

PERSIAN TRICKS.

A missionary in Persia in a letter to *Children's Work for Children* tells of the strange things that people do to gain power among others, and that make it much harder to get the people to believe in the gospel. He says:--

"A name for holiness and power to work miracles is a great source of gain as well as fame to a person or place, and sometimes people try to get this reputation by deceit.

"A Sheikh (or chief) in Kurdistan wished to increase his influence over the people. He was already of considerable repute and he gave out that on a certain day he would kill and raise to life one of his pupils.

According to previous arrangement, a drug which would put him into a heavy sleep, had been given to the pupil. He was commanded to enter the room and die. Then word was given to the people. They entered, found him lifeless and prepared him for burial. The grave was dug, the body deposited, a little earth placed upon it, and the people were told to come in the morning. At sunrise a crowd assembled, the earth was removed and the body called upon to rise. No answer came. He had not correctly calculated the time when the effects of the drug would pass off. The pupil had awakened in the night and after trying in vain to escape had died. The Sheikh was arrested for fraud.

"A holy shrine in Karadagh is visited by many sick for healing. It originated in this manner. One morning a man told his neighbors that during the night a heavenly light—a manifestation of an Emaum had appeared on a certain hill. The report spread and people began flocking to the shrine. It was a time of an overstocked melon market, and the bazaar was distant. This story brought a throng of purchasers near and the man sold his melons at a good profit. Then he told the people what he had done, but they declared his confession a lie and held to the fable as truth.

It is considered very meritorious for a Mussulman to pay the expenses of the burial of a dead believer. Two beggars agreed that on alternate days each should feign himself dead and the other collect alms for his burial. They have a remarkable power of stiffening their limbs and bringing a deadly pallor to the countenance. After many successful efforts, they one day were informed that a great man was approaching. Having made all preparations, a piteous tale of distress was poured into the Khan's ears. He recognized the men and immediately assented to bear all the expenses of the burial. He ordered his attendants to dig a grave and light a fire that hot water might be prepared for washing the body. The accomplice besought him not to trouble, declaring that he had a vow to perform these last rites for his friend. Unheeding, they made all the preparations, and only when the scalding water was falling on his pate did the dead man abandon his trick. The noble then gave the beggars a present and sent them on their way.

"Just outside of Oroomiah a new shrine has been built. A man dreamed, so he said, that a son of an Emaum had appeared to him and directed him to where he should find gold in his grave. He should take the gold and build a shrine which should be under the protection and blessing of the Emaum. The man called several witnesses, went and dug up the treasure, and built up the shrine. It has become a resort of the faithful, whose offerings have not only made good the original outlay, but filled the purse of the dreamer and given him a reputation as one honored with a vision of the holy Emaum. Even the children can see that the man had first hidden the gold to make his story appear true.

Does it not seem to us that people who can so easily believe these silly fables and lies might be easily won to believe in the truth which Christ's messengers, the missionaries, go to tell them, but it is just the reverse.