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The Life of a Convert

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THE life that a convert from Islam is compelled to live claims our sympathy and something more. The Arab or Persian who becomes a Christian needs more than our sympathy because he would be put to death if the Mohammedan law were enforced. The Khalifah Ali burnt alive some early apostates from Islam. Ibn Abbas, who was the cousin of the Prophet Muhammad and an early governor of Basrah, said that the Khalifah had not acted rightly, for the Prophet had said: "Punish not with God's punishment, (*i.e.*, fire),

but whosoever changes his religion, kill him with the sword." (*Hughes: Dict. of Islam.*)

To this day, even where the Moslem law is not allowed to operate, this desire to kill a convert remains and it must be guarded against.

"I shall certainly shoot my brother with this revolver if I ever see him going to the Christians' Sunday afternoon service!" So declared recently the brother of one of the converts baptized in Basrah in 1920 by the Rev. Dr. T. H. Mackenzie, the Chairman of the Board's Executive Committee.

"Oh, please stay away from the church service, so that your brother will not carry out his threat," the convert's mother pleaded with him. "You say your new religion is a religion of love," she continued. "You will not show love if you give your brother a chance to kill you."



A MOSLEM PREACHER AND JUDGE OF THE
SHIA SECT

For her sake he staid away some Sundays until his brother went to India.

This Arab convert and the Persian baptized several years ago have both been threatened with death. Neither of them has any expectation that the threats will be carried out. The Moslem preacher who urged from his pulpit that his hearers should slay the Persian convert was only paying lip-service to his law. Neither he nor his hearers cared to follow the recommendation. But while these converts are not living in the expectation of being killed, yet they live with the knowledge that many people would rejoice in their death. We need to overbalance that cause of unhappiness by the ministry of friendship and assurances of affection.

The Arab convert whose experiences are mentioned here has become an outcast to all his family except his mother. When he returned to his home town some months ago he called at his cousin's house. "So it's you, Fulan!" they said. "Please go away and never come again! You are dead to us and we to you," and they shut the door upon him.

This convert's mother has not forsaken him. The family allow her to visit him. They use her to try to win him back. At first she brought offers of mercenary reward if he would renounce Christianity. Five thousand rupees she said his brothers had collected to give him. The offers afforded him excellent opportunities to explain his motives in changing his faith, while their misunderstanding of his position and sincerity emphasized the inferiority of their appeal. One day the mother brought with her the little girl that they had planned should later have become his bride.

His mother finally became convinced that he was in very truth determined to remain a Christian and her visits have become less frequent. Recently she said to him, "It would be a feast-day for me if you would only say, 'Secretly, I'm a Moslem.'" He countered, "It would be a feast-day for me if I could only hear you say, 'I'm a Christian, but secretly.'" "There's no doubt of it," she declared. "You are indeed a Christian."

Not only are this convert's relations with his family heart-breaking and pitiable, but his position with his former friends and school-mates is likewise distressing and depressing. There is a little comfort for him in the fact that some of these friends would remain friendly if they could, but they dare not oppose the general contumely and antagonism towards him. One friend who is a slave and keeps a shop for his master said to him, "From the crown of my head to my feet I am under obligations to you, and to the day of my death I will not forget your favors, but I must beg of you not to come and sit in this shop any more."

Another of his former fellows paid him a brief visit one day and told him, "When your name is mentioned in any group I am in, I curse you more than the others do, and before the others do. so that no one will think that I am a friend of yours. I have to do it because I would not be able to get a job if people thought that I was your friend"

It is probable that there is not a harem in the city which has not



THE ARAB CONVERT, AHMED, WHEN A STUDENT AT KUWEIT

Women who have seen him there have picked up sand and cast it in his direction as they flung their bitter words at him. To make life miserable for him is the object of all who meet him except the mission community. The missionaries must needs do much to make life pleasant for him.

Added to his trials is the affliction of tuberculosis. Truly his burdens and heartaches are many and heavy. He needs our aid and more than our human aid. Let us give him our help by praying now that he may accept from the Lord the comfort of heart and the freedom from burden that belong to him through his coming to Christ.

heard of our friend's apostasy. Callers come to the hospital just to look at him and to see how his change of religion has changed his appearance. Two Arabs from the interior came once while he was taking a noon-day nap. "Where is he? Where is he?" they asked. A patient uncovered our friend's face. "Here he is," he said. "But he still looks like a man!" they exclaimed. "What did you expect to find?" they were asked, but they hastened away without answering. Children point him out to each other as they pass the hospital and see him on one of the benches, and they all curse him with expert tongues.



A FORM OF PUNISHMENT USED IN THE MOSLEM SCHOOL AT KUWEIT