

# THE LIGHT.

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Correspondence of literary nature may be addressed to the Editor. Short articles, letters and questions will also be welcome. Non-Muslims are also invited to send questions to be answered.

## NOTES.

### Literacy in the Muslim World.

In a statistical survey of the world of Islam in the July number of "The Muslim World", Rev. S. M. Zwemer gives the following figures, in point of literacy :—

Country or State.	Total Muslim population	Estimated percentage of literate population.	Literate Muslim population.
British possessions in Asia ...	78,000,000	37 p. c.	2,886,000
Egypt and North Africa ...	30,000,000	5 p. c.	1,500,000

Reminder of Africa	31,000,000	2 p. c.	620,000
Europe (exclusive of Russia) and America ...	2,500,000	20 p. c.	500,000
Independent Arabia, Persia, Afghanistan & Turkey	20,000,000	6 p. c.	1,200,000
Russia in Europe and Asia ...	15,000,000	20 p. c.	3,000,000
China ...	9,000,000	6 p. c.	540,000
Dutch East Indies, Phillipines, Siam, etc. ...	47,000,000	4 p. c.	1,880,000
	252,500,000		12,126,000

According to his estimate, the missionary tells us, the "total number of Moslems in the world able to read is less than eight million and of these less than 500,000 are women. These facts emphasize at once the intensive need of leadership for the educated classes of Islam and not less the inadequacy of the printed page to reach the masses unless supplemented by the living message in the vernacular speech."

Dr. Zwemer has his own point of view, his own particular interest in giving these figures. He means thereby to arouse the enthusiasm of the Christian World to take the message of the Cross to the literate as well as the illiterate part of the world of Islam. This he does, in spite of the tons of Christian literature that is broadcasted amongst the Muslim, in every known dialect of the world, in spite of the fact, that there is not one Muslim land all over the world where Christian Missionary, with all the weapons of proselytism, has not planted himself to preach his gospel by the word

of mouth to the masses in their own vernaculars.

Will it not serve an eye-opener to the world of Islam, whose own appalling condition the figures depict? To the Muslim it ought to be a personal affair. He has a twofold task before him. He has to remove this deplorable illiteracy as well as to protect himself against Christian aggression. This latter must engage the immediate attention of all well-wishers of Islam. Literature on Islam in sufficient quantity to be effective against Christian propaganda and an organized effort to spread the light of Islam, by the printed page as well as by the word of mouth, is the crying need of the hour. "The Moslem World" is only one of the numerous Christian propagandist organs, and its circulation is not less than 100,000. This is the circulation of a journal of 110 pages but what about the few Muslim journals of that character? "The Light," for instance, is but a four-paged paper but what is its circulation? Let the readers of "The Light" ponder.

## THE LIGHT.

DATED THE 16TH DECEMBER 1923.

**"The most unkindest cut of all."**

من از بیگانه ننگ هرگز نه قائم  
که با من هر چه کرد آن آشنا کرد

We often talk of non-Muslims mis-representing and vilifying Islam. Few of us ever care to pause awhile and ponder how far we, the so-called followers of Islam have done justice to that Great Faith. Truth may be bitter but we must tell it. We believe we are guilty in the first degree.

Others may have reasons of their own—their inherited prejudices, their vested interests perhaps—to misjudge Islam, but those that claim to stand for that religion, what have they to excuse themselves? They wear the colours of Islam and yet their betrayal of that Noble Faith!

Yes, betrayal. This is our studied judgment. We who call ourselves Muslims have done greater disservice to Islam than the non-Muslims all put together. As an abstract Truth, Islam has the fairest of faces, but as represented through ourselves—in flesh and blood—

what a horrid picture! Its graceful features, we have distorted, its fairest of faces we have deformed. We have painted it in colours as ugly as ugly can be and yet we are—*Muslims*! False, thrice false!—to ourselves as well as to the Fair Faith we pretend to represent.

Are we Muslim-like in thought? Are we Muslim-like in word? Are we Muslim-like in deed? Do Muslim-like sentiments throb our heart? Do Muslim-like aspirations agitate our bosom? Does Muslim-like dignity mark our demeanour? Above all, does Muslim-like manliness characterise our being? Let us look within ourselves for an answer to any of these questions. Noble exceptions there may be, but what does a drop in the ocean count?

The fate of the institutions of a people is invariably bound up with the fate of that people. With their rise, they rise, with their fall, they fall. Such happens to be the law of life here below. "If this handful of Thy servants, O Lord! should perish to-day, there shall arise none on this earth ever to uphold the Glory of Thy Name." Does not this supplication of the Holy Prophet on the critical day of Badr, imply this same truth? Those early custodians of the honour of Islam were made of better stuff and they did not perish. They rose and with them rose Islam.

Times have changed. The mantle of those early heroes of Islam fell on unworthy shoulders. We fell low and falling low, brought that highest of truths, Islam, low down with ourselves. We degenerated and brought about the degeneration of everything Islamic. If others have misjudged Islam as a religion of decay and decadence, Islam has mostly its own so-called followers to thank for it. They have judged it by our standard and we are, to confess the truth, a standing reproach to that Great Faith of a once great race. Islam has received many a cut at its fair face at the hand of the foe, but that received at the hand of the friend, though unconscious, is surely "the most unkindest cut of all."

## ISLAM IN GERMANY.

**Miss Charlotte declares herself a Muslim.**

On Friday, the 9th November 1923, Miss Charlotte, who comes of a very good German family, declared herself a Muslim. She stated that she was brought up

as a Christian, but the dogmatic teachings of her faith never appealed to her. The dogma of trinity, she said, was so very childish, primitive and unthinkable. What function does the Holy Ghost—the third God of the trinity—perform, has never been known to the Christians, and still, she observed the clergy demand that educated people should continue to subscribe to mysterious dogmas of that character. It is too much indeed, she remarked. Miss Charlotte was equally at a loss to understand how the death of Jesus on the Cross could take away the sins of all mankind. It has on the other hand contributed to the notoriously licentious life of Christian Europe, for they believe that the death of Jesus has atoned for their sins, and that they can thus escape punishment. Islam, on the contrary, does not enforce any irrational tenets. Its principles and practices are not only such as are easily understood, but are also highly edifying and useful. "I therefore" she said, "join this excellent faith of Islam."

Before she asked me to help her in reciting Kalmah-i-Shahadat, I explained to her why we Muslims do not touch alcoholic drinks and do not eat the flesh of swine. She remarked that she already knew it and solemnly promised to have nothing to do with these enemies of mankind which have undermined the morality of Christian nations. The ceremony came to a close, and a Muslim name of Nafeesa—which represents its proud owner in many ways—was conferred upon her.

*Giesebrecht St. 5,*  
*Berlin.* } : SADR-UD DIN.

#### A WEEK IN DHARAMSALA.

If you want to see the India of old, go to some hill district, away from the haunts of civilization. Here in these parts, you find man still living, as it were, in the stone age. The bustle and hurry of modern life is a thing unknown there. Calm and content marks everything—man and bird and beast—and you are reminded of the good old days when Adam delved and Eve span.

Dharamsala in one such place, not the town of course, but the country side. My business recently took me there and short though my sojourn I made the best of it. I moved from village to village, from hamlet to hamlet, to see men and things for myself. I think some of my impressions might be of

interest to the readers of "The Light," especially what I saw there of what passes for religion and hence these few lines.

Like the rest of the hill places, Dharamsala is indeed an interesting relic of ancient India. Population is mainly Hindu, with a bare sprinkling of Muslims. The rigidity of caste system is perhaps nowhere stronger than here. The high caste Brahman must not touch anything cooked by a Hindu of a lower order or by a woman, even though Brahman. And so the Rajput must not take things prepared by those below him or by a woman, even of his own order. Then come those wretched people known as the "untouchables". There are several tribes of these unfortunate outcasts, known as the Batwals, the Sarirs, the Dumna, the Chamar. Not only is anything in the way of edibles touched by them considered unclean for a Brahman or a Rajput, but their very contact is supposed to pollute. Their persons are shunned like plague. No part of their body must come into contact with any part of the body of a higher caste of man. This means the greatest sin against religion.

Idol-worship, image-worship, stone-worship and such like primitive forms of worship are still in vogue. As you pass along a mountainous track, you can read the whole history of the religion of these people. On a huge rock by the way side, every here and there, you see engravings of Hanuman and other mythological figures. Figures of big snakes engraved into a big stone is another popular form of worship. In one village temple, dedicated to a certain Devi (goddess), now in ruins owing to one of the frequent shocks of earthquakes with which this part is visited in spite of so many gods and goddesses, I also came across a lion carved out of stone, in addition to the curling snake and the mythological figures engraved in huge slabs of stone. Besides, there is hardly a house where they don't have miniature idols of their own. And what moved me very much was that thousands of human beings should, in this twentieth century, still be enshrouded in such ignorance and superstition. In their worship of these things of their own creation, they are as devout as a man of any other religion. Perhaps they are more so; for there they have their Hanuman, their snake, their lion, their elephant, in solid stone, right in front of them.

Stone-worship is also common. One day as I was out on my daily round, my guide drew my attention to a patch of ground, red with blood and strewed with flowers. This again, I was told, was the outcome of religious devotion. The blood, now dried up into a thick crust, was the blood of the goats offered as sacrifices there and so were those flowers there as an offering. I pulled my wits together, but I could not account for the thing. Such sacrifices, I knew, must be offered at the feet of some idol-god or goddess, but there was neither the Hanuman, nor the snake, nor the lion, nor the elephant, nor any other blessed thing that I could see there. What was it for, after all, I said to myself. And my surprise knew no bounds when my guide told me that all this was meant for the rough, unhewn piece of stone lying there. This stone happened to be so shaped that by a very wild stretch of imagination, it might be thought to resemble the head of an elephant. On the top of this elephant-headed stone, there lay another piece of stone, rather thin and in the shape of a huge plate. Was it not some mysterious arrangement to protect that head-like stone from rainfall? Well, then, that stone must be some goddess, of which so much care had been taken. This is how they argue there and that is why they bring their offerings to that uncut piece of stone on the hill side. It is known as "Kunal Pathar" or Plate-stone from the huge plate-like stone which affords shelter to the elephant goddess.

Every village has a few Muslim families as well but these are no better than their neighbours. They are Muslims only in name. They have no mosques of their own, nor do they know aught about their religion. Even in outward appearance, they have taken after their Hindu fellow-villagers, so much so that you cannot tell a Muslim from a Hindu. In certain cases, the influence is felt even in names. I met one Muslim youth who comes of a very high Rajput family whose name, I was told, was Ihsan Singh. These Muslims are as steeped in ignorance and superstition as the Hindus. Some, I was informed, have taken to the Hindu practice of keeping miniature idols in their household. I was much pained to hear this. Whether any of the so many Muslim Anjumans in the Punjab knew about this degeneration of their brethren in faith and whether,

knowing this deplorable state of things, they would care to take any steps to ameliorate their condition—I wondered and still wonder.

M. Y. K.

### Questions and Answers.

A. Z. Haque:

1. Is it compulsory for a Muslim to read the Holy Quran in Arabic only? If so, why?

A. It is not a question of compulsion or otherwise. You can not read the Holy Quran *but* in Arabic, for the obvious reason that the Book *is* in Arabic. In other languages, you can only have *translations* of the Holy Quran which you can read by all means. But then you will be reading *not* the Holy Quran but *translation* of the Holy Quran.

2. Does Islam allow us to be photographed? If not, why?

A. Of course, it does.

Abdul Hai Abbasi:

1. طاب العلم فرضة لى كل مسلم و مسربة

What is the meaning of this saying of the Holy Prophet?

A. Acquisition of knowledge is incumbent on every Muslim, male or female.

2. Does علم (knowledge) include modern education as well?

A. Certainly. Have you never heard the Prophet's famous saying: اطرب العلم و لا كان في الدين

*i.e.*, seek after knowledge, even though it is to be had in China? Surely, the Prophet, the fountain-head of all *religious* knowledge would not recommend China for that purpose. Obviously, the saying implies knowledge as such.

3. To what standard may female education go?

A. To the highest possible standard. No limit could be put to education, whether male or female.

4. What is Pan-Islamism? Is it a political movement? Who was the founder of it?

A. The idea that Muslims all the world over are bound together in the bonds of fraternity is the true conception of Pan-Islamism. The idea is as old as Islam itself, but the term is of modern origin. The underlying idea is purely religious, but in these times and under the present name, it was revived more out of political necessities. Towards the later part of the last century, when Western aggression had usurped the liberties of the major part of the world of Islam and contemplated striking a final death blow at the power of Caliphate, Turkey, an attempt was made to arouse the whole of the world of Islam and unite it against this common danger. Thus, what was and what is first and last religious, was branded as political to facilitate its suppression. This, in a nutshell, is the genesis of the movement, which we think is at bottom purely religious.

The founder of the idea was the Holy Prophet Muhammad himself who proclaimed: *ي. ع.* all Muslims are brethren.