

But the rapid expansion of the Caliphate exhausted the native population and led to political divisions. Hence its glory was but transient. It contained the germs of its own dissolution, and those soon began to develop. It was like some gorgeous flower which rapidly expands, soon ripens, and as swiftly withers away; or like the fair and fragile maidens of the East, who reach a splendid though precocious maturity, but soon fade.

It is the story of this rise, decline and fall that Sir William Muir, one of the greatest living authorities on the subject, has undertaken in this goodly volume to tell. His previous works on "The Annals of the Early Caliphate," and his exhaustive "Life of Mahomet," demonstrated his conspicuous ability for continuing the story down to the fall of the Caliphate. The story has a two-fold interest to all English-speaking people. For many hundreds of years Moslemism was one of the dominant forces of the world. In the Litany of many of the Churches of Christendom was inscribed the prayer, "From the fury of the Turks, O Lord, deliver us." In the office for Good Friday, in the Church of England, is a special petition for the conversion of the Turks as well as of Jews, heretics, and infidels. This baneful superstition has extinguished the light of Christianity in many lands where it once shone. Two hundred million followers of the false prophet still maintain the doctrines and practices of Islam. The largest university in the world is the great Mahometan university of Cairo, where 14,000 students are trained to become missionaries of the religion of the crescent. Of special interest to British people is the subject of this volume, because Queen Victoria reigns over a larger Moslem population than any other sovereign in the world.

A blight like the breath of the simoom seems to follow the govern-

ment of the Turk. Great cities, once renowned as marts of trade throughout the world, now are a solitude. Where was once the highway of the nations, the tinkling bell of the armed and wandering caravan is now the only indication of life midst this universal death.

For the intelligent study of the rise and fall of the Caliphate, Sir William Muir's book is indispensable. His conclusions seem to us of judicial fairness and candour. He notes the immobile and stationary character of Islam. "Swathe" in the bands of the Koran," he says, "the Moslem faith, unlike the Christian, is powerless to adapt itself to varying time and place, keep pace with the march of humanity, direct and purify the social life, or elevate mankind. Freedom, in the proper sense of the word, is unknown, and this, apparently, because in the body politic the spiritual and the secular are hopelessly confounded."

"Nor," he adds, "has there been any change in the condition of social life. Polygamy and servile concubinage are still the curse and blight of Islam. Hardly less evil is the one-sided power of divorce—at the mere word and will of the husband. Hanging over every household, like the sword of Damocles, it must affect the tone of society at large; for, even if seldom put in force, it cannot fail, as a potential influence, to weaken the marriage bond and lower the dignity and self-respect of woman."

The absence of intemperance, he admits, is a spectacle in Moslem lands to be commended. While Islam may make some progress among the barbarous tribes of Central Africa, and probably by substituting the worship of one god for the idolatry and fetish worship of the pagan tribes, it may prove a preparation for a purer and more spiritual religion, yet it is itself doomed to decay and pass away. It lacks the great moral antiseptic which is found alone in the religion of the Cross.

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FOLKS never understand the folks they hate.