

Mahometan faith—a faith of which it is not an accident, but an essential principle, that it is to be spread by the sword, can never, except under compulsion, sit down on equality with other faiths. It may, within certain limits it must, grant a contemptuous toleration to men of other religions; it can never willingly submit to accept toleration, or even equality, at the hands of those whom it looks on as made to be either its victims, its subjects, or its converts.

The more we feel the prominent part which the struggle between Christendom and Islam, has borne in the general history of the world, the more deeply we feel the importance of a right understanding of the Mahometan history. Until we fully grasp the true nature and position of the rival power, whole volumes of Christian and European history remain most imperfectly understood. And the more deeply we feel all this, the more deeply also we feel the frightful difficulty of getting at a right understanding of the Mahometan history. We speak from the point of view of Western students, anxious, first of all, to understand the history of a system which has such powerful effects on the history of the system which forms the subject of our own studies. But those who go so far as this cannot fail to be anxious also to know something, for its own sake, of a system which has exercised so powerful an influence upon the mind of man: and, if possible, they will be even more anxious to call up a lively image of the man who has wrought a greater change in the condition and history of the world than any mere mortal. But the difficulties which beset a Western scholar in striving to gain a knowledge, so precious in itself and so important for his own purposes, are almost enough to make him draw back at the onset. He finds a gulf, which it seems hopeless to think of crossing, between himself and the original authorities on his subject. He finds a gulf only less wide between himself and those modern scholars who have undertaken Eastern subjects, and who must serve as interpreters between himself and the original writers of Eastern history. Few scholars can be found who are masters alike of the Eastern and the Western languages. Here and there a

man may be found who has enough knowledge both of European and Asiatic tongues to serve for the purposes of comparative philology. But it is almost impossible to find a man who is thoroughly master at once of the literature of the East and of the West. Thoroughly to work out in detail the long story of the relations between Christendom and Islam—a story which involves the story of the relations between East and West before Christendom and Islam arose—a man must add a thorough knowledge of European history, classical and mediæval, to a knowledge equally thorough of a vast mass of historical literature which has been accumulated through so many ages in the languages of the East. But such knowledge as this is only to be had piecemeal; its acquisition in all its fulness would surpass the longest life and the greatest energy which has ever fallen to the lot of man. The man who devotes himself to any one branch of the subject, must be content to take many things at second-hand, on the authority of those who have devoted themselves to other branches. It is rare to find a man to whom all ages of European history, classical, mediæval, and modern, are alike familiar; and it is inconceivable that any man should be able to add to this unusual amount of Western knowledge, anything more than a mere smattering of the needful knowledge of the East. Even if he has gained some knowledge of the chief historical languages of the East, mere lack of time will hinder him from gaining the same sort of knowledge of the historical literature contained in them which he has gained of the historical literature of the West. He is driven back at the threshold. He wishes, for instance to gain a thorough knowledge, not only of the life and teaching of Mahomet, but of the practical working of his system as a religious and political code. He is told that “the living law of Mahometanism is not to be found in the Koran, but in the commentators—a set of the most vicious scoundrels who ever disgraced humanity, whose first object seems to have been to relax the plain meaning of the original edicts as far as practicable.” He feels that he may possibly master the Koran, but that he has no hope of mastering the