

In many respects Mahometanism is a most debasing religion, and is disfigured with the grossest and most horrid superstitions. We have just passed through the Fast of Rhamadan in which, from sunrise to sunset, no follower of the Prophet of Mecca is permitted to taste a bit of bread or drink a drop of water, while during the hours of night he may riot and revel at his pleasure, and indeed, I believe, the reins thus thrown loose, after a ridiculous and meaningless restraint, you have as the result a wild licentiousness. Strangely enough, through this sacred month, for the Fast continues a whole moon, there do not seem to be any special religious services—work and business go on as usual, and there is only, perhaps, a greater regularity in offering up prayer once a week in the mosque.

One of the sights of Cairo is the dancing Dervishes. As these Mahometan saints exhibit at night, I have not seen them; but they perform their devotions before the public (and for English visitors at least, provide refreshments when they go to see them), dance and sing their breath out, still shouting out the same refrain in a kind of wild monotone, "There is one God."

The loud hum of this thronging city never ceases. On Sabbath day as well as week-day all the markets ply, the mason hammers at his stone, the cobbler and tailor and saddler are as busy as usual in their sheds. You remember the description in Nehemiah, last chapter. This is exactly what you have in Cairo. Stand on a Sabbath morning beside the famous Babe-nouss gate, the gate, that is, of victory, a noble piece of ancient masonry, and you might count the camels and donkeys with their back-loads of sugar-cane, and vegetables, and tomatoes, and oranges, and beans, and firewood, and building stones passing through in hundreds, while other entrances into the city are still more crowded. There is no rest day for the labouring men and labouring beasts in Egypt.

Destroy the sanctity of the Sabbath and would you retain it long in Scotland?

One of the worst things about the Mahometan religion is the low place it assigns to woman. She is treated as an inferior being. I suppose not one in a thousand Mahometan women can read. Never permitted to appear in public but under a veil—and there are plenty of veiled women moving up and down the streets of Cairo—forbidden out of her family to associate with any but her own sex—you can think what the mother in an Egyptian household must be. Marriage is a mere thing of parental arrangement, the young man and woman only see each other once, and that on a visit of the former to the house of the latter, when the destined bride must hand coffee round. Of course this means a vast amount of domestic misery, which is not alleviated by the system of polygamy and the law of divorce which the Koran teaches. A husband can divorce his wife, *e.g.*, with a mere word spoken in the heat of passion; twice over, indeed, he can take her back as easily as he puts her away; but after the third time the re-union can only be effected in the most degrading way. Nor are the "horrid cruelties" of false religions unknown. At one of the festivals, for example, it is the practice of the deluded people to lay themselves down side by side in long array till they form a pathway of human backs, over which a saint in professed ecstasy rides on horseback, grievously mutilating many of the poor creatures. Nor is there need of force to get the victims, there is, I am told, a perfect frenzy of eagerness to have the honour of being thus trampled on by the holy rider. The moral results, as a whole, are such as you might expect. The Egyptians are a morally degraded people.

HOPEFUL SIDE OF MAHOMETANISM.

And yet there is another side. Since I came to Cairo I have read the Life of Mahomet by Sir W. Muir—it is a long and full and fair account of that remark-