

come to the abode of the poor?" asked the master of me.

"I am also a dervish," I answered, "and travelling from land to land. It was pleasant for me to come and learn about the condition of my brethren."

"*Ay-voollah*," exclaimed the master, "then we are brethren." After placing his hand in mine, he carried it first to his mouth and then to his forehead.

"Of what nationality are you?" he asked of me.

"Armenian," I answered.

"To what religion do you belong?"

"The Christian."

The last words caused the lips of the master to curve with satiric laughter, and he replied,—

"You said you were a dervish, but the dervishes do not belong to a nation or a religion."

I felt my mistake in my words, and answered,—

"We are that kind of dervishes."

"The founder of the religion of Christians, Messiah, was a perfect dervish. He belonged to the *Ah-i-Moo-habbet* (the people of love). He hated riches; he was a friend of the poor and wiped the tears of the afflicted."

"Yes he preached love, and took upon him the heavy burden of the sinner," said I. "But his successors, your caliphs, did not become the real and worthy followers of their master. They loved the world and its glories, and sacrificed holiness to their passions."

The Ethiopian dervish, who was lying in the corner, interrupted our conversation with a song, which he suddenly began to sing in his sleep.

"Last night our brother was much affected by the *hasheesh*," said the master. "He is yet charmed with beautiful dreams."

The Hindu at this time took out of his little bag a long piece of opium, chopped it into smaller pieces, and put them into his palm, then put it in his mouth, and swallowed all at once. I was surprised. A single piece of the opium was enough to poison and kill the healthiest man; but he ate it like

candy, without showing any sign of dislike.

The master lighted his small *narguileh*, the bottle of which was made of a calabash, put upon it a little henbane, and began to smoke. The others likewise began to smoke and eat opium, and after a few minutes the small room was again full of suffocating smoke. The intoxicating power of the opium and *hasheesh* began to exert its influence. By and by the dervishes became more lively and cheerful. They offered to let me smoke from their *narguileh* and *ghaylan*; but I declined, saying, "I am not used to it," and lighted a cigarette.

Our conversation continued long. I noticed that these dervishes belonged to a sect which is called *Ahl-i-Hakikat*, which means followers of truth. They do not accept any truth unless it is manifested by the supernatural power in order to reach the truth, they have to pass through the following two degrees: first, love upon which they put the foundation of their morality; second, the *tarikah*, ceremonial forms, whereby a man kills in himself by austerity and numerous tortures the bodily passions, and purifies and cleanses himself and enters into the ways of the spirit. Then he reaches the truth.

Many of the dervishes belong to different sects, as Tahri, Babi, Sophi, Ourafa, etc. . . There are also many swindlers among them who are engaged in sorcery, enchantment, and divination.

The *Mollas* (Mohammedan priests or scholars) do not love the dervishes, and consider them infidels, as they do not perform the laws of shariat. But the higher class of people, the nobility, respect and revere them, and like to hear their wisdom.

The dervishes, the wandering missionaries of wisdom, might be useful in introducing and spreading new ideas into Persia, although they have no definite direction now, and each one has his own way, opinions and beliefs. Yet they have the liberty of free thinking.