

ordinary conversation. On the other hand, when the missionary is conducting a religious service he no doubt feels more at ease, for custom prescribes the use of "correct" classical Arabic in public addresses, and, too, the version of the Bible from which he will read the lessons is also likely to be in the literary language. The trouble is that he will be aware how few in his audience understand him. Only educated people will be able to follow what he says, and in the Near East the percentage of educated people is quite small. Classical Arabic in fact is in rather the same position as Latin in the West, and we know how few churchgoers could derive much advantage from a Latin service. Similarly, private reading of Scripture is out of the question in the one case as in the other. Mr. Sigel's version of St. Luke in the colloquial Arabic spoken in Damascus is a step towards meeting a real need for his own neighborhood, and suggests a useful line for missionaries and teachers in other Arabic-speaking districts.

From the side of theory such a book as this is extremely useful for establishing the different dialects, still an obscure matter. Their existence is evident, and illustrated by the story of the British consul who would not himself claim a profound knowledge of the language, and yet to his satisfaction found himself in the position of interpreter between two groups of Arabs. But though everyone knows that these different dialects exist, it is hazardous even to estimate how many there are. Before they can be studied at all adequately, we must have books like the present version of St. Luke.

A further service which a book like this renders is to provide help for those who wish to study the Arabic spoken in a particular area, and are not specially interested in Ibn Baṭūṭa or Ḥarīrī or other lights of the classical literature. If one wanted to get up enough Arabic to understand and be understood by the people of Damascus and the neighborhood, one would probably progress as rapidly with the help of this little book as in any other way.

Mr. Sigel's work could be recommended from the linguistic point of view still more strongly if it had been possible to avoid mistakes and inconsistencies in the vocalization. One is of course aware of the difficulties, but it must be said that these errors assume a dangerous proportion in the present book, at least from the standpoint of the student of dialects or the learner. If they can be removed from a second edition we shall have a valuable aid to colloquial Arabic studies. It is to be hoped that the author will find time for continuing his work, and that others will be encouraged to do the same kind of thing for the Arabic of their own localities.

D. M. DUNLOP.

Feisal and Anita. By Henry Ruskin. Published by the author, 212 Asylum Avenue, Hartford, Conn., 1939. \$1.50.

Twenty-nine sonnets in sequence, describing the friendship of King Feisal of Iraq with a Christian girl.

CURRENT TOPICS

Moonlight Evangelism in Oman¹

We were spending two weeks of an evangelistic tour in Kuraiyat, located about fifty miles south of Muscat. This town with its villages lies on a coastal plain from three to four miles wide and twelve miles long. The plain has a background of hills that reach back toward the mountains of Oman. Various gorges cut through these hills, and after a rain these become raging torrents. One of these gorges is the auto road that leads to the plain, and the autoist who is the first to travel there after a rain has to negotiate huge boulders, steep banks of sand and gravel, and uncertain crossings of the little stream that still trickles down to the sea. Once out of the gorge, the car follows the camels and the donkeys around the boulders and the bushes as best it can.

On our trips to the villages in the daytime we noticed a lovely camping place about three miles from town—a dry river-bed of sand, with a water-hole near by, where sweet water could be had, and about it several villages or hamlets within easy walking distance. So one evening we packed our supper of rice and fish into the car and went out to this camping place. While we waited for the water for our tea to come to the boil, we watched the moon rise in all its splendor out of the sea, and cast a magic spell on hill and plain.

A little to the right a mountain hides a lovely valley with many palms, mango trees, and fighting men. These men have to date resisted the building of an auto road into their valley through a gap in the mountains. And when they say No, they mean just that. A few years ago a high official of the local government sent word into the valley that on the morrow he would come and visit them. They sent back word to him that he should not come. The next morning as he with his camelcade approached the entrance to the valley, shots rang out from every side and many of his men fell before they could find cover. Retreat was not possible, and thirst threatened to take the lives of those that had escaped the bullets. It was only the timely help of a gunboat and its crew that extricated the exhausted men. Later as we rode along this place into the valley, our donkey boys pointed out to us the rocks and the hillocks where deeds of valor or acts of perfidy had taken place.

Over the top of this first hill looms a dark, sinister mountain mass where live the redoubtable Beni Batash—a name that strikes fear into the hearts of the less warlike Arabs of the plains. (Their ruler called on us in Muscat to listen to the Arabic news over the radio, and invited us to visit him in his mountain stronghold.)

¹ This article appeared also in *Neglected Arabia*, October, 1939—March, 1940.—Ed.

Beyond that mighty mass, mountain is piled upon mountain till they reach the height of over 9,000 feet in Jebel Akhdar. •

But the singing kettle recalls the mind from its moonlight reverie and we all fall to and eat the evening meal. Soon shadows detach themselves from the solid darkness of the palms and shrubs and converge upon our camping place. A group of silhouettes inspect the car. From the opposite direction some women timidly make their way to our camp upon the sand. The car has lost its novelty and that group draws near, sending their salaams ahead, like Jacob's sheep, to test the temper of these strangers in their midst. As soon as the watchword is returned they come and form a circle all about us. Greetings are exchanged, as also repeated inquiries as to each other's state of health. With our helpers joining in, we sing several hymns in Arabic, and we have a very rich collection of hymns from which to choose. This singing they seem to enjoy and appreciate, as this method of giving the Gospel message is somewhat like the way in which their traveling minstrels recount exploits of raid and war. They also listen attentively to the Gospel story read and explained to them afterward—as the Arab loves to sit about a campfire in the evening to hear and tell a tale. A prayer for God's blessing on the message given and for His keeping through the coming night concludes this moonlight service on the sands. We repeat the service the following evening, and a different group attends at that time. Thus we try to cast our bread beside all waters and all wadis and trust that we or someone else will find it after not too many days.

Again we are left alone with the moonlight, and with the thought that it needs more than the light of the sun, the moon and the stars to lighten these dark hearts and lives.

Muscat, Arabia

DIRK DYKSTRA.

Women Tear off Veils in Tashkent

More than a thousand women, led by local deputies, Stakhanoffists and intellectuals, met in the Tashkent opera house Monday to demand a law prohibiting the use of veils over women's faces throughout Uzbekistan, of which Tashkent is the capital. At a signal, long rows of older women in the galleries tore off these "remnants of outworn superstition and the insignia of feminine servitude" and threw them away amid wild applause.

The veil in Uzbekistan is far different from the gossamer silk that used to lend attraction to the dark-eyed beauties of Turkey and Egypt and covered only the lower part of the face. The Uzbek veil is a hideous contraption of black horsehair, stretching from the middle of the chest to the crown of the head with a kimono-like dark robe across it up to the crown. It gives women the shocking appearance of headless, faceless ghosts.—*The New York Times*.

How Moslems Win Converts in Europe

"For a European to change his or her ancestral faith for Islam, by the grace of Allah, is no longer an extraordinary incident," says the *Islamic Review*, January, 1939.

The question of the appeal of Islam to Western converts and

its hold on westernized scholars may be a subject for experts, but perhaps an amateur may be permitted to express a view which is based on experience, not large in extent but among people of varied character and education.

There are striking similarities in the arguments given by *The Islamic Review*, lectures at the Woking mosque, students in England from Eastern lands, and ex-Christian converts to Islam. One cannot but sympathize with a courteous Eastern correspondent who expresses the hope that false impressions of Islam may be corrected in this article.

"An educated lady" is quoted by one Moslem as exclaiming "Moslem! That's an awful religion isn't it? They don't believe in God." Christians have been known to include Islam in the category of "heathen religions." The title "Mohammedan" seems to show a lack of understanding. Moslems do not claim divinity for Mohammed as Christians do for Christ.

Also, "Christians say that Islam teaches that women have no souls." Here we reach the border of a form of argument which many Christian missionaries consider legitimate—a comparison of the condition of women in Moslem and Christian lands. The reply to such an argument may take various lines:

A simple denial that women are ill-treated in Moslem lands. The dowry has been quoted as showing that a wife always has her own personal property. The right of divorce is allowed to any woman who cannot live happily with her husband, says the Woking Imam.

It is stated that proved cases of ill treatment are in spite of, not because of Islamic law. No one with a Christian bias can have the right of criticizing the translations and interpretations which prove this from the Koran and approved traditions.

Some of the sins against womanhood are still found in Christian lands and many more have only recently ceased to exist.

As regards easy divorce it is said that Christian nations are beginning to realize that this leads to a surer morality. Are not divorce laws being altered everywhere in this direction?

The phrase "Christian nations" leads on to another side from which appeal comes.

Both Eastern and Western protagonists of Islam would agree with one who says "Real happiness has very rarely followed Western conquest or infiltration." The Crusades, the Inquisition, the Slave Trade, are all blots on the character of nations which had claimed to be Christian for centuries. An English Moslem says: "Christianity as practised has failed as a religion."

"The Unity and brotherhood of all men and nations" given by Islam is in striking contrast to the differences of Christians. A letter in *The Times* gave a cutting exposure of our neglect of the Assyrians: "They are only our fellow Christians"—had they been fellow-countrymen we should have found some means of rescuing them from their impossible position. Nationalism comes before Christianity and many Moslems feel that they are despised because they come from the East. There are Western converts who considered Christianity a racial religion and wish by joining Islam to show their sense of brotherhood with the East. Imagination is stirred by the Pilgrimage,

when all must wear the same simple garment and perform the same actions.

At Woking, too, there is this attraction for those who feel disgust at the conscious or unconscious assumption of superiority by Westerners. There the hosts and the majority, are Eastern, and the Westerner comes as a guest.

Religious intolerance is condemned by Koranic reference to previous prophets. All religions are said to contain truth, indeed one has been told by several Moslems that all are ways to God—though Islam is the final and the straightest way.

Perhaps the most potent influence is found in the "modern" demand for a religion which can be proved, or felt, to be true.

The writer has been told that Islam is scientific, for "We only believe what we can prove. Christians themselves know that the Bible has been altered, but we have proof that the Koran has not been altered since it was revealed."

An English Moslem, formerly a Unitarian, brought forward an interesting confirmation of his statement that Christ did not die on the Cross. "Look at the images in Roman Catholic Churches and you will see that the wound in His side was only superficial."

But "One knows what one can or cannot believe" is perhaps the most common basic principle leading to modern Islam. Some one finds Moslem belief "to coincide with my own feelings"; many feel or think it better to follow a purely human Prophet who is nearer to us than "God manifest in the flesh" could ever be; the doctrines of Atonement and of the Triune God—"I could not grasp", they say.

Thus a reaction against unfair criticism, toleration, a natural faith, a sane outlook on life—all seem to lead to Islam. And so the only possible reasons for remaining a Christian must be supernatural—above reason.

First there would have to be a vision, through the Scriptures, of God the Father revealed in Christ Jesus by the Holy Spirit. With this, a discovery that we cannot prove any theory about the nature of the Godhead, but that this vision will explain unprovable but nevertheless incontrovertible aspects of Love and Truth, law and Mercy.

Then to see that one's own heart is indeed "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked," and that nothing short of suffering and sacrifice by God Himself for our redemption, and the coming of God Himself to dwell in our hearts can change it.

Apart from such a vision, Islam appears to have the best of the argument.

London

OLIVE BOTHAM.

Rare "Rubaiyat" Found

Princeton's Garrett Collection Discloses Copy Dated 1463

"A rare manuscript of the 'Rubaiyat' of Omar Khayyám, produced just seven years later than the oldest known copy, has been discovered in the Robert Garrett collection of oriental manuscripts, a catalog of the Persian, Turkish and Indic items published recently.

The collection, the possession of Robert Garrett, class of 1897, of Baltimore, Md., a trustee of Princeton, is on deposit in the university library.

"The Garrett copy, according to the catalog, was made at Baghdad in 1463. Only two manuscripts in Istanbul and one in the Bodleian Library at Oxford University antedate it.

"The catalog just published is a companion piece to that of the Arabic manuscripts in the collection and completes the task of studying, classifying and describing all the items in Arabic script owned by Mr. Garrett. It was produced by Mohamad E. Moghadam and Yahya Armajani, both of Teheran, Iran, former Princeton graduate students, under the supervision of Dr. Philip K. Hitti, Professor of Semitic Literature."—*The New York Times*.

Tunis Gospel Broadcast

A letter just received from Mr. Stanley Miles of Tunis thrills us with the news that, despite the war, the Saturday evening Gospel broadcasts from the Tunis radio station are being continued. How wonderfully God has answered prayer in maintaining this unique testimony in a needy land!

Those who do the actual broadcasting need our prayers that the messages sent forth may prove to be the very word of Life to many!

Coeducation—An Explosive Idea

From *The Sunrise*, the weekly newspaper of the Qadian Ahmadiyya (Lahore, India), we quote:

"In every scheme of educational reform, Primary Education holds a place of supreme importance. Unless it is placed on a healthy footing, no reform is possible. With this object in view, the Ministry of Education set about chopping and changing the Primary Syllabus to suit the needs of the hour. But the long-awaited Primary Education Bill as it emerged from the embryonic stages drew a heavy fire in the recent Assembly Session. The fly in the ointment was the proposal to introduce co-education in the Primary stage. Being an explosive idea it was bound to injure religious susceptibilities and provoke virulent opposition. It is a curious fact that it was launched by a Muslim Minister and hotly opposed by Muslim members, who regarded it as a great social menace. Even outside the Assembly Chamber, the 'heretic' idea provoked hostile comments. Muslim Press tried to scotch it with sarcasm and ridicule. Some Muslim scholars discussed it academically and dispassionately and concluded that it boded ill for society. The opposition has come from Muslim quarters. Hindu Press not only 'boosted' the Bill, but flung flippant jibes at the obscurantism of the Muslims

"Islam does not forbid the mingling of tiny tots of both sexes. It is not repugnant to any principle of Islam, if they sit cheek by jowl and receive their lessons. But the crucial point in the controversy is how long they can brush up against one another without danger of corruption. Pre-puberty age is a relative term. It should not be interpreted too liberally, as the sponsors of coeducation have

done. There is no hard and fast line of demarcation where safety ends and danger begins. Even before the actual dawn of puberty, there is a very precarious period of sex-consciousness. It is an age of quivering sensibility, when the mingling of two sexes is bound to have serious repercussions on after life. A girl, exposed to these influences, is hardly amenable to Purdah. She would certainly revolt against any restriction on her movements. Coeducation, thus viewed, would in the long run, prove an insidious poison to kill Purdah. In homes not enjoying the 'blessings' of coeducation, there is judicious graduation in the imposition of Purdah. Before the age of full Purdah is reached, the girl is quite attuned to life within her home."

Fighting Illiteracy in Egypt

A Memorandum Presented to the Ministry of Social Affairs

Maitre Mohammed Mazhar, School Inspector and Director of the Society for Village Improvement, presented a paper to the Ministry in which he pointed out that the percentage of children in school between the ages of 7 and 12 was 12% in Egypt (according to the census of 1927), 98% in Sweden, 60% in Czechoslovakia, 30% in Bulgaria, 31% in Greece,—all of which were nations of the second and third classes with reference to education.

Illiterate males in Egypt are 79% of the population, and females 95%—a most appalling situation, he said. Even provincial capitals were on the average 90% illiterate. Amongst fellahin only one in 1333 could read! Four out of five Muslim men were illiterate, and 40 out of 41 women. "And the Copts likewise" being classed with other Christian sects, foreigners included, show 1 in 5 illiterates amongst men and 2 in 5 amongst women. Similarly for Jews.

He then traced the long history of attempts to reform this, expressing disgust at the slowness of progress. In spite of the recent intensification of the government's compulsory school program, it does not yet take in more than one third of the children. Practically all the parents of these children are still illiterate and create a very poor environment for the children, once they are through school. This large element in the population is a definite barrier to every possible form of progress the government wished to institute. He urged the spending of large sums in the fight against illiteracy, saying that no sums were too great in view of intellectual and moral values that would be reaped sooner or later. Illiteracy laid a black veil on the mind of the untaught which robbed him of incalculable advantages.—*Egyptian Press Translation Service.*

60,000 Divorces in Egypt Every Year

Amongst the foremost projects of reforms which the Ministry of Social Affairs is studying these days, is the preparation of a new law for the control of divorce, in such way that divorce will not be permissible except in exceptional circumstances and under conditions which the legislation will specify.

Egypt is not the only country which is afflicted with the evil

of divorce. Indeed it has spread widely in Western countries and especially in America where special courts have been established for dealing with it. There is, however, one big difference between divorce in Egypt and in Western countries and that is, that while in those countries it can only be granted by means of courts of law and at the hands of judges after it has been established that the conjugal life has lost its most important foundations namely, mutual understanding and friendship and is, therefore, no longer possible, with us, divorce takes place "extemporaneously" and for the slightest of causes; until we have come to see husbands pronouncing the "word of divorce," with the same ease with which they pass a morning salutation to their friends and acquaintances.

Islam has legislated for divorce, yet with wisdom, and has permitted it as other religions have permitted it or to a wider extent, but yet has surrounded it with a network of severe limitations. But what is to be done when extreme ignorance has led to the spread of divorce so that divorce takes place every day by the hundreds for sufficient reason and without reason, since it is not possible to assert that all divorced women are "faithless" as required in the definition of the law?

Official census returns show that divorce is on the increase in Egypt. Thus in 1936-37, there were 53,026 divorces; 1937-38, 56,125; 1938-39, 59,023. At the beginning of last year, the number of divorced women had reached the figure of 169,725 (*sic*); but dropped at the end of the year because, of this number, 48,558 married again within the year. As for the remainder, only Allah Himself knows what will become of them, what number of them will resort to immorality and what number of them will escape.—*Al Musawwar*, December 15, 1939.