was to destroy that nefarious organization, which had not only impeded the progress but had actually imperilled the very existence of Turkey as a nation. The clergy were against and for the Sultans turn about, as it suited their own scheme of self-aggrandizement; they did the same with the Nationalists; but Mustafa Kamal Pasha, whose merits equalled his reputation, never fumbled in discovering in that priesthood a very real menace to the future of his country. And so the whole structure, burdened with the clerical heaviness of centuries, had to be dismantled.

"To view the whole perspective in this light is to view it correctly. There is no revolt against Islam in Turkey—rather it is a reaction against that unspeakable intrigue of the 'Ulamas that would have deprived Turkey even of the merest semblance of national existence if it were allowed to remain in the land. Culturally the purest form of Islam is to be seen everywhere in Anatolia. One needs to go only a hundred yards up the hill on which Angora is built to notice real Islam in all its glory, despite Occidentally dressed men and unveiled women. In Konia, that lies in the heart of Old Turkey, you would notice Islam writ large over the ploughboys' faces, as also over the countenance of the manager of a modern hotel there. Squalor, filth, there is none, nor quarrelling, drunkenness or dancing the *Cancon*, of which I saw plenty in Beyrout.

"That heavy tapestry of dogma which cast a gloom over the young and the old in Turkey is gone—gone, I hope, never to return. A healthy sense of Nationalism bubbles from the heart of every young Turk that you meet in the cobbled streets of Angora. After breaking the shackles of that sham religion, they feel free, even freer than when they won the war against the Greeks. Nationalism is the cry of the moment; none would throttle that deputy in the chambers today in

Angora if he speaks of religion in a liberal tone. All look to their military leader, Mustafa Kamal Pasha, their great Khan of the Great Wolf, to lead them on to Nationalism of Old Jagatai."

The Qualifications of a Moslem Missionary

These are described in *The Light* (Lahore) as follows:

"There is one very remarkable point which should never be lost sight of by any *Tabligh* (Mission) worker. It is the urgent necessity that at the altar of the work itself everything of lesser importance should be sacrificed. It is not a person nor even a community which has a claim to be dearer to the heart of a man who undertakes to propagate Islam than the mission whose standard he bears. And this feeling should be impressed in the mind of those who are under training as missionaries. No man who does not think in this way and does not admit in his heart of hearts as well as in his conduct of life the primary importance of the work deserves to be called a *Tabligh* worker. When a man can really love the work, then alone it becomes his duty to do it and unless he feels it his duty to do the work he cannot do it properly. It must, however, be remembered that love is not the only thing which qualifies a man as a missionary of Islam. 'Love is the greatest thing in life. . . .' writes a well known British author and journalist. 'But love is not all. It may even be dangerous if misguided. Thought is necessary too. The head is wanted as well as the heart.' It is not only the feeling that a Moslem should take up the work but the thought, added to it, that he is going to preach Islam that can bring us success. A mere sentimental feeling may appeal to the softer corner of the heart; such an appeal may seemingly prove effective in the beginning but it can do little more than leaving a faint and momentary impression which can be effaced by the very elementary force of another appeal in opposition to the former. And to take undue advantage of the sentiment is never honest as conversion consequent on an emotional feeling is not as good as the one resulting from honest and genuine belief. Sentiment is a good thing so long as it serves as an impetus to action but it must never precede belief and not be allowed to rush into passing judgment. A preacher of Islam lives in a stronghold when he directs his appeal to the intellect of man for Islam wants him to utilize his faculty of reasoning and power of judgment."

A Reading Room in Constantinople

The Reading Room on Divan Yolu, Constantinople, is developing into a real institution. It is practically the only people's reading room in the city except as the many cafés are so used. In these latter, however, newspapers only are available, and conditions are far from favorable for quiet reading and study. Our Turkish director reports increasing daily attendance, now over five hundred, and a frequently voiced demand for a department for women and girls.

In addition to a generous quota of important Turkish dailies, weeklies and monthlies, a number of English and American periodicals are available. The feature which is coming to be most prized is the selected library which is being assembled; it has now seven hundred and eight volumes, fifty-seven of which are in English or European

languages; the rest are Turkish books of philosophy, history, natural sciences, law, literature, education, medicine, fiction and travel. It has not seemed feasible to allow books to be taken away from the building, but a comfortable, quiet place is provided for prolonged reading at the Reading Room.

The best literature available is thus put at the disposal of many who would not otherwise have access to it. Expressions of appreciation for the great service rendered in this way are often heard. Students, teachers, government officials, laborers, merchants, men from all walks and conditions of life are frequenters of the Reading Room. It is an institution of demonstrated value as a center of adult education, and the need in Turkey today for that sort of thing is very great.

The Reading Room is a place where friendly intercourse under wholesome conditions is possible. The director and his assistant create an atmosphere of friendliness and welcome to all. Barriers of all sorts are being broken down and germinal ideas of liberty, democracy, the spirit of service are being planted in the minds of young and old.

The missionary in charge is enabled to come into personal contact with many individuals. He does not conceive of his task as propaganda for Christianity or for Western civilization in the narrower sense, but as an opportunity to stimulate thinking and living along lines which will inevitably lead to character building in home and society. New foundations of moral and religious life must be laid in Turkey as the country swings away from its old moorings and seeks the secret of national strength.

—*The Missionary Herald.*

New Books for Young Turks

At Constantinople we have been publishing each month during 1928 a booklet in a series on American Education and have sent copies to over a hundred officials in the Government Educational Service throughout the country; the great number of grateful and expectant replies received has made us feel that this series has been unusually effective in carrying an interpretation both of modern methods and educational ideals.

In order to make the Turkish of our translations as perfect as possible, we not only have in general only Turkish translators, but have had their work corrected by a Turkish writer of accepted standing. The writer who has done most of this correction is Ahmed Jevad Bey, under whose editorial direction has been commenced a series called the Genjlik Library. The first of this series, already printed, is a Turkish adaptation of Basil Mathew's "Spirit of the Game." It contains an introduction by Selim Sirri Bey, Director of Physical Education in the Department of Education, and contains also a historical treatment of sport in Turkey by a Turkish writer. The book bears the imprint of the Hilmi Library, which has in charge its distribution on a forty per cent commission basis. It is prepared with every effort to make its character as indigenous as possible. It is really a case where by our financial help and our counsel we have made possible a volume prepared by Turks and presented by Turks to the Turkish public. Other volumes in this series now being prepared are translations of Kipling's "Captains Courageous," Jean Webster's "Dear

Enemy," Victor Hugo's "Les Miserables," and a Book of Games for use in school playground and home; this last has been in preparation for some months by a special committee. We also have in preparation a book of poems collected from Turkish literature, using as a model David Porter's "Poems of Action."

—*The Missionary Herald.*

Moslem Religious Art

Sir Thomas Arnold gave the concluding lecture last year before the British Academy on "The Old and New Testament in Moslem Religious Art." He put forward the evidence for deriving the beginning of Moslem religious art, which made its first appearance at the beginning of the fourteenth century, from the art of the Oriental Churches—particularly the Jacobite and Nestorian Churches. He laid emphasis on the destiny of the Christian population living under Moslem rule in Mesopotamia and Persia, and on the intimate relations of the Nestorians with their Moslem neighbors; and gave examples to show that similar artistic conventions are found in Christian and Moslem manuscripts of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. As the Moslem theologians were hostile to all forms of representational art, and consequently no school of religious painting could spring up spontaneously in an Islamic society, such Moslems as cared to disregard the teaching of their religious guides and wished to possess religious pictures had to employ Christians or other painters who carried on the tradition of Christian art. Examples were given of such transference of Christian forms of representation of sacred subjects, such as the Annunciation, and so forth, to Moslem religious pictures. In succeeding centuries Moslem artists became more independent and devised methods of their own for the representation of their religious history, and illustrations were given of Persian and Indian pictures of the Prophets of the Old Testament and of the life of Jesus and of the Virgin Mary.

Professor Margoliouth on the Koran

The Near East and India reports an address delivered before the Near and Middle East Association (London) last year which contains matter of new interest to the student of Islam.

"Professor Margoliouth began his brilliant address with an anecdote of the Bishop who set at rest the fears of one of his flock concerning the possible popularity of the Koran among English people. That the Koran was widely read, however, was proved by the translation of Sale, done in the eighteenth century, which was a national classic, and by the translations of Rodwell and of Palmer, both of which were standard works. Rodwell had already been reprinted, and Palmer was now in process of reprinting. The lecturer then gave (in order that he might not be thought unduly to underestimate the knowledge on the part of his audience of the Koran), three examples of ignorance of the Koran taken from the history of Moslems themselves. The first was at the time of Abu Bakr, the second at that of the second Abbasid Caliph, and the third example of ignorance was displayed by the Ottoman authorities in 1807. In all these instances reference was made to the Koran which had no justification in fact whatever.

"Professor Margoliouth proceeded to make a striking examination of

the Koran and of the Old Testament. Between these two Holy Books, he said, there were both resemblances and differences. Among the resemblances were a sublimity of language, a similar presentation (e. g., the introduction of a revealed passage with a phrase such as 'Thus saith the Lord'), and a general classification of the respective contents into historical, legislative, devotional, and homiletic matter. Among the dissimilarities were the comparative lack of redundancy in the Old Testament (such repetitions as might be found in Isaiah and Kings II were rare), whereas if all redundancies were expurged from the Koran, it would be reduced possibly to one third of its present size; the fact that, whereas the Koran was accepted practically *in toto* as genuine, most of the Old Testament had at some time or other been disputed; and the unchronological basis of the Koran as compared with the more readily understandable order of the Old Testament.

"The lecturer devoted some time to an explanation of how the Koran came into being, emphasising the fact that the Arabs made a habit of keeping the memory of sublime things 'within their breasts,' as well as, or in contradistinction to, committing such things to parchment. It was, incidentally, upon this examination of the drawing up and publishing of the Koran that Professor Margoliouth was, after his address, questioned by certain Moslems, who claimed that not only the whole of the Koran but also the order of the *Suras* were known to Moslems before the death of the Prophet; to which questioning the lecturer gave the exceedingly adroit answer that the order in which the Angel Gabriel recited the Koran was undoubtedly the correct order! He also examined the problem of the 'abrogation' of certain verses and the inconsistencies of the Koran, as exemplified in the twin injunction of both tolerance and intolerance towards unbelievers.

"In concluding, Professor Margoliouth referred to the influence upon Islam of the Koran. On this, apart from mentioning his belief that a religion was to be judged by its interpretation at the hands of the choicest spirits of any particular age, he did not expatiate. He did, however, refer to the tremendous influence of the Koran upon the Arabic language. Alike in linguistic and philological matters the Koran held a unique place in Arabic literature, and to the loftiness of its language (he had previously described the fascinating rhythm of the Book) the lecturer paid a remarkable tribute."

Moslems In Finland

Mr. W. J. Wiseman, of the British and Foreign Bible Society, sends us the following information regarding the Moslems in Finland.

"During the World War the number of Moslems increased, particularly owing to influx from Russia to Helsingfors, and reached a total of seven hundred people before the revolution in Russia of 1917.

"After the revolution, and mostly due to the civil war in Finland, the majority of these went back to Russia. Only about sixty people remained.

"Since the establishment of the present régime in Russia many Moslems have left that country, some have gone to Esthonia where the Moslems now number two hundred and fifty to three hundred, but more have come to Finland where there are now about nine hundred and fifty Moslems. Hodja Hakim was able to count from his records covering Finland and Esthonia about twelve hundred people."

Islam In Madagascar

Islam, in Madagascar, is found almost exclusively on the North West Coast, and is represented by the Indians (Hindus) and the people from the adjacent islands, Comoro, Anjouan, etc.

Indian Moslems. All natives from the Indian coast, particularly of the district between Baroda and Goa. Government statistics show 10,000 of them, but I think this figure too small. In our opinion 12,000 to 12,500 would be more correct. They are divided between:—

- (1) Bohrahs
- (2) Khojas, Agaca
- (3) Sunni
- (4) Bagnan (These last are Buddhists)

Each sect has its mosque in important towns such as Majunga, Marovoay, Tulear, Antaohihi, etc., and it is not a rare thing to see three, four, or even five mosques in a town. The language of all is Gujarati, but they understand Hindustani, the official language of India.

To these must be added the natives of the Comoro group, who may also be considered as Sunni, and are all Moslems. Government statistics give the number 125,000 for these. Among these latter Islam preponderates everywhere, the few Hindus remaining quite separate, marrying only amongst themselves. In the interior some are evidently living with native wives, though the children arising from these marriages cause no such complicated problem as the half-castes.

Thus we must have a total of some 135,000 to 140,000 Moslems here.

What have we done for them? For the Hindus we have obtained from India copies of the Gospels in Gujarati, and of these we have distributed more than two thousand. They like us and try to help us; some secretly attend our services and procure our religious books in the vernacular.

The islanders of Comoro and Anjouan, less isolated than the former, are much more open to the activities of our native workers. Some, though very few, have been converted.

What ought to be done? In my opinion the synod or synods of the Christian Churches of the Indian Coast provinces ought to send an evangelist here. There should be created a special mission field for these Churches. This man, or these men (two could find together mutual encouragement) would work together with us, under our direction, but especially among their compatriots.

Here they would have, right at the commencement, an itinerating work, travelling from community to community, and eventually would discover the best centre for work, a series of conferences.

Majunga, Madagascar.

A. BEAULIEU.