

THE CRESCENT AND THE CROSS.

The Moslem religion is not only not dead, but it was never more alive than to-day. When the old Moors were driven out of Spain, and especially when England forced the Sublime Porte, by conquering India, to so form his policy as to suit Russia, it was thought by the Christian world that the reign of the false Prophet was over; but never in the history of Islamism was it more alive and aggressive than the present time. It has always been an aggressive religion. Its instincts force it to the front. With flashing sabre and confident speech it has sought conquest, and gained it, in almost every portion of the Eastern world. And its progress now, in many directions, was never more marked and rapid.

To those who have not given this subject careful examination, the facts in the case will hardly be credited. To the ignorant and credulous Moslem these modern achievements of the false Prophet will be ascribed to miraculous power, while they may stagger the faith of those who have believed the victory of the Cross was near at hand; but the facts should be carefully studied by all who would know what is taking place under the influence of all religions.

We gather the following facts from a paper recently published by Dr. Dolinger of anti-infallibility fame, and they may be relied on with implicit confidence. He says that whole tribes in Africa have become devout Mohammedan worshippers, abandoning their fetish worship for that of the god of Mahomet. A Moslem university, containing one thousand young men, is in full and successful operation at Sierra Leone. These young men are being trained for teachers, preachers and propagandists of the old Mohammedan faith, and are devoted body and soul to that religion, as much so as are the missionaries of the Cross to Christ, in all portions of the world. In the olden time the soldiers of the Crescent counted it a joy to die in its defence, and these young men and many others are said to be not one whit behind those who have gone before them in zeal and self-sacrificing labour.

In China also, the old religion is making most wonderful progress. In Tongin alone 50,000 have enlisted under the Crescent while it is computed that no less than 18,000,000 have been won to the same faith among the Malaysians and in the islands of the Archipelago. These are all recent converts, while one-fifth of all the inhabitants of the earth, 50,000,000 of whom are subjects of Queen Victoria, believe in the false Prophet. These are wonderful religious achievements, which prove that Islamism is still in the ascendant.

Mohammedanism is a religion of progress, and every Mohammedan is a missionary to a far larger extent than are the members of our Protestant churches. The Mohammedan may be formal in his devotional services, but his convictions enwrap him. There are no sceptics or doubters in their faith. They believe with all the heart. Their religion is in their blood. It is a part of their existence. They fight as well as pray. The teachings of the Prophet make it obligatory on all his followers to draw the sword in favour of their religion.

"And fight," says the Koran, the Bible of the Mohammedans, "for the religion of God against those who fight against you. And kill them wherever you find them, and turn them out of that wherein they have despised you, for temptation to idolatry is more grievous than slaughter." And these demands are met with joy. No Mohammedan hesitates to follow where the Prophet leads. His convictions are clear-cut and stronger than his love of life. He believes in fate. What is to be will be. Every thing has been ordained from the beginning. God rules over all and directs every minute fact of life. The followers of the Prophet live and die only by the direct fiat of the Merciful. It is for these reasons, he fears nothing, but rushes into the jaws of death with a shout and with grand hymns.

His religion, to him, is divine. He believes in one living and true God. The first sentence of the Koran is, "Peace be to God, the Lord of all creation, the most merciful, the King of the day of judgment. Thee do we worship, and of Thee do we beg assistance." They divide their religion into faith or theory, and religion or practice. While the Prophet called prayer the pillar of religion—"the key of Paradise"—declaring also, "that there can be no good in that religion where is no prayer." And to-day the millions of the followers of the Prophet pray, morning, noon and night, with their faces turned toward Mecca.

The Koran is also full of commands to give alms. They are called justice or righteousness, and one of the successors of Mahomet said, "Prayer carries us half way to God, fasting brings us to the door of the Palace, and alms gives us admittance." In reference to fasting, the Prophet said it was "the gate of Heaven, and that the odour of the mouth of him who fasteth is more grateful to God than that of musk."

The laws of Islam are founded on justice, and are equitable. And the time was when their schools were equal to the best in any part of Europe, and were sought by young men for their superior educational advantages. It is also true that the revival of learning and even the Reformation may be traced, to some extent at least, to these schools.

With these facts before us, and knowing that every Mahommedan is as susceptible to the influence of the memories, traditions and records of the past

as we are, we are warranted in saying that the Crescent will not be easily conquered by any power. The Cross will yet triumph in all the earth, but its victory over the religion of the false Prophet will not be easily gained. The Mohammedan has a grand and glorious past behind him, with bright hopes before him. He is in earnest. He is fierce also in his conviction and in the assertion of his belief, alive in every nerve and in every drop of his blood. He believes down to the lowest depth of his soul. Nor will his religion grow old. If it shows no sign of decay after the centuries of its existence, we have a right to say it will not rot down and be blown away. It may be overcome, and will be, by the superior light of the Cross as the darkness is scattered when the sun rises, but not overthrown.

The contest between the Crescent and the Cross will not be settled with the sword, but by the truth. These two religions will meet in time, face to face, and each be tested on its merits. The one that best meets the wants of humanity and of human nature will be victorious. It is what a religion can do to make the world better—make the people more honest, kind, humane, and brotherly—that will decide in regard to its existence. The true God will not, as did Mahomet, depend on the sword for success, but on the simple, unadorned truth. That is divine and will triumph. It will grow into victory. Mohammedanism is a grand success as a creed, as a religious system, as a sect, but it has no power to develop true manhood. It can win grand victories for Mahomet, but none for Christ, or that religion whose aim and tendency is to make man as perfect as is his Father in Heaven. The religion of the Prophet is narrow, bigoted, positive, savage and strong; that of Christ is broad, gentle, loving, forgiving, and with no less force and power. The former wins by muscular, the latter by moral force. The one clubs men into the kingdom, the other obtains its grand victories by growth.—*Rev. C. B. Smith, D.D.*

ADVICE.

It has been my experience thus far in life to have received an amount of advice which has been of such proportions, that, if all of it had been acted upon, I should have exercised no independence whatever of act or mind. There seems to exist in the thoughts of nearly everyone who may happen to be a few years older than their companion, an inherent tendency to advise. The conversation sometimes begins by the statement that "an old head cannot be put on young shoulders, and it is better thus," and immediately a frantic effort is made to effect this impossibility, while a complacent tone of superiority is assumed, so that the younger person may feel his insignificance, and bring his mind into a proper state of deference for receiving it; or sometimes, as I have seen it plainly stated, "the first thing for a young man to learn is, that he does not know anything"; in other words, that he is a fool. Now, as a young man, I wish to enter my protest against the statement that a young man does not know anything, and also wish to protest against the assumption of superiority made by a great many advisers. In the first place, I hold that all young men know something (some think they know more than they do); they know they have hope, courage, health and zeal, and why should cold water be thrown upon these attributes? Oh! but he is too hopeful, too zealous. Can there be too much of a good quality? The danger is *always* the other way; there is never enough. He is too hopeful, and the kind adviser wishes to save him from disappointment and loss. Is this experience gained by another's experience of any real benefit as regards forming qualities of mind? I may wish to do a certain thing, and my adviser may say, "I know better than you, it is not advisable." Can it be said that I have gained any experience by this? His advice may be wrong, as he is but human, and then I weaken my own determination of character in learning to depend upon the advice of others. In fact, if we scan the lives of those men who have been successful in life, we shall find that they are the very ones who have been independent of aid or advice from others and have held to their own plans. Rochefoucauld has said that we enjoy a secret satisfaction in the misfortunes of others, and I have thought that this applied to advisers, as they seem to gloat over your failure if you have followed your own plans in preference to their advice, and greet you with "What did I tell you? I told you so," &c. They seem to forget that if you had followed their advice, you would perhaps have failed. The assumption of superiority by these kind friends is sometimes very amusing, to say the least of it. Some of them actually presume to advise when their own lives have been, and still are, miserable failures; and they say that through want of advice when young they have not succeeded, the truth of the matter being, that if they had been blessed with advisers they would have been still worse failures, and would have blamed their advisers as they now do the lack of them. It is only those who are unsuccessful in everything else that succeed well as advisers. I have written these few lines as an expression of some of my thoughts upon this subject, and have often heard young men say "I wish they would keep their advice to themselves; what use is it to a man when he is down? *help him up first.*" What I desire to say in closing is this: When you wish to advise a young man, do not treat him as if he knew nothing, or as if you had learnt everything; and if he is in trouble, give him a little help first.

Marih.