

CHILDREN OF PERSIA



MRS. NAPIER MALCOLM

CHILDREN OF PERSIA

Uniform with this Volume

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PERSIAN SHEPHERD BOY

CHILDREN OF PERSIA

BY

MRS NAPIER MALCOLM



WITH EIGHT COLOURED ILLUSTRATIONS

EDINBURGH AND LONDON
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MY DEAR BOYS AND GIRLS,

This is a book about Persia, intended to be read by children; and, on this account, much has had to be left out. Do not think, when you have read this book, that you know how bad Muhammadanism is, for a great deal of its sin and cruelty is too terrible to tell to young folks. But I hope enough has been said to show you that Persian children do need to be rescued from Muhammadanism and brought to the Lord Jesus Christ to be His children. He needs them and they need Him. So for His sake and theirs we must do all we can to win the Persians for Christ.

I am,

Your sincere friend,

U. MALCOLM.

BROUGHTON, MANCHESTER, 1911.

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CHILDREN OF PERSIA

CHAPTER I

MUHAMMAD

BEFORE we look at the Persian children of to-day, let us go back nearly thirteen and a half centuries to the year of our Lord 570, and take a look at two adjoining countries in Europe and two adjoining countries in Asia.

In Western Scotland, St Columb is teaching the people Christianity, and is writing out copy after copy of the Bible, until tradition tells that he copied it out three hundred times.

In England the heathen Saxons are conquering the Midlands and crushing out the Christianity of the Britons.

In Persia there is a Christian Church, but most of the people are Zoroastrians, that is, they belong to the Parsee religion. They worship God and believe in a prophet called Zoroaster, who lived long before the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, and so knew nothing about Him. He seems to have taught his people much that was very good, but their religion has become full of superstitions.

Lastly, we must go to Arabia, where a Muhammadan legend describes a curious scene.

A number of Arab women are riding into the town of Mecca. Their animals are weary and very thin and weak, for it is a year of famine. Last of all comes a woman with a crying baby, riding on the thinnest and most miserable looking donkey of all the company. They are nurses from the healthiest part of Arabia, come to find children to take home and nurse, each hoping to get the child of a wealthy man, who will pay her well, and give her handsome presents.

They are not long kept waiting. The babies are brought out, and questioning and bargaining begin. One baby is not popular—the whisper goes round that it is an orphan—there is no father to give presents—the grandfather who is looking for a nurse will surely not do much for it. And so one after another all the women refuse the baby, and the old man begins to despair of success. All the women have found nurslings except one, the woman who rode in last. She, too, has refused the orphan, but now, seeing no hope of a better bargain, rather than have taken her journey for nothing, she tells the old man she has changed her mind, and carries the baby home. And the story runs that the thin weak donkey that could hardly drag itself along as it entered Mecca, ran along so nimbly on the way home that the rest could scarcely keep up with it.

The orphan baby was Muhammad, the founder of the religion called after him Muhammadanism. Some of the details of this story (told by a Muhammadan writer) are probably quite untrue. Little Muhammad's grandfather was known to be very rich

and in a very high position, and if the baby was refused it was probably because he was a sickly child, and would be difficult to rear. However, in due course he grew bigger, and came home to his mother, and after her death lived with his old grandfather, who thought all the world of him.

Mecca was an interesting town to live in, for once a year pilgrims from all parts of Arabia came to the great idol temple, and little Muhammad would see all there was to be seen, for his grandfather kept the keys and superintended everything.

When his grandfather died he went to live with his uncle, who used to take him on business journeys, going through the wide deserts to distant towns with long strings of camels loaded with goods to sell. So the boy grew up a good man of business and saw much of foreign countries and something of foreign religions, Christianity, Judaism, and Parsiism, and he grew discontented with his own country and his own religion.

All the great peoples round worshipped one God. Surely Arabia would be a better and greater country if it did the same. All the great religions had a prophet and a book. The Christians had Jesus Christ and the Gospel, the Jews had Moses and the Law, even the Parsees had Zoroaster and his book the Zend Avesta. Surely what the Arabs needed was a prophet and a book.

Muhammad was not the only person who thought this. There was a group of people, several of whom were relations of him or of his wife, who shared this view. Some of them thought that Moses and the Law would be best for Arabia ; but many of them saw that

Jesus Christ and the Gospel were what they needed, and most of these in the end became Christians. If Muhammad had joined them, the history of the world from then to now might have been very different. But Muhammad had set his heart on an Arabian prophet and an Arabian book, and the more he thought of it the more sure he felt that this was the real way to unity and greatness for Arabia.

He himself belonged to the family which took the lead in religious matters in Arabia, he had always been made much of, and told he would be a great man ; he used to have fits which seemed to him and to others to mark him out as something out of the common ; so it is not surprising that he at last came to believe that he was to be the new Arabian prophet who seemed to him to be so badly wanted. His fits began to take the form of visions, and he believed that the words of the longed for book were being revealed to him.

But it was a long time before he came forward publicly, and when he did he was a good deal laughed at, and only a few became his followers. Then he got an invitation to the town of Medina, where he had a number of cousins. The people of Medina were very jealous of Mecca, and all, whether they believed in him or not, joined in giving Muhammad a great welcome.

It was in Medina that Muhammad really founded his religion, and there he became a very great man. But sad to say, as his religion developed all its bad points came out, and Muhammad became a very cruel tyrant and very self-indulgent, excusing himself by saying that God allowed him, because he was a

prophet, to do things which were sinful when other people did them.

The people who joined Muhammad's religion were called Muhammadans or Muslims, and they went everywhere making as many converts as they could, by fair means or foul. They had learnt that there was one God, but they knew nothing of the Bible; they only knew the Quran, the book which Muhammad was revealing, and they knew nothing of the example of Jesus Christ: their only example was Muhammad, who was a murderer.

You may wonder what all this has to do with Persian children. One of the first countries conquered by the Muhammadans was Persia—and the Persian children to-day are themselves Muhammadans.

CHAPTER II

PERSIA

THERE is a story that when the Muhammadans took Persia and killed the Parsee king Yazdigird, their *Khalif* 'Omar asked Yazdigird's son where he would like to live. He said he would like to settle in Persia out of reach of any cultivated spot. 'Omar accordingly sent him off with an escort of soldiers to find a suitable place. After three years he returned and said he could not find any place such as he had asked for. 'Omar saw that he was doing all this with some purpose, and asked him what it was. Yazdigird's son answered that he wanted to show 'Omar how prosperous

and well cultivated the land had become in the hands of the Parsees, and begged him to see to it that it remained so under the Muhammadans.

But it did not, and to-day a great deal of Persia has relapsed into desert.

In our country all is green, and stones have to be put up to show where one village ends and the next begins. In most parts of Persia you may look over the plain and see the villages quite distinct—each a little green blot on a vast sheet of sand or dry earth.

The very fruitfulness of the ground makes it less green than it would otherwise have to be to support the population, for when three crops can be got off the same piece of land in one year, only a third of the amount of land that you would expect to be needed to support the village is under cultivation.

The villages vary very much. Some count their population by hundreds, while one village, marked on the map, contains just two families, seven persons in all, including two children. Their nearest neighbours live six miles off, over the sand.

How bare the world must appear to those two little children. Children here who live in the country can hardly imagine any boundary to the wonderful green tangle that they can see on every side of them. And children who live in towns look out every day upon wonderful human works, which, although they are not as marvellous as God's country, yet puzzle them very much as to how they were ever made. With a Persian child it is quite different. In many places the children do not know what wild growth

is, and if you talk of continuous country, hundred miles after hundred miles of field and wood and meadow, they think you are telling an impossible fairy tale. While as for the little town children, the buildings which they see all round them made of sun-dried bricks and earth, the barrels and the thousand and one household utensils formed of exactly the same material, or perhaps of clay very roughly baked in a primitive kiln, seem to them hardly more artificial and man-made than the corn in the walled gardens outside the city, which they see watered twice a week.

They have a very different life from you and me.

Little Ahmad was a sturdy, jolly little lad of four when I knew him, and, though he ought to have known better, he used to call after me (if his parents were out of hearing) the rhyme so familiar to Europeans in Persia—

*Ferangi,
Chi rang-i,
Palang-i,*

which, translated into English, means—

European,
What colour art thou ?
Thou art a leopard.

He lived in a really beautiful house, built of sun-dried bricks and clay, and whitened inside with a smooth coat of plaster of Paris.

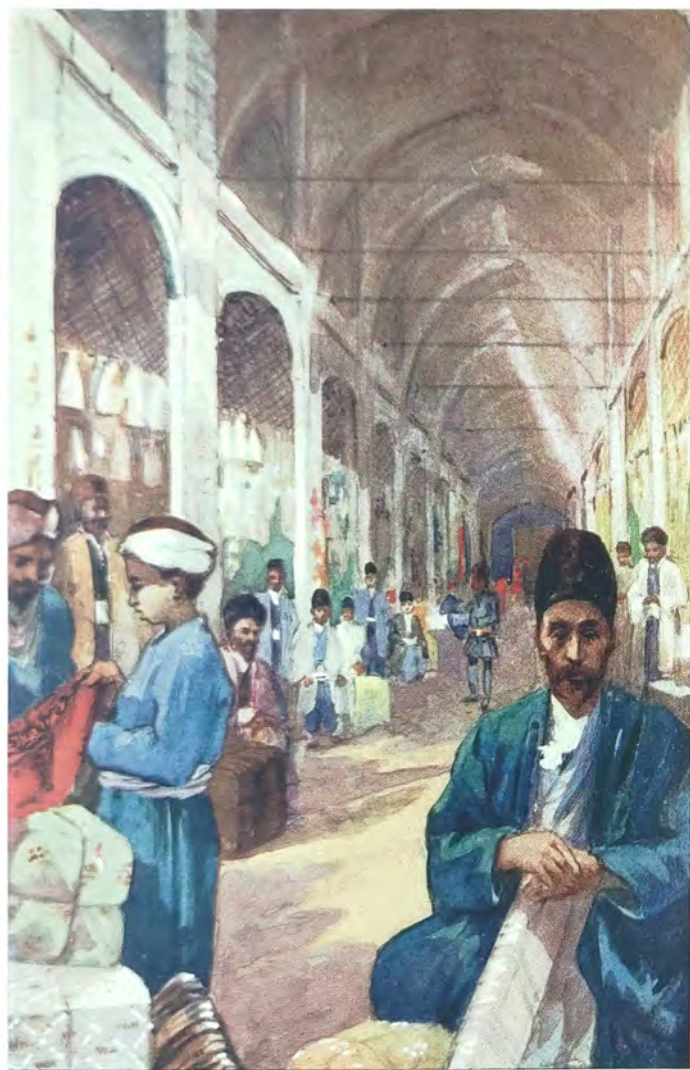
The rooms were large and very nicely furnished with beautiful Persian carpets, and a mattress and pillows of gay designs, and Ahmad, little rascal though he was, would never have dreamed of treading on those carpets

with his shoes on ; all shoes were left at the door. One small table for the tea-urn completed the furniture. And upstairs ? Upstairs was the roof, such a lovely large flat roof, Ahmad loved it, and he often terrified his mother by the way he leaned over the low wall to look down at the street, for the house had no window looking to the road. All the windows looked into the garden, which might be said to be in the middle of the house, for the rooms were built round it. The windows, too, were all doors ; some of the rooms had as many as five double doors all in a row, and when they were all open the room was very airy and bright.

There was no grass, and no gravel path for Ahmad to play on, but there was a nice wide brick-paved walk all round the garden, which gave him plenty of room. In the centre were the beds, which were watered by turning a stream in and flooding them once a week. There were watering cans, but they were only used for watering the path and roof, and even the rooms, to keep them cool, not for the flower beds. There was a large tank, too, in the garden with gold fish in it, where Ahmad loved to cool his feet on a hot day, and the days can be hot in Persia.

When it was dinner-time in Ahmad's home a cloth was spread on the floor, and he sat on his heels beside it, and had a loaf of bread for a plate. It was flat and round, and about as thick as a plate, so it did very well. But he had no spoon or fork.

One of the things he liked best was rice, and when his mother put a few handfuls on his bread he would eat it quickly and tidily with one hand, without spilling any, which is not as easy as it sounds.



A STREET OF SHOPS

Sometimes Ahmad went out for a walk in the town with his father, or with his mother and a servant, and he passed along streets that had not any names, and by houses that had not any names or numbers. There was no pavement except sometimes a narrow strip in the middle of the road for the mules and donkeys. There were no gardens in front of the houses, there were no windows facing the road, all he saw was a sandy road with a high mud wall on each side, and a heavy wooden door here and there, the front door of a house.

Sometimes they came to a "*bāzār*" or street of shops. Here the street was covered over with a mud roof so that goods and sellers and purchasers might keep cool in hot weather and dry in wet weather. He did not need to go into the shops, for the counters were all along the street and there were no windows.

When the summer was getting very hot, it was decided that Ahmad and all his family should go for a summer holiday to a village in the hills.

What a packing up there was ! They packed the carpets, they packed the beds, they packed the kettles and saucepans. Then a number of mules were brought to the door and such a shouting and bustle began as the loads were roped together, two and two, and slung across the big padded pack-saddles. One mule carried two great covered panniers and these were filled with cushions, and Ahmad's great-grandmother got into one, and his mother got into the other to balance her, and they pulled the curtains well over the front, so that no one might see them. Ahmad himself sat in front of a servant who held him safe, and some of the

bedding made a nice broad soft seat for them on the mule's back. At last all the mules were ready with their loads and off they set through the streets, and soon they found themselves outside the town, going mile after mile across the bare desert plain. This went on for fifteen miles and then they reached a large village at the foot of the hills. They had been riding five hours and were tired and hungry, so they dismounted at the *caravansarai* or inn. One of the servants took a carpet off one of the loads and got a cloth and some food wrapped up in a large handkerchief out of the saddlebags and spread a meal on the ground, while another got the tea-urn and charcoal, boiled the water and made the tea. After a few hours' rest on the roof, the shouting and loading began again and off they went, up the hill, which was terribly steep in some places. Now they saw scattered and stunted plants growing here and there, and finally, after another seven hours, they reached their summer holiday quarters in a little hill village.

How Ahmad enjoyed the hills and fields and trees, the flowers and birds and butterflies. A little brook ran down the valley and on either side were cornfields and orchards and gardens, as many as the brook could provide water for. And at night Ahmad would hear the shouting, as 'Ali Muhammad declared that Husain had had his fair share of water and now it was his turn to have it for his orchard. For water is very precious in Persia, and must be made the greatest possible use of, day and night alike.

But the little children who live in the village are

not so fortunate as little Ahmad. They work all the summer at gardening, shepherding, and other work ; but in winter they have to stay in, and they live upstairs and their sheep and goats downstairs. But the stairs are outside and sometimes it is too cold for them even to go down to feed the animals. If they can they make a little fire of sticks in the oven, which is only a deep, round hole in the floor, and when the flame has died down they sit round with their legs hanging into the oven and cover over the opening to keep it warm as long as possible. One very severe winter there was a report current in the town that in this village the water was all frozen and that the animals were dying because there was not enough fuel to melt the ice and give them water. The poor children must have had a very hard time that winter.

Even in the town Ahmad is one of the fortunate children. Little Soghra had a very different home. She lived with her grandmother in a single small room. The floor was mud, covered in one place by a small ragged piece of coarse matting. On this the grandmother lay, for she was old and ill. The bed-clothes were filthy and torn. One side of the room was filled with a pile of pomegranate skins, which are used for making dye, and there were several fowls wandering about. There was no furniture, nothing but a few old pots and cups and a waterbottle. And yet Soghra was a cheery little girl, and she and her grandmother were very fond of each other.

CHAPTER III

PERSIAN BABIES

A PERSIAN baby—what a funny little mortal! It looks for all the world like a little mummy, rolled up in handkerchiefs and shawls till only its little face peeps out, and tied up with a long strip of braid exactly like a parcel tied up with string. Hasn't it got any arms and legs? Oh, yes, safely put away inside all those wrappings and put away carefully too—straightened out and rolled up so thoroughly that it will stand up stiff and straight against the wall though it is only a week old.

How surprised and shocked the Persian mothers are to see the English babies kicking and throwing their arms about. "O Khanum, aren't you afraid its limbs will grow crooked? Why don't you bind them straight? Aren't you afraid its legs will get broken if you leave them loose like that?"

So at its very start on life's journey the poor little Persian baby is checked and prevented from growing up properly; for how can its little legs grow strong without kicking? It is no wonder that Persian babies as a rule learn to walk much later than English babies.

But perhaps the Persians are not quite so foolish as they seem when they roll their babies up in these stiff little bundles. Very likely the little arms and legs *would* be broken or bent if they were left loose, for many of the Persian mothers are very young—much too young to know how to look after babies.

They often treat them like dolls and would very likely break them just as English girls break their dolls.

Even the grown-up mothers are often very careless. One woman I knew laid her baby, not quite a year old, on a chair, and left it there. Of course it fell off—it was sure to; and yet she did this over and over again, and a few days later dropped it into a stream of water. She was very much surprised that it began to have fits at this time, and she said she could think of nothing to account for them.

A new missionary, who did not know the ways of Persians, went one day to see another woman and found her in bed, that is, lying on a mattress on the floor under a large quilt. Her friends invited the missionary to sit on the quilt beside her, for they do not use chairs in most Persian houses. After she had sat for some time she enquired for the baby. They pointed to a little lump in the quilt, and there, close beside her, entirely covered up and invisible, was the baby, and it gave the poor missionary a terrible shock to see how near she had been to sitting down upon it. After that, she always asked to see the baby before she sat down.

A baby less than a week old was brought one day to the Julfa hospital with its face badly torn by a cat. A few days later the doctor went into the ward and found the mother smoking and gossiping with the other women, but the baby was nowhere to be seen. "Where is the baby?" "It is all right," said the mother; "I put it *under the bed*." And sure enough, a little

way off, under a bed (this time an English bed) lay the poor little bundle, its arms bound to its sides, only its little face exposed, or rather half-exposed, for the torn half was covered with a dressing, while close at hand there prowled in search of food a large half-wild cat, which frequented the hospital and had slipped in at an open door.*

When they get a little older the babies are laid in broad comfortable leather hammocks slung between rings let into the walls of the room. Most Persian rooms have these rings in the walls. These hammocks save the Persian mothers a great deal of trouble, for a single push will set the hammock swinging for a long time and keep the baby quiet or send it to sleep.

No baby may be left alone in a room till it is forty days old.

From the very first the baby is given *kaiḥ* every-day, that is, something to make it sleep; this *kaiḥ* is almost invariably opium. After the first week most babies are also given tea every day, without milk but with a great deal of sugar in it, or better still sugar-candy. This is considered specially good for babies, but it takes a long time to dissolve. Both opium and tea are very bad for the baby's digestion, so we are not surprised to find that nearly all Persians suffer from indigestion.

There is one Persian custom connected with babies that boys and girls of other lands would probably like

* For the credit of the hospital authorities it must be stated that they were making every effort to destroy the cat, but had hitherto failed owing to its wildness and cunning.



A BABY IN HAMMOCK

to introduce into their own country. The newly-arrived baby is weighed and its weight in sweets is handed round to the people in the house, and it is supposed to bring bad luck to the baby if anyone refuses its sweets. Plenty of people always drop in when they hear that a new baby has arrived.

Another Persian rule for babies would not please your mothers at all. After the first bath no baby must be washed all over till it is a year old. One Persian lady, who was better educated than most, and had been reading about European ideas on health and cleanliness, told the missionaries that she was bringing up her little boy just like a European baby. She said she gave him a bath every day and generally let him kick instead of tying his legs up to make them straight. She was delighted and triumphant when, instead of getting crooked, his legs grew so strong that he walked at about half the usual age. But when he was nearly a year old his body became covered with sores and the missionary doctor told the mother to wash them not with ordinary water in the bath, but with a lotion. "I should never think of washing them in the bath," she said. "His body must not be washed till he is a year old." But I thought," said the doctor, "that you gave him a bath every day." "Oh dear no," she replied; "I don't wash his *body*. It is his *legs* that I wash every day."

When a Persian baby learns to talk it begins just like any other baby, so that the Persians declared with great glee that the English babies were talking Persian when they said "Baba" and "Dada." But

instead of "Daddy" and "Mummy" Persian babies call their father and mother *Bābā* and *Nana*.

When the baby is shown to anyone the mother generally remarks that it is an ugly little thing, and similarly the visitors are expected to say how ugly and dark it is, though there is no need to say it with any great conviction. It is possible to say "How ugly you are" just as affectionately as "You little darling." But such uncomplimentary remarks are used to avert bad luck and to guard against any suspicion of the evil eye. If the visitor makes any complimentary remark she must add "*Māshā'allāh*" (*i.e.* "May God avert it"), or the parents will be seriously alarmed, and Baby's admirer may be held responsible for any calamity which befalls him for weeks afterwards.

Bibi Fati was the mother of four dear little children, Rubabeh, Hasan, Riza, and Sakineh, and very dearly she loved them. One day they were all gathered together for dinner when in walked a poor old beggar woman in search of a meal. She was very anxious to please the mother, and looking round at the children said: "What a nice little family you have; you are like a hen surrounded by her chickens."

Poor Bibi Fati did not feel at all comfortable at such a complimentary speech and quickly gave the old woman some food and sent her about her business.

For a day or two all went well. Then one after another Rubabeh, Hasan, Riza, and even little Sakineh sickened and died, probably of some infectious disease, and the poor mother was left childless and heartbroken. Nothing would convince her and her

neighbours that the old beggar woman had not caused the catastrophe by her admiration.

Baby girls do not get such a good welcome as baby boys. When little Ferangīz Khānum was born, her father was staying at a garden a few miles away, and no one troubled to send him word. "I would have sent a message if it had been a boy," said the mother, "but it is not worth while for a girl. It will do when he comes home next week."

Persian fathers and mothers are often very fond of their little girls, but there is no doubt that they very much prefer boys. The father and mother, but especially the mother, are often known by the name of their son, so much so that sometimes the neighbours know them by no other name than "the father of Hasan," the "mother of 'Ali."

Perhaps one reason for preferring boys is that the girls marry so young, just as they might begin to be of some use to their mothers; and the father has to pay a sum of money to his daughter's husband on her marriage. A son, on the other hand, does not generally marry till he is grown up, and then he almost invariably brings his little wife home and continues to live with his parents.

A greater reason is that the Persians are Muham-madans, as you have already heard, and in a Muham-madan country the men are allowed to treat the girls and women very badly, and parents who care at all for their girls must always feel great anxiety as to their future.

We shall never get the Persians to treat their girls

and women much better till we teach them the religion of our loving Saviour, Who cares for us all equally and wants us to be equally kind to one another.

CHAPTER IV

PERSIAN CLOTHES

PERSIAN boys and girls are white, almost as white as ourselves, though they generally have black hair and dark eyes. The chief difference in appearance between Tommy Jones and 'Ali Muhammad is that Tommy wears trousers while 'Ali Muhammad appears to wear a skirt. Tommy's sister on the other hand wears a skirt, and 'Ali Muhammad's sister wears trousers.

The fact is that if 'Ali Muhammad is a poor boy, his trousers are short and so very wide as to be practically a divided skirt. Indeed they catch like a skirt in running, so that if he wants to go fast he pulls one trouser-leg up out of the way. If he wears a coat at all, it is a long cotton one, or more probably two long cotton ones, reaching nearly to his knees and adding to the skirt-like appearance.

The sons of well-to-do men often wear frock coats with the skirts pleated all round almost like a kilt, so that in spite of their longer and narrower trousers they still have a look of wearing skirts.

'Ali Muhammad's girdle too, which binds his coats to him and prevents their blowing about in the wind, is more suggestive of a sash than a belt. I once saw a little boy putting on his girdle on New Year's Day.



LADIES' OUT-DOOR AND IN-DOOR COSTUMES

It was a long folded scarf or *shāl* and he put one end round his waist while his brother took the other to the far end of the long room and drew it tight. Then my little friend turned round and round, so winding his *shāl* round him, gradually moving up the room as the length grew less, and he finished by tucking in the end. But whether they wear long trousers or short ones, wide trousers or narrow ones, the boys all fasten them by drawing them up with a string round the hips—braces are not the fashion.

As we have found that, in spite of appearances, 'Ali Muhammad after all wears trousers, we may perhaps find that his sister, Rubabeh, wears a skirt, and so indeed she does, but it is so short as not to be very noticeable indoors, while out of doors it is completely hidden by the big baggy over-trousers, gathered in at the ankles and footed, which she wears when she goes in the street. An English missionary once suggested to a young woman that a skirt reaching to the knees would look better, but she said she was not an old woman yet. The old women generally wear quiet colours and long skirts, reaching down to the knee, but young women and girls like something more dressy. They like a nice bright-patterned skirt about a foot long, but wide enough to reach half across the room. This they draw up with a string over the white cotton trousers, and the short shirt hangs loose outside. The shirt is generally white but may be coloured, and a short coloured jacket is worn over it, varying from plain coarse cotton to velvet embroidered with gold and pearls.

The indoor *chādar*, or "prayer-*chādar*," is often of pretty print or muslin, and when Rubabeh puts on her clean white trousers, shirt and headkerchief, with a bright frill of skirt round the waist and a pretty jacket and *chādar*, she makes a very bright and effective picture. But when she goes out she must put on dark overtrousers which cover everything up to the waist, and over her head, in place of the pretty prayer *chādar*, she must throw a large black *chādar* which hangs over everything, while a long strip of white cotton hangs down in front of her face with drawn thread work in front of the eyes, so that she may be able to see without being seen.

So, unlike our streets, the Persian ones get their colour from the men and boys, while the women and girls supply the darker, duller element. Bright blue is the commonest colour for the men's coats, and green is not uncommon, while, at the New Year, pink, yellow, lilac and other colours make the streets very gay indeed.

The children are dressed just like their fathers and mothers, and are little imitation men and women. The little tots look so funny sometimes; tiny boys toddling about in long trousers, frockcoats, and grown-up hats, and wee girls, who cannot yet speak distinctly, in the long trousers, short skirts and *chādars* of the women.

It seems to suggest that no great distinction is made between children and grown-ups, and really there is not as much difference as we find at home. The children are taught to take life very seriously and are treated as little men and women before their time, and

so they have no time to grow up into proper men and women, and the result is that we find the children too grown-up and the grown-ups too childish.

You will find, roughly speaking, if you look at animals that the higher the animal, the longer its childhood lasts, because it has more growing up to do. Caterpillars and tadpoles look after themselves from the time of coming out of the egg, mice grow up in a few weeks, horses in a few years, and man takes longer to grow up than any animal.

Now Muhammad, the false prophet whom the Persians believe in and obey, had no such high standard to set before them, no such high ideal for them to grow up to, as our Lord Jesus Christ set before His followers and enables them to grow up to ; and so his religion provides only a short time for growing up, and stunts instead of assisting the growth both of individual Muhammadans and of Muhammadan nations.

But we must get back to our Persian children and their clothes. Their day-clothes we have seen ; what about their night-clothes ? They have none. They just take off their outer garments and lie down in the rest, and in the morning they just get up and put on their outer garments again. Sometimes they do not put off anything.

“ We are so tired,” said some ladies one New Year’s morning. “ With all our new clothes on we could not lie down, we should have crushed them, so we sat up all night.”

You wonder why they were so foolish as to put them

on on New Year's Eve in that case, instead of on the morning of the New Year itself. The reason is simple. A Persian only puts on new clothes after a bath, and a bath in Persia is not a mere matter of half an hour ; it takes half a day, and sometimes a whole one. Some of the richer people have baths in their own houses, but most people go to the public baths.

All Persian women and girls love a day at the bath, and will not shorten it if they can possibly help it. It is something like a Turkish bath, and there they meet their friends and sit about in steamy rooms, talking, laughing, gossiping. No wonder they look forward to it, for a Persian girl has a much more secluded and restricted life than girls in Europe and her intercourse with her friends is much less free. One girl of fifteen told me that except for her weekly visit to the bath she had only left her house once in a period of six months, and in her own house she received very few visitors, the calls of her English missionary friends being great events for the whole household.

At the bath they wash their hair, dye it with henna, and plait it up in a dozen or more long plaits which hang down their backs under the headkerchief and *chādar*, not to be undone again probably until the next visit to the bath. The henna is a reddish dye and though it does not show on black hair it turns fair or grey hair a carrotty red. The newcomer to Persia wonders to see so much red hair, till he finds that this is the explanation. But the boys and girls nearly all have black hair.

Boys have their heads shaved, though sometimes

a handful of hair is left over each ear, or a lock in the middle of the scalp. This shaving is probably the reason why Persian boys always keep on their caps or hats indoors and only take them off to sleep. Instead of taking off their caps, Persian boys, and girls too, take off their shoes when they come into a room, and this, together with the absence of chairs and tables explains how Persian carpets last a hundred years. They are actually more valuable after several years wear than when they were new.

Besides the hair, the fingernails, palms of the hands and soles of the feet must, by Muhammadan rules, be dyed with henna. The richer bathers have all these things done by the bath attendant, but the poorer ones do it all themselves, and the very poor often omit the henna, except on special occasions.

Just as no Persian likes to put on clean clothes without going to the bath, so he will not go to the bath without putting on clean clothes.

"Khanum, give me a new shirt," begged one old woman, displaying a ragged one she had on. "For want of one I have not been able to go to the bath since this was new."

But where there's a will there's a way, and some people who are too poor to have a change of clothes go to the bath, take off their clothes and wash them, and then wait in the bath till they are dry.

There is a large tank in which the people wash and a ceremonial washing requires a dip right under the water. The usual idea of changing the water is to take out canfuls to water the tiles round, and then fill

up the tank again with clean water, so simply adding a little clean water to the dirty.

During a cholera epidemic the Governor of a Persian town ordered that the bath water should be changed at least once a month. One cannot help wondering whether the monthly change was carried out as described above, and I am sure you would prefer the little village baths where there is often so small a tank that no one can get into it, and they ladle out the water and wash in basins.

The common use of the one tank, with the only partial changing of the water, and the general carelessness of infection, make the bath one of the greatest means of spreading disease.

The Muhammadan religion provides strict rules as to clothes and baths and washing. In the washings before prayers it even decides which hand and which side of the face shall be washed first. And all this the parents teach the children as carefully as, generally much more carefully than, such matters as truthfulness, honesty and kindness.

Here again we see Muhammad giving his people what we may call "nursery rules," treating them as children, while our Master expects us to grow up so that we can arrange these matters for ourselves.

As children we must live under detailed rules, but always with the object before us of growing up right. The very fact that the detailed rules of Muhammadanism are binding through life shows that the Muhammadan is not expected to grow up as we understand growing up.

CHAPTER V

PERSIAN GAMES AND TOYS

It is curious to go thousands of miles to Persia—to cross vast sandy deserts—and at last to find little skirted boys in the mudwalled streets playing tipcat just like their counterparts in our own cities. Hopscotch and duck-stone too are favourite games, and kites are very popular. The kites are large and square and fly very well, and the boys often fly them from the roofs, sending “ messages ” up the string just as our boys do. There is a regular game of “ wolf ” too, played almost exactly as it is in many parts of the world by English-speaking children. I am sorry to say that pitch and toss and gambling with cards are very common.

There is nothing like cricket and football, but in Yezd there is a kind of “ rounders ” which is played for a fortnight only at the New Year—the Persian New Year, that is, in March. Any evening during that fortnight if you go out into the desert just outside the town walls you will see a crowd of men and boys, some playing, some watching. And any day during that fortnight if you visit the women, some small boy will proudly show his *chaftar* or rounders stick. For a week or two afterwards an occasional *chaftar* may be seen but after that it is a puzzle where they disappear to, not one is to be seen till the next New Year.

The little girls in Persia, as everywhere else, depend

largely on dolls. The dolls are home made—rag-dolls without much shape, with the features worked in fine cross-stitch, and dressed of course, as Persians. Good European dolls are great treasures, even to the women, and I knew one rich lady who had eight very nice ones all for herself.

In Shiraz they make wooden horses for the children and little models of the *kajavehs* or covered panniers in which women and children often travel. In Yezd, where the workers in clay are cleverer than the carpenters, little model *kuzehs* or waterpots are commoner and clay money-boxes and nightingales. Roughly moulded and gaily painted clay animals and men too, are made in quantities—but only at the “ Festival of the Sacrifice ” when a camel is sacrificed. At the time of this festival there are stalls and shops in the bazaars full of clay toys and toy drums, but they cannot be got at any other time of year, and as clay animals are quickly broken they are only to be seen for a very short time. Among the toys may sometimes be seen a figure evidently copied from an Italian statuette of the Virgin and Child—copied by Muhammadans without any idea of what it represents. But when all is said the games and toys are very few in Persia, as compared with those you are accustomed to. Perhaps they are not so much needed there. The grown-ups are so childish that it is no great hardship to a child to practice grown-up ways instead of playing games of its own. There is so much in ordinary grown-up life that is really a very good substitute for a game—the elaborate greetings to be gone through

with each person in turn according to their importance, the tea served in tiny cups no bigger than a child's teaset, the sweet-eating, the pressing of roseheads into the visitor's hand, or the more elaborate arrangement of stiff sticks closely covered with roses, the presentation of tiny unripe first-fruits, of melon seeds or nuts ornamented with fluffy bits of silk, of oranges inlaid with velvet, all these would seem a very attractive game to a child. Perhaps they really prefer to join in the games their elders play in earnest rather than play their own in jest. The conversation too is seldom over their heads, but generally interests them as much as their parents. The entertainments of the elders are of a kind to suit the children too. What child does not enjoy the Fifth of November with its Guy Fawkes, its fireworks, and its bonfires? and the Persians, too, have their firework day, when they burn not Guy Fawkes, but 'Omar, the Muhammadan leader who conquered Persia. They do not burn him, because he conquered Persia, but because he was *Khalif* or head of the Muhammadans, and the Persians say that 'Ali, Muhammad's son-in-law, ought to have been *Khalif* and that 'Omar was a usurper. There are torchlight processions, in which 'Omar's effigy is carried, bonfires illuminations, and fireworks in plenty.

All the year round fireworks and illuminations are very popular, so much so that the main work of the Government Arsenals seems to be the manufacture of fireworks. Another very popular form of entertainment is the *ruzehkhānī*, or religious reading. It is considered a very pious act for a man to have a

ruzehkhānī in his house in the two months of Muharram, and his friends come in crowds and greatly prefer it to an ordinary party. Muharram is the time of mourning for Husain and Hasan, Muhammad's grandsons.

The courtyard is crowded with people sitting on the ground, and as the professional reader recites the story of the death of Husain and Hasan the people sway their bodies to and fro to the rhythm and gradually work up their excitement. Then they all begin to beat on their bare chests with the open hand and raise a wail that gradually grows in strength, till the wailing and the sound of the blows can be heard several streets off and the tears stream down their cheeks. It is very exciting, and grown-ups and children alike enjoy it thoroughly.

But *the* day of the year is the day of the death of Husain when the *nakhl* is carried and the great passion play of the death of Husain and Hasan is played.

This is a general holiday and all through the early part of the day, the villagers come trooping in to the towns. The streets are now full and processions pass along them carrying the *nakhls* from the squares outside the smaller mosques. In some towns, too, they carry *alams*, or long poles with a series of handkerchiefs tied to them. When the processions from two different quarters of the town meet there is generally a struggle, often ending in a free fight; so both *alams* and *nakhls* are now forbidden in some towns.

I only once met a procession myself, and then it most politely halted to allow me to pass comfortably.

The smaller processions being over, everyone crowds to the large squares to see the carrying of the great *nakhls* of the big mosques.

The *nakhls* are wooden frameworks carried on poles and hung on one side with looking-glasses, on the other with daggers. Those in the large squares are of immense weight. They are said on this day to be carried across the square by Fatimeh, Muhammad's daughter, but it is a work of great merit to help her, so as many as can possibly get within reach of the poles join in the work, and the *nakhl* moves across the square. But the afternoon is the best part when the great play of the death of Husain and Hasan is acted. Then, indeed, there is wailing and beating of breasts. "I enjoy it more than anything in the year," one lady told me.

One year there was a little boy dangerously ill with inflammation of the lungs when the great day came round. It was considered quite out of the question for any of the family to stay away from the play to nurse him, and being a boy he was not likely to obey the woman servant who was being left in charge of the house. "He would have been all over the roof trying to get a glimpse of the play," his mother said, "and probably would have fallen off, so we had to take him." So they took a mattress for him, and he lay and listened to the play from a gallery, and of course got up to watch the exciting parts. It very nearly killed him, but they seemed to feel they had taken the only reasonable course, and he eventually recovered.

CHAPTER VI

PERSIAN SWEETS

IN a Persian town there is a curious arrangement of the shops. All the shops where one kind of article is sold are generally grouped together in one street or *bāzār*. To buy shoes we go to the shoe bazaar, for cooking pots to the copper bazaar.

The copper or brass bazaar is almost always worth a visit in a Persian town. It is a long roofed-in street with a continuous row of small shops on either side. The "shop" consists of a lock-up room with a small mud platform in front of it, raised a foot or two above the street. On this platform are two or three stumps on which the pots are placed for hammering, for after being heated over a charcoal brazier they are hammered and beaten into the required shape, thickness and pattern. On nearly every platform is a man, sometimes two or three men and boys, hammering each on his copper pot and the noise produced by a hundred or more men hammering vigorously on copper vessels, which give different notes according to size, shape and thickness, is deafening, but not wholly disagreeable.*

But there is another bazaar well worth a visit in Yezd at anyrate. The shops here have counters rising in tiers, so as to display the very tempting goods to advantage. The goods themselves are chiefly laid out on huge round copper trays, about a yard across and

* This description is taken from the Shiraz copper bazaar.

very heavy, made in the bazaar we have just left, but whitened over, as all copper vessels are.

Surely we are in Fairyland at last. Shop after shop shows tier upon tier of the most delicious sweets in the most tempting profusion. Here is *pashmak*, looking like cotton wool and tasting something like butter creams. There are two or three kinds of almond toffee, or *sōn*—some with green pistachio nuts in it. Huge fondants, or *lōz*, in diamond-shaped cakes, nearly as large as the ordinary penny fancy cakes in England, alternate with similar cakes of green *pari-tā'ūs* (peacock's feathers), and brown *bāghalavā*, richer and stickier than either.

Those white *nuqls* are delicious burnt almonds, which seem to melt away in your mouth, the long ones have strips of cocoa-nut instead of almonds, and the little round ones burnt peas. Here are little flat round cakes of *gaz*, a kind of nougat only made in Isfahan, but sent to all the towns in Persia. One variety of *gaz* contains little sticks of a gum which is supposed to cure rheumatism, a very pleasant remedy.

There is a great bowl a foot across, and over an inch thick made wholly of sugar candy, which has taken the shape of the basin in which it crystallised, and in the middle of which three long sticks of sugar candy stand up high above the top. Such a bowl a kind Persian friend sent to a missionary's little boy, when he was a few days old, to provide him with "sugar-candy water," which is considered particularly good for young babies. These are only a few of the sweets, there are too many to mention all. Some kinds are

only made in the fast month of Ramazān, and others only at the New Year. The sweets are delicious but they are as a rule very simple and very sweet. So the Persians do not hand them round in little paper bags, nor even in pretty little boxes ; they pile them on plates and dishes, as we do cakes ; and, as you have seen, many of them are as large as cakes. When you go to visit a Persian, you have not tea and cakes, but tea and sweets. For a quiet call on quiet people, two or three plates of sweets are enough, but at a regular sweet-eating at a big house, one or two great trays will be set on the ground before the guests, each with five dishes of sweets on it, each dish holding about a pound and a half to two pounds of sweets. The Persian women are often very pressing with their sweets, even to the point of putting them into their visitors' mouths, and in their hospitality they sometimes over-estimate the size of the mouth. Often too, the guests are made to carry home what is left, or a part of it, tied up in a handkerchief. This is so common that where the European is shy of pressing the custom, the Persian ladies will sometimes carry home the remains of European dishes out of courtesy, to show that they have appreciated them. This custom probably exists and has existed in many Eastern countries, and may very likely be the reason why Joseph gave Benjamin five times as much as his other brothers. Benjamin was probably intended to take what was over away with him.

I was visiting some Persian women one day, and they asked for my handkerchief to wrap up the re-

mainder of the sweets in. I apologised for being unable to take them as I had not a clean handkerchief, on which they all eagerly assured me that it did not matter in the least, they would be quite content with the one I had. The Persian *dastmāl* or handkerchief serves every purpose except the one we connect it with. Your Persian servant, always carries a large coloured one in his pocket. He dusts the rooms with it, puts his purchases from the *bāzār* into it, polishes your boots with it before you enter a Persian house, and carries home sweets or nuts in it.

At the New Year, there are twenty-one days set apart for holiday making and visiting, and in every house tea and sweets and sherbet are ready for all comers. In those twenty-one days people are expected to visit all their friends, and even with strict moderation the most sweet-loving schoolboy of your acquaintance would probably be glad of a rest by the end of the three weeks.

All this sounds delightful, doesn't it? But unfortunately it is more for the grown-ups than for the children. The children like sweets well enough and get a good many, but they have not the same opportunities as the grown-ups.

But sweets have their serious uses among the Persians. We have seen that rheumatism may be cured with nougat, and we find that sweets in general are very strengthening. It is not at all uncommon, after a small operation or the extraction of a tooth, to see the friends pressing sugar or sweets into the patient's mouth, to restore her strength after the shock,

and in the same way after a fright a few sweets make you feel much better.

Bread and sweets are not an uncommon dinner, and a child who was ordered by the doctor to take plenty of milk because it was good strengthening food, was given three-quarters of a pound of sweets for her dinner instead. "So much more strengthening than milk," the mother said.

Persian sweets are very soft and in the dry climate quickly get hard and lose their first freshness, and to offer a Persian stale sweets is like offering you stale cakes. They are at their best only on the day they are made, and the servant sent to buy sweets will sit down with his tray of plates at the shop-door and wait till the new sweets are ready, when they can be put quite fresh and new on the plates on which they are to be served. In Yezd, where the best sweets are made, our servants seemed to regard the moving of sweets to a fresh plate much as we should the removal of a pie to a fresh pie-dish, and many sorts are certainly the worse for being shifted after they have got cold. All better-class Persians make their own sweets at home and consider "shop sweets" very inferior.

The fame of Persian sherbet has spread far, and nearly every visitor to Persia looks forward to a treat when he tastes it. But it by no means comes up to expectation. It is often made fresh in the presence of the guests, so the recipe is no secret. A sugar loaf is put in a basin, by preference a pot pourri bowl, and cold water is poured over it, and it is allowed to melt with an occasional stir. A little rosewater is then

added to flavour it, and it is handed round in glasses, with ice if possible. At meals, however, the bowl is placed on the tablecloth,—there is no table,—and a large carved wooden spoon is passed to each in turn from which to drink it.

Sometimes lime or orange juice is offered as an alternative flavour to rosewater, which makes it much more palatable to Europeans. But insipid as the ordinary sherbet is, it seems the most delicious compound imaginable when it is taken, well-iced, after a long walk with the thermometer at 100° in the shade. Perhaps that is why it has been so much praised.

Another favourite beverage is *sekunjibin*, which is like raspberry vinegar with mint instead of raspberry.

Sherbet and good things to eat figure largely in Muhammad's description of the joys of Heaven. His ideals were ideals that did not need much growing up to. He expected his followers to have childish ideas and childish desires even in heaven.

CHAPTER VII

PERSIAN PRAYERS

PERSIAN boys and girls need not say their prayers till they are seven years old. Sometimes they begin sooner, but that is considered unnecessarily good. They are not to be beaten for not saying them till they are ten, and I have not seen many children under ten years old saying their prayers. We cannot remember learning to pray, for as soon as we could understand

anything about God, we were taught to ask Him to take care of us, to ask Him to forgive us when we were naughty, and to help us to be good, to thank Him for His kindness and His gifts. It is so simple that a child of three or four can come to God in this way, we need not wait till we are seven to bring simple petitions to our Heavenly Father. But little Ghulām Husain's prayers are far from simple. He has first to learn to wash his face, hands and arms, and feet and legs. "That does not need much teaching," you say. "He can surely wash himself at that age." But there is a right and a wrong way of washing in Persia before prayers. There is a right and a wrong side of your face to wash first, there is a right and a wrong hand and a right and a wrong foot to wash first. If a Persian is very religious and careful there is even a right and a wrong side of his arm and leg to wash first, but few Persian children are as careful as that. No soap is wanted, just plain water, or, if there is no water, sand. So our little Ghulām Husain learns his washings, and now he is ready to learn the prayers themselves, which are all in Arabic so that he does not understand them.

He is shown the direction of Mecca to which he must always turn when saying them, and he is taught when to stand, when to kneel, when to bow himself till his forehead touches the ground, and when to make various gestures. And when he has learnt all this he is ready to begin saying his prayers regularly, and he is told that if he says them correctly, and with the right movements, they will be pleasing to God, and count as good works. He must say them three times



PERSIANS AT PRAYER

a day, and he cannot choose his time. When the prayer-call sounds from the mosque roofs, and is taken up by people on the house roofs, he must leave what he is doing, and wash and say his prayers—the same prayers every time. First in the early dawn, before sunrise, he hears the call, and he must get out of bed for washing and prayers. In the summer it may be as early as four o'clock, in winter not till six or seven. Then, again, when the sun-dial on the mosque marks noon, the call is heard, and again at sunset, and each time the prayers must be said within half an hour. Half an hour's grace is allowed, so if Persians have visitors when the prayer-call sounds, they are able to go in turns to say their prayers, so as not to leave the visitor alone.

Some Persians are very particular about their prayers, but many are not so particular and will leave them unsaid if there is any excuse; and, as in other religions, there are people who neglect their prayers altogether.

There are many who are very regular in their prayers and very particular as to the direction towards which they face, and their positions and gestures at various parts of the prayers, but who are not in the least really reverent over them. Medical missionaries especially cannot always choose the time of their visits, and sometimes cannot avoid prayer-time. Then, instead of going to a quiet room, the Muhammadans often say their prayers in the room where the missionary is being entertained, and the conversation is never hushed for them; indeed, they will often themselves join in the conversation even while they are supposed to be praying.

One day a party of women from a Mullā's house were visiting a missionary, when the evening prayer-call sounded.

"We shall hardly have time to get home in half an hour," the Mullā's wife said. "May I say my prayers here?" The missionary readily gave her consent, but only the one lady availed herself of the permission, and, having asked in which direction Mecca lay, placed her prayer-stone in front of her and knelt down to say her prayers.

The rest went on talking loudly round her, calling out and stretching across just in front of her in a way that must have attracted her attention. When the missionary asked them to be quiet they assured her that their friend did not mind, and she herself turned from her prayers to beg them not to stop for her. But the missionary insisted on quiet until the prayers were over, explaining that it was not a question of respect to the lady, but of reverence to God, and, in the conversation which naturally followed, she was able to tell them some of the Bible teaching on prayer.

The prayer-stone is a small slab of about an inch and a half across, made of the earth of Kerbela where Husain, the grandson of Muhammad was killed. The Kerbela earth is said to be scented with "the blood of the martyrs," and is much used for prayer-stones and rosaries.

A Muhammadan places his prayer-stone on the ground before him when he says his prayers. If anyone passes in front of a Muhammadan as he

is saying his prayers it is supposed to greatly reduce their value. But if he puts the prayer-stone in front of him it acts as a church wall and cuts him off from the outside world, and nothing passing on the far side of the stone can affect his prayers. If he has no prayer-stone he sometimes draws a line on the earth instead, and this is said to be just as effectual. At certain points in the prayers the forehead must touch the ground, and when a prayer-stone is used the forehead touches the prayer-stone, and perhaps the holiness of the earth touched is supposed to increase the value of the prayers.

After the regular Arabic prayers have been said any further prayers may be added in Persian, but the people seem generally to content themselves with the set prayers and to be shy of adding any of their own wording, and in any case the Arabic prayers are considered the more important.

Although the Persians use their prayers like charms, repeating forms which convey to them no meaning, yet they have great faith in the efficacy of prayers as charms. One Sunday a Persian woman brought her little girl to the doctor's house, covered with small-pox and very ill. Finding that it was service time she thought the prayers might do the child good, so she put off asking for medicine till later, and, hiding the child under her *chādar*, she sat down among the other women and children through the whole service.

I have never known Persians refuse Christian prayers over their sick friends, and generally they join in with a heartfelt *Amen* to prayers which they

have been able to understand. At one house where they were afraid of the medicine they entreated the missionary doctor to come daily to pray over the patient. The patient was one of five cases of typhoid fever in the house. The others were being treated by a Persian doctor, but this woman had very serious complications and seemed so unlikely to recover that he suggested their calling in a Christian doctor for her. For many days she lay quite unconscious, but every day the missionary walked a mile and a half to pray beside her, and every day the same entreaty was repeated, "You will come again to-morrow, won't you?" And the prayers were answered, for at last signs of improvement appeared, and the poor woman was restored to health and strength again.

God has given us a wonderful privilege in allowing us to come freely to Him as our Father, and lay all our joys and sorrows, troubles and perplexities before Him.

"Oh! What peace we often forfeit,
Oh! What needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer!"

And, if that is true of us, how much more true it is of the Muhammadans who do not know God as their Father, who do not know that God is love, who do not know that they may carry everything to God in prayer. When we think of the want of peace, the needless pain, the sin, the sorrow, the wretchedness in Muhammadan lands, and yet see the people so ready to pray, surely it is our plain and urgent duty to teach

them *how* to pray, as our Lord has taught us, and to teach them *to Whom* they must pray—not to an unknowable, unloving Allah, but to a tender, pitying Father, Who so loved them that He gave His only begotten Son to die for their salvation.

CHAPTER VIII

FASTING AND PILGRIMAGES

ONE month in every year Muhammadans have to fast.

Persian boys begin to fast at twelve years old, but the girls have to begin at nine. Sometimes they begin sooner if they want to store up merit early. But even little four-year-old Ibrahim, who is considered too young to join in the fast, shares it to a certain degree. For no one is going to cook anything for him or make him his usual cup of tea when they may not share it. He gets a bit of dry bread and a drink of water when he wants it, but little more all through the day.

"It makes me hungry to see him eating," his mother said.

The name of the fast-month is Ramazān, and through Ramazān it is often difficult to get eggs, because the sweetmakers buy them up to make sweets. It is a great month for sweets, and there are several kinds that are only made in Ramazān ; and, so far from having "self-denial boxes," as many Christians do in Lent, the more devout Muhammadan servants ask for an advance of wages to buy better food in Ramazān

This all seems strange in a fast-month, but a Muhammadan fast only lasts from dawn to dark. At night people may eat what they like, and they take full advantage of the permission and have nightly feasts, ending up with a great feast on the last night.

Boys and girls are not late for supper in Ramazān. They gather round the tablecloth as the time draws near, ready to start directly the signal is given that it is dark. In towns there is generally a gun fired, and at the sound of the gun the meal is begun in every house.

One day such a party was waiting round the supper, listening for the gun, and they got hungrier and hungrier, but they heard no gun and waited on. At last they realised that the wind had carried the sound away from them, and they had fasted far longer than they need have done. This was bad enough, but another family fared worse, for they overslept themselves in the morning, and woke to find they had missed their breakfast and must eat nothing till night.

People might differ as to when it was dark, so a test has been appointed—as long as you can distinguish a black thread from a white one it is light, and you must fast.

It does not sound a very difficult fast, and in winter, when the days are short, it is not so bad, but on a long summer day it is very hard. No food, no drink, and a blazing sun all day. It takes a plucky boy or girl to get through it without complaining. It is no wonder that in Ramazān “bed-time” is forgotten and all the children sit up half the night and sleep half the

day—the longer they can sleep in the day the better, poor little things. Towards evening tempers are apt not to be very good, but everyone enjoys the night.

No one wants to work in Ramazān ; they do not want to get more hungry than they need ; and, of course, the schools are all closed.

The dispensaries and hospitals are nearly empty, for the taking of medicine, or the use of drops for the eyes or ears, would be a breaking of the fast, and there was a great discussion once as to whether having a tooth out would have the same effect. It seems curious to have to tell the people to take their medicine twice a night instead of twice a day.

After Ramazān the dispensaries are full of patients who have made themselves ill by fasting all day and overeating themselves at night. .

Besides the younger children there are a good many other people who get off the fast. Opium-eaters need not fast ; travellers need not fast on a journey ; sick people can get a dispensation from a mulla. A great many people take advantage of this, and make a small ailment an excuse for not fasting, but they are supposed to make it up at some other time of year.

If anyone forgets and thoughtlessly breaks his fast no great harm is done, but he must fast an extra day in the year to make up for it. Some people “ forget ” every day, but such people do not usually make it up at any other time.

Just before Ramazān a good many people are fasting, having put off to the last minute the making-up of the fast days for the previous Ramazān.

People who want to be very good sometimes fast on Saints' Days too, and one old lady always fasted on the day when Muhammadan tradition says that our Lord Jesus Christ was born.

Another way in which Muhammadans think they can gain merit is by making a pilgrimage to some holy place.

Pilgrimages may be made to any place where a Muhammadan saint is buried, but there are four special places to which the Persians go—Qum, Meshed, Kerbela, and Mecca. Mecca is considered far the greatest place of pilgrimage, because it is the place where Muhammad was born. A pilgrimage to Qum gives the pilgrim no commonly used title, but if he goes to Meshed he becomes *Meshedi*; if to Kerbela, *Kerbela'i*; and, if to Mecca, *Hāji*; and a *Hāji* always uses his title. In accosting a working-class stranger it is polite to call him *Meshedi*, and more polite to call him *Kerbela'i*, but *Hāji* is too important a title to be used in this way. Quite little boys and girls are sometimes *Hājīs*—they have been taken to Mecca by their parents.

But the people who most frequently go are the business men and the old people. The business men manage to make a business journey, which will include Mecca, and the old people, old women especially, are often sent as a polite way of getting rid of them when they are cranky and ill-tempered. If they die on the way, they are supposed to go straight to Heaven. A good many do die on the road, which is a very rough one. It reminds one of the man who said of his enemies that he should like to convert them and send them to Heaven before they had time to backslide.

One day in a *caravanserai*, or native inn, I met a young woman who told me a friend who was going on a pilgrimage had passed through her village and had persuaded her to come too. She was going to walk all the way and trust to charity for food, as many pilgrims do, for it is considered a greater work of merit to give to a pilgrim than to an ordinary beggar. The journey would take several months.

I asked her a few questions.

Yes, she said, she had a husband and children.

"And are they with you?"

"No, they are in my village."

"Are the children grown-up then?"

"Oh no, they are quite little."

"Then who is going to take care of them while you are away?"

"I do not know. There was no time to make arrangements. I had not even time to tell my husband I was going. He was at work. My friends tell me it will be a very great work of merit if I go. What do you think?"

We had a long talk, and I believe she went back the same evening to her home. If so, she would get back within twenty-four hours of having left it.

The Muhammadans themselves generally allow that they are no more agreeable or kind or truthful or good after their pilgrimages—at least those who do not go say so freely. They even have a proverb: "If your friend has been to Mecca, trust him not. If he has been there twice, avoid him. But if he has made the pilgrimage the third time, flee from him as you would from Satan."

Even dead people make pilgrimages, generally to Qum, or, if they are very important people, to Kerbela. I have not been to Kerbela, but I have been to Qum, and we met quite a number of corpses going to the burying-ground outside the big mosque. Sometimes the relations bring them, but often they cannot afford the journey and pay a muleteer to take them, and to pay the fees, which are very large. Sometimes the muleteers bury the bodies elsewhere and pocket the fees.

Qum itself is considered such a holy city that they do not allow dogs inside it.

CHAPTER IX

SAVĀBS

THEIR is a little Persian book, which many of the little boys learn to read, called "Sad Hikāyat" or "A Hundred Stories." Some of the stories are very like Æsop's Fables, and they are all supposed to teach the children something. One story tells them that at the end of the world God will take a great pair of scales, and as each person comes up for judgment God will put his good deeds in one scale and his evil deeds in the other. If the good deeds weigh heaviest he will go to Heaven, if his evil deeds weigh the balance down he will go to Hell.

These good deeds are called *savābs*, and every Persian, whether child or grown-up, hopes to get to Heaven by doing enough *savābs* to outweigh his sins.

So a little Persian boy or girl is not taught to try to always do right or to always try to please and serve God, but only to do enough right to outweigh the wrong he does, and if he feels he has done wrong instead of confessing his sin to God and asking His forgiveness he simply tries to balance it by a good deed.

And what a Persian boy or girl is taught of what is right and wrong is very different from all you have learnt. First there is a definite list of sins, which they can learn by heart, and nothing outside of this list is considered a "sin," though other things which are not right may be called "errors," which is a much less strong word.

As to good deeds there is more difference of opinion. One of the "Hundred Stories" deals with this point.

A man was travelling in the desert and came to a well. He dismounted, drove a stable-pin into the ground, and tied his horse to it while he ate his meal. When he resumed his journey he left the pin in the ground that other travellers coming there might tie their horses to it. Presently a man on foot came along, and, not seeing the pin, knocked his foot against it and hurt himself. He pulled up the pin and threw it into the well lest any one else should hurt himself in the same way. A discussion arose as to which of the two had done a *savāb*, the man who drove the nail in or the man who took it out, and finally a learned and holy man was consulted. After much thought he gave it as his opinion that both had done *savābs*.

Every little act of kindness is a *savāb*, and this encourages good nature and kindness.

The children are taught to look out for chances of doing a kind action and so balancing their wrong-doing. But at the same time they are taught to think that if they do a certain number of kind deeds it will not matter if they do wrong at other times. Little Rajab 'Ali, the muleteer's boy, would run to fasten up the trailing head-rope of another man's mule, he would lend a helping hand to some stranger whose donkey had fallen under its load, and between whiles he would treat his own mules and donkeys most cruelly. He thought his cruelty did not matter, because he had been kind as well.

A dishonest lad will try to wipe out his dishonesty by being regular with his prayers or by an extra day's fast. A man who has cheated someone of ten *krāns* will give a *krān* to a beggar and consider his account settled. One man tried to atone for the most outrageous extortion and injustice by spending *part* of his ill-earned gains on good roads for the villagers and a free school, while all the time he made no pretence of giving up his evil ways. Those he had injured complained that now he would escape the punishment of God.

The Persians seem unable to realise the possibility of any other motive for good works. When the missionaries first went to Yezd and opened a medical mission, the people said, "What terribly wicked people they must be to have to do so much good."

One curious result of this idea of winning Heaven and securing better places there by good works is that it almost destroys gratitude. The beggar feels

that he has helped you one step up in Heaven by accepting your alms ; then surely he has done you more good than you have done him, and why should he be grateful to you ?

The patients who are treated free at the dispensary have the same feeling ; the doctor improved their bodily state, but they have improved his spiritual position.

It is considered a special work of merit to do anything for a *Seyid*, that is, a descendant of Muhammad, so everyone tries to be kind to *Seyids*, and they are so spoilt and are made so much of that they are generally unbearably selfish, and think themselves the most important people in the world.

Often in the dispensary the doctor is exhorted to do his utmost or to break through some rule because the patient is a *Seyid*, and they are incredulous and rather shocked when they are told that an ordinary patient's pain is just as great as a *Seyid's*, and that all must be taken in their turn.

Another result of this doctrine of works of merit, or *savābs*, as they call them, is that even when a Muhammadan seems straight and honest and altogether a good fellow you cannot entirely trust him, because he has so many good works to his credit that he feels a few sins do not matter, they are more than paid for beforehand.

A Persian's idea of what is a *savāb* is sometimes curious. Prayers, fasting, pilgrimages, and the reading of the Quran are, of course, all considered works of merit.

Marrying your father's brother's daughter is a *savāb*, though there is no particular merit in marrying

your father's sister's daughter or your mother's brother's daughter.

Some Persian women inquired one day what each of three missionaries living together ate for breakfast, and hearing that two had eggs, while the third had not, they nodded at each other, as much as to say, "I told you so," and remarked, "It is a *savāb*. She wants to get a higher place in Heaven."

Giving money to beggars is always considered a *savāb*, but it is considered a greater *savāb* on Thursday than on any other day. Friday is the Muhammadan holy day, and they call Thursday "the Eve of Friday," and on Thursday the beggars all call out as you pass, "It is the Eve of Friday; give me a copper."

The grown-up beggars generally, but not always, sit by the roadside begging, but the children run alongside of you and are often very persistent. There are nearly always beggars at the gate of any town, asking those who are starting on a journey to give them an alms, and so secure safety on their journey. If Jericho was anything like a Persian town it was most natural that our Lord should find one blind beggar as He went into the town (St Luke 18, v. 35), and one or two more as He came out by another gate (St Matt. 20, v. 30), and that they should address Him in almost exactly the same language.

Begging is often a very paying occupation, for so many people feel that they have sins to make up for, that the cry, "Give me a copper. It will be a *savāb*," is a difficult one to refuse, especially if the copper is only worth a farthing.

So well does begging pay that on more than one occasion the mothers and wives of well-to-do tradesmen have been detected in old *chādars* begging in the streets and at houses. The difficulty of recognising a woman who is completely covered up with a black *chādar* makes disguise easy.

During the massacre of the Babis, a dissenting sect of Muhammadans, in 1903, it was considered a *savāb* to kill a Babi, but some of the kindlier people thought it also a *savāb* to save a life, even if it was a Babi's. One man is said to have been seen with a prisoner, in great perplexity, saying, "I am quite sure of Hell for my sins, unless I can do a big *savāb* ; if this man is a Babi, my chance of salvation is to kill him, but I am not sure whether he is, and if I kill a true believer I shall be worse off than ever."

But there are *savābs* of a very different sort.

There was an old woman friendless and ill, and a Persian man found her in the street, too ill to get home to the one wretched room where she lived all alone. He did not know her, but he decided to undertake the *savāb*. He sent across the town for a medical missionary, knowing the Christians had the reputation of never refusing to help the sick poor. He stayed there till the doctor arrived, and said that if she would visit the old woman and provide the medicines he would send for them, and would provide the food and nursing, and this he did until the old woman died a few days later.

The adoption of a destitute child is not an uncommon *savāb*, and these children are often treated very well and given a good start in life.

A kind action, as we have seen, is always considered a *savāb*, whether it is helping a fallen mule to get up, giving a copper to a beggar, or tending a friendless stranger in sickness and death. We may almost say that this is the one redeeming point of a Persian's religion. Generally speaking, Persians are not improved by their religious ideas, for the stronger their religious ideas are the worse their lives are, and what one most admires in Persian character is least in accordance with their religious beliefs.

CHAPTER X

MUHAMMADAN CHARMS AND SUPERSTITIONS

MUHAMMAD did not write down his teaching, for he could not write, but his followers learnt it by heart, and wrote it down, and after his death it was collected into one book called the Quran. It was arranged in a haphazard way, and probably the early chapters were really spoken last, and the later ones first. However, the Muhammadans believe it to be, as it now stands, the Word of God, and they treat it with great respect. When they pick the book up or lay it down they put it first to the forehead and then to the lips, and they hold it in both hands. Many Christians might learn from them to treat God's Word more reverently. They consider it a work of merit to read the Quran or listen to it, and they read it over their sick folk in hopes of curing them. But perhaps the commonest and most popular edition is a two-inch hexagonal one



READING THE QURAN TO THE SICK

which is almost illegible. This is sewn up in two little round or hexagonal cases, each containing half, and is worn on the arms to keep off evil of every kind. The cases may be plain leather or cloth, or they may be more elaborate and ornamental, or silver cases may be used with texts from the Quran engraved upon them.

Smaller and cheaper charms are made of texts from the Quran enclosed in the same way.

These charms, and also beads made from the blue clay of the holy city of Qum, are used for animals as well as people, especially young mules. I once had a charm given me for a kitten.

Children often wear a very large number of charms sewn on to the cap or hung on a chain round the neck, as they are supposed to be much more susceptible than grown-up people to evil influences. One quaint-looking charm is a little cloth camel, Abraham's camel, sewn on the cap.

What the Persians fear more than anything for their children is the evil eye, and it is especially to protect them from this that they cover them with charms. They say there are certain people who have an "evil eye." No one seems to know many such people, but most people say they know at least one. These people injure everything that pleases them, and that they admire. If they admire a baby it will get ill and very likely die ; if they admire a mule it will probably go lame ; if they admire a tree it will wither ; if they admire a cup it will break. There does not seem to be necessarily any wish to do harm, the mere taking pleasure in the thing causes the disaster.

Persons with the evil eye are quite impossible to distinguish, so the Persians are afraid of all strangers lest they should have it. This is why you must not admire a baby, and Persian mothers cover up their young babies completely in the street for fear a casual passer-by should admire them and should prove to have the evil eye.

The men carry iron in their pockets as a protection, and a magnet is considered specially powerful in this way. A more common form of iron to carry is an iron chain, which is useful for driving mules and donkeys and beating off savage dogs.

The women sometimes wear charms to make their husbands love them. One poor thing gave me hers—two large beads: they had not proved of much use, for her husband beat her and treated her very badly.

Another charm is a tiny bag of the scented earth of Kerbela, where Muhammad's grandson Husaín was killed, and if rubbed on the eyelids it is said to cause the eyes to shine brightly.

The beads of the Muhammadan rosaries are often made of this Kerbela earth. Every Muhammadan has his rosary—many of them have quite a collection, for pilgrims to Kerbela bring back rosaries for all their friends.

These rosaries are never used for counting prayers, but occasionally for counting the attributes of God or invocations. But the main use is a very different one. They are the Persian's ordinary means of trying to find out God's will. They are used both in serious and in frivolous matters; no Persian will settle anything without "taking the beads." He takes the beads

before making a business appointment, but he takes them again to see whether he shall keep it or not. He takes the beads to see what doctor he is to send for, and again to see if he shall follow his instructions. He takes the beads to see if it is a good day to buy a new coat, and again to see if it is a good day to put it on. You often see a pious Muhammadan fingering the beads under her *chādar* before she answers your questions.

The rosaries are made of a large number of small beads all alike, and three only, which are different and are called "*Sheikhs*," placed in different parts of the string. To take the beads a Muhammadan turns towards Mecca and says an Arabic collect. Then he divides the beads without looking, and tells them off two by two, saying over and over, as he does so, "*Subhānu'llāh*" (God is glorious) "*Alhamdu'li'llāh*" (Praise be to God), "*Va'llāh*" (and He is the God), passing two beads for each word until he comes to a *Sheikh*, when he stops. If there are two beads for the last word, the answer is much more emphatic than if there is only an odd one. If the last word is "*Subhānu'llāh*" the answer is favourable, "*Alhamdu'li'llāh*" is doubtful and "*Va'llāh*" is unfavourable. If the answer is doubtful a Persian generally follows his own inclinations.

If the answer is not what the questioner likes, the beads may be taken again in the mosque, and the answer in the mosque take precedence of that in the house. If, however, the answer is still the same, there is a third method. For a small fee a mulla will do the same sort of thing with the Quran, and the text selected overrules the two previous answers.

A Persian lady sent for an English missionary to

extract an aching tooth. The missionary found her in great pain, but she said she could not have the tooth out as the beads were against it, but she had sent to the mosque and was hoping for a favourable answer from there. However, all methods gave an unfavourable answer, so she put off the extraction to another day.

"It would be much better for me to have it out," she said, "but it is not God's Will."

The Wise Men from the East looked for God's guidance among the stars, and there God sent them a message. And here and there where a Muhammadan earnestly seeks God's guidance, because he is trying to really live as God's servant, who shall say that he does not receive it where he has been taught to look for it.

But taken as a system, how trivial, how childish, how irreverent it all is. They use God's name, but they take His name in vain. They profess to seek God's will, and profess to receive an answer from Him, and often try the next moment to set it aside and force or coax an opposite answer out of Him.

The Muhammadans think that through their beads they can *use* God for settling the every-day matters of this world in a lucky way, while they are disobeying Him in the greater matter of godly living.

CHAPTER XI

PERSIAN SCHOOLS

A **GREAT** many things are topsy-turvy in Persia, but **perhaps** reading is as topsy-turvy as anything. It

is not only that the lines, and indeed the whole book, begin at the wrong end, but the lessons begin at the wrong end too.

An English boy learns to read his own language first, and does not always go on to a foreign language. A Persian boy learns to read a foreign language first, and does not always go on to his own language.

When a little Persian boy goes to school he is given a big Arabic book, with a great many long words in it, and he is not taught how the words are spelt, but is told what they are, and made to repeat them from memory, pointing to each word in the book as he says it, and gradually he gets some idea of which word is which.

The boys sit on the floor round the room, all reading at the top of their voices at the same time in different parts of the book. They read in a monotonous sing-song voice, swaying their bodies in time to the sound.

The master sits and listens through the din to one and another correcting mistakes here and there, and calling up any boy who seems perfect in his lesson to learn the next bit, and then return to his seat and read it over and over till he knows it too.

The book is the Quran, which the Muhammadans think was dictated by God to Muhammad through the Archangel Gabriel. It would not be surprising if the Persians, being Muhammadans, wished all their boys to learn what they believe to be God's Word ; but the book is written in Arabic, which Persian boys do not understand, and even the letters are not quite the same as in Persian ; so when the little pupil reaches the end

of the book he can read the Quran with the proper intonation, but he can read nothing else, and he cannot understand the Quran.

The Muhammadans, however, think that reading the Quran, quite apart from understanding it, is a very good action, so the little Persian boys work away at it, and they do not think it hard lines because they know all the men, and big boys began in the same way, so it seems the natural thing to do. And perhaps it is a little consolation to know that when they reach certain points they will be given sweets. One little boy, who was asked how far he had got in the Quran, said that he had just got to his first sweets.

Having finished the Quran our little Persian boy goes on to Persian books. These, too, he studies in much the same way as he did the Quran, but it is more useful, because now he understands what he reads. After plodding through the Quran it is a pleasant change for little Ghulām Husain to turn to the War between the Cats and Mice, the Hundred Fables, or Stories of Husain and Hasan (Muhammad's two grandsons). Later on he reads the poems of Hāfiz and Sa'adi, and other great Persian poets, for there is a great deal of beautiful poetry in Persian.

There is no convenient desk or table for Ghulām Husain to write on. He sits on the floor and holds the paper in his hand or on his knee. His pen is a bit of fine cane, cut like a quill, but with a slanting end. As he holds it the handle points directly to the right and it is the horizontal lines which he must make broad, while the up and down strokes must both be fine.



A PERSIAN SCHOOL.

Ghulām Husain never spills his ink. Each boy has his own inkpot, which contains a tangled piece of silk soaked in ink. It dries up between the lessons, so when Ghulām Husain wants to write he moistens it with water so that the silk is thoroughly wet, but there is no water lying in the inkpot. In among this wet silk he dips his pen.

If you look into Ghulām Husain's pen-box you will find pens cut to various breadths for large or small writing, a penknife, and a little slab to rest the pen-point on for the final cut ; an inkpot, and a tiny brass ladle for adding water.

Many an English boy finds it tiresome to have to dot his i's, but little Ghulām Husain has to dot almost every letter, some above the line and some below, some with one dot, some with two, and some with three. These dots are not round, but square, and the height of the letters is measured by the size of the dots. This letter must be one dot high, that letter two dots high, another three, and yet another five dots high. The size of the dot itself depends on the breadth of the pen.

As he learns to write better he will run his letters into curious combinations, and group his dots picturesquely in parts of the word to which they do not belong, or leave them out altogether, until at last, when he can write a really beautiful hand, the schoolmaster himself will not be able to read the letter without careful study, and may even have to guess at the meaning of particularly well-written passages.

One great beauty of a Persian letter is the way each

line runs up at the end, making a pile of words, syllables, and even single letters, something in this style:—

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letters are very hard to

The Persians do not apparently think much of their own system of education, for they are always laughing at their schoolmasters.

They have a story of a *chārvādār*, or muleteer, one of whose mules strayed one day into a school. It was quickly driven out, and the muleteer claimed damages

from the schoolmaster to the extent of half the value of the mule. The schoolmaster indignantly asked on what he based his claim. The muleteer turned to the crowd which had gathered to listen to the argument. "My beast," said he, "went into his school a mule and it has come out a donkey." You see a donkey counts half a mule in caravan travelling, just as a child counts half a person in train travelling.

The punishments are as topsy-turvy as the lessons. When a boy is caned he lies on his back and holds out his feet instead of his hands. Sometimes his feet are held in a kind of stocks while he is caned across the soles. They call it "eating sticks" or "eating wood"—the words are the same.

Some missionaries were picnicking one day in an orchard in a hill village, and the village children gathered round to watch the foreigners' strange ways. "Do you often come and eat plums here?" one of the ladies asked; and she was greatly bewildered by the curious tastes of Persian boys, when the owner of the orchard answered for them, that the boys who came into his orchard ate not the plums but the wood.

This beating on the soles of the feet is a common punishment for every one, from the slave and the school-boy to the criminal and the political offender. With schoolboys it is of course not very severe, but in more serious cases it may be very severe indeed, even resulting in death. The culprit in these cases is ordered not so many blows but so many sticks, *i.e.* he is to be beaten till so many sticks have been broken. A hundred sticks is not an uncommon punishment. If the culprit is rich enough he may bribe the *farrāshes* to

strike the stocks when possible and so break the sticks quickly, and not over his feet ; but a poor man has to take his punishment.

There is no compulsory education in Persia and very little free education. There was one man who tried to atone for sins, which he made no pretence of giving up, by founding a large free school in one Persian town, but it is not a common form of benevolence. So it is only those who can spare a little money who send their boys to school, and a great many never get beyond a very early stage of reading and writing.

As for the girls very few parents care to waste their money over their girls' education. A certain number are taught to read the Quran, a less number go on to reading such books as they have studied, but very few can read at sight, and writing is even rarer. Still in the matter of the education of girls Persia is in advance of other Muhammadan countries.

In these days of general education it is difficult for us to realise in this country how hard it is for the missionaries to teach the gospel truths to the Persians. There is so much to be taught and there are so many to be taught, and when it has to be done orally to people whose intelligence and memory have never been developed by study of any kind, whose minds and brains have never grown up properly, and who forget so easily, it means an amount of work that would take up all the time and strength of far more missionaries than are now in the field.

Many of the converts cannot come regularly for oral teaching, and they are liable at any time to move out of the missionaries' reach, so the missionaries try

to teach all the converts and their children to read their Bibles at any rate, so that they can get teaching direct from God's Word themselves.

Besides the Persian schools there are now several Christian schools in Persia, but we will talk about those in the next chapter. Since they were started there has been an attempt in some of the big towns to introduce an improved system of teaching, and Persian reading-books are now printed with *ba-bi-bu*, *pa-pi-pu*, etc. etc. ; but this is the exceptional method of teaching, and not the rule in Persia, and I doubt if any orthodox schoolmaster would care to teach Persian before he taught the Arabic Quran.

The Parsees have a very good school in Yezd, largely supported by the Parsees in Bombay, but this is only for Parsee boys.

CHAPTER XII

CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

THERE are two branches of mission-work in Persia that bring the missionaries into close touch with Persian children : one is the hospital, the other is the school. You will hear about the medical work presently ; in this chapter we will look at the school work.

There are Europeans in Persia, wanting English-speaking servants and employés ; there are rich Persians wanting secretaries who can write French and English ; there are business firms trading with England and India who want English-speaking clerks and

correspondents; so naturally many Persians want their sons to learn English; and who should teach it better than the Englishman?

But this is not all they want. As they get to know the Christians they see that there is something in English ways and English character that the Persian lacks. And they bring their boys to the missionary, and ask him not merely to teach them English, not merely to teach them book-learning of any sort, but to teach them to be good boys.

They do not so often ask for a girls' school, for they do not think a girl needs any book education as a rule, and only a few of the Persian women can even read. Yet in some of the Mission-stations girls' schools have been started with great success, and year by year the demand for them is growing.

English is less taught in these schools, but some of the girls learn it, especially those most closely connected with the mission. The girls, of course, have to give a good deal of time to sewing and embroidery, which are more necessary for them than foreign languages.

But in all the Mission-stations sooner or later, generally sooner, a boys' school is started, and these schools vary very much according to the needs of the different towns.

In one school Armenians and Muhammadans work side by side, in another we find Muhammadans and Parsees, while a third contains all three.

In one school only English is taught, in another advanced Persian and Arabic are added. In yet another, everything is taught from the Persian alphabet onwards.

One missionary works alone in his own house, another has a full staff of Armenian and Persian teachers and monitors, and a well-built convenient school.

But whatever the race of the boys, whatever the subjects taught, whatever the organisation, there are difficulties to be faced.

It is difficult to get teachers; sometimes none can be got on the spot, and they have to be fetched from some other town, perhaps several weeks' journey away. Sometimes the missionary has to be the only teacher till he can train some of his own boys to be first monitors and then masters in the school.

Then there is the school itself. Sometimes the small beginnings of a school are started in the missionary's own dining-room; sometimes he is able to spare a room entirely for school purposes. In one case this was supplemented by a rough tent or shed made of matting in the compound. But as the school grows, separate buildings have to be found or built.

Books are another difficulty. All books for teaching English have to be got from abroad, and many are not suitable. Readers which are very suitable for the size of boy who reads them in England or India, are not suitable for the young men who often use them in Persia. If you give an educated young man, well read in the finest Persian poetry, the childish stories and rhymes in many of the readers, he thinks English books are very, very foolish, and his opinion of English intelligence in both literary and religious matters falls very low.

All these things need money. The boys generally pay a very small fee and buy their own books, but the fees do not go far towards paying for the schools and the teachers' salaries, and the getting together of the necessary money is another difficulty.

The pupils themselves present three great difficulties. In our country boys under fourteen generally go to different schools from boys over fourteen, and those who wish to continue their education after seventeen or eighteen leave school and go to college, or attend special lectures. But in Persia the missionary is asked to take them all together in one school, even middle-aged men wishing to become pupils. But it is quite impossible to make a satisfactory school of boys and men together. It is sometimes possible, especially in the larger schools, to arrange separately for the men, but generally an age limit has to be set.

The second difficulty arises from the number of boys who want to learn English and who are never likely to have any use for it. They have an idea that it is so new and uncommon that any one who knows it is bound to get work at a good salary, and so they want to waste their time over it when they ought to be learning the subjects they will really need for their work. It takes some time and trouble to sort these boys out from those who are really likely to need English. The third difficulty is not peculiar to Persia, though it presents some peculiarities there. It is the problem of managing the boys.

Boys in England, I am sorry to say, sometimes tell lies, but in Persia it would be more correct to say that they sometimes tell the truth.

Then again the boys are of different ranks ; some of them come with their servants, and a certain amount of tact has to be used to get them to accept the ordinary rules of discipline. But in a school where everybody comes to learn most of these difficulties can be overcome.

Persian boys want knowing, like all boys, but when one tries to do one's best for them one finds them thoroughly lovable and possessed of a large number of exceedingly good points.

Lastly, the *Mullās*, or Muhammadan clergy, see in the schools the greatest danger to their religion, and they oppose them strongly. They know that such close contact with Christians must open the boys' eyes to some extent to the contrast between Muhammadanism and Christianity, and they know Muhammadanism cannot stand such a comparison.

Many Muhammadans, who believe that Muhammadanism is a true religion given to them by God through Muhammad, still see that Christianity is the better religion, and Muhammadans have told me that God had given us a better religion than He had given them.

So the *Mullās* try to persuade or frighten the fathers into not sending their boys to the Mission-school, they try to frighten the boys out of going, and they try to get the governors to close the schools. But it is God's work, and He does not allow them to stop it for long.

The boys themselves show the greatest interest in whatever they are told about the Bible, and naturally in one way or another Bible reading is always a prominent feature of every class of Mission-school.

Sometimes there is a regular lesson on the Bible as one of the school subjects, but in other places there are no Bible lessons, but only prayers and Bible-reading, with very simple explanations. But however this may be, the gospel story of Christ Jesus, which is known by name to every Muhammadan, but by more than name to very, very few, is always of absorbing interest, and is not likely to be forgotten.

CHAPTER XIII

WORK

"To the house of 'Ali Akbar the pea-roaster," I said to my servant.

"There are two 'Ali Akbars pea-roasters," he replied, "one is alive, and one dead; which do you want?"

It proved to be the widow who had sent for me, and we were soon great friends.

"And do you go to school?" I asked Husain, a merry little boy of eight.

"No, I am an apprentice-baker," he said with an evident sense of importance; he felt he was a wage-earner—a halfpenny a day, I think was the amount, but where a labourer often only earns fivepence a day, even a halfpenny a day counts for something in the family.

Seven years old seems to be a very common age for apprenticing boys in Persia. A boy of that age can make himself useful and gradually learn his trade, and if his master and his fellow-apprentices are kind he may be very happy, like my little baker. He probably fetched and carried, brought sticks for heating the

oven, laid out the long thin flat loaves in rows as they were handed to him from the oven, and later carried them in a tray on his head, or hanging over his shoulder, to some of the customers.

Probably our Lord Jesus Christ Himself started work in the carpenter's shop at Nazareth as soon as He could be of any use. He would fetch and carry tools, sort out the nails, help to clear away the shavings, and later He would learn to hammer nails, to saw and plane, just as the little Persian apprentices do to-day, and He would thoroughly enjoy helping Joseph in the workshop and Mary in the house.

There was a little "apprentice-carpenter" who looked such a baby he can hardly have been as old as seven. He used to run back to the shop for tools or nails, and hold the hammer, and he even succeeded in pulling some nails out of a packing-case. But his master was not always kind to him, and sometimes beat him, and he did not seem as happy as the baker boy.

Servants will often bring their little boys to the house to help them in their work, and gradually fit themselves for service. When they begin to be really useful the master generally gives them a small wage. A servant who has no boy of his own will often bring a nephew or a cousin.

In every trade you find them, little boys whose business it is to lighten their elders' work a little in any way they can, for the Persians are not over fond of hard work.

You find them too in the houses of poor people, who cannot afford to keep a regular servant, but pay a few coppers or a meal to a little boy to come in and make

himself useful, sweeping the floor and watering it in hot weather, preparing the *qaliān*, or hookah, running errands, chopping firewood, and a hundred other things. It is a system that works very well when it is worked with kindness and consideration, but it is a terrible system when it is abused.

In the Persian carpet trade we see this. In the villages the whole family works at one carpet, and as the children grow old enough they are taught and made to join in the work. There need be no cruelty in this, and often the little things are only too proud and happy to do as their elders do, and join in the family task. But unhappily even in the family there are many cases of cruel overwork and ill-treatment.

But for the horrors of child labour in the carpet trade we must turn to the factories of Kirman.

These factories are filled with children from four years old upward, underfed, overworked, living a loveless, joyless, hopeless life. The factories are built without windows lest the children's attention should be distracted, and the bad air, want of food, and the constantly keeping in one position produce rickets and deformity in nearly all. Of thirty-eight children examined in one factory thirty-six were deformed.

One of the Governors of Kirman forbade the employment of children under twelve in the factories, but the order did not last beyond his governorship. The same Governor gave the order still in force, which forbids the employment of children before dawn or after sunset, thus reducing their working hours to an average of twelve hours a day. A recent Governor added to this an order limiting the Friday work to

about two and a half hours, "from sunrise to full sunshine," so now the children share in part the general Friday holiday of Muhammadanism.

One of our medical missionaries was called to attend the wife of the owner of one of these factories, and consented to do so on condition he made windows in his factory to allow the children air and light. He objected at first, saying that it would prevent their working, but finally consented, and admitted afterwards that the children did more work with the windows than they had done without them.

The factory owners are glad to get the children, for they say children work better than grown-up people at carpet-making, and of course they expect less wages. But how can the parents allow their children to live this cruel life? You will find the answer in the Persian saying that "of every three persons in Kirman, four smoke opium."

The man who takes opium regularly becomes a wreck; first his digestion is ruined, then his heart gets weak and he gets bronchitis and other chest troubles, and he becomes unreliable physically and morally; he is untruthful and deceitful, and when he is once well under the power of the habit, he goes almost mad if he cannot get his opium at the usual time, and would sell his soul for it, and does sell his children. Over and over again comes the terrible story, the father and mother smoke opium; the little deformed child toils through the long days to earn the money that buys it.

In the villages the children begin almost as soon as they can run about to take out the sheep and goats, not in green fields, for there are none, but among the

scattered plants on the mountain-side or under the village trees.

Only the boys are allowed to take the flocks out on the hills at any distance from the village, and on mountains where there are thought to be wolves, even the boys are forbidden to go without a man.

But in and around the villages boys and girls alike turn out. Often they carry a long pole, generally more than twice as long as themselves. This pole serves at times as a fence to keep the flock from wandering into crops as they pass them on their way, or as they graze on the stubble of the neighbouring crops which have been already gathered in. The stubble itself is not much, but there are more weeds there because the ground has been watered. But neither on the hills nor in the fields can they find much pasture in the heat of summer, so the little shepherds and shepherdesses take their flocks under the trees and beat the leaves down with their poles for the animals to eat. When the lower leaves are finished they climb, boys and girls alike, into the trees, often to considerable heights, and beat the higher branches. The leaves that are not eaten are dried and kept for the winter as we keep hay. It is an awkward thing for a child to climb trees encumbered with a long pole, and in the districts where they do this there are often accidents. One little boy of eight or nine was brought to the Yezd hospital with a bad compound fracture of his skull through falling out of a tree while tending the sheep. He got nearly well, and then his mother took him home, so I do not know whether he fully recovered or not.

Among the richer classes the children sometimes

undertake nominal work at a very early age, but not actual work. One boy of about sixteen in our school held a position in the Persian army corresponding to that of Colonel, and there was said to be a Field-Marshal of twelve in the army.

Merchants consider it good training for their sons to do a little business on their own account, and some of our schoolboys imported goods from Bombay or elsewhere while they were still at school, and disposed of them at a profit.

CHAPTER XIV

CHILD WIVES

THE Persian girls stay at home longer than the little apprentices, but not so long as the richer schoolboys.

The usual age for a Muhammadan girl to marry is thirteen or fourteen, but in many places they marry as early as eight or nine.

This perhaps explains why the girl is given no voice in the choice of a husband, and all is left to the parents.

It perhaps partly explains too why Muhammadans are allowed to beat their wives, though they will tell you, as a proof of their prophet's kindness to women, that he forbade them to do it with a chain. A little girl who has not had time to grow up and learn to behave herself, will often no doubt be difficult to control.

The young wife of a shoemaker one day lost her temper because her husband said he could not afford to buy her something she wanted. She proceeded to break all the ornaments in the house and to tear her

best *chādar* to rags. Her husband, who was a Christian, went to the English missionary to ask whether it would be allowable under the circumstances to beat her.

Another girl refused to cook her husband any food when he came home from his work, and would not even speak to him. She admitted that he was very kind to her, and that she liked him better than her own brothers, but still continued to sulk in this way. Her own relations said a good beating was what she wanted, but her husband had scruples about wife-beating, and would not do anything. But not many Persian husbands are so forbearing.

Another necessary result of these early marriages is the custom of living with the husband's parents. A girl of even fourteen is not fit to be given sole charge of a house. So the bridegroom takes his bride home to his father's house, and puts her under the charge of her mother-in-law. When, however, the mother-in-law becomes a widow, she has to take a secondary place, if her daughter-in-law is at all of an age to manage her own affairs. Then the old lady often prefers to leave her son's house, and to go and live with a married daughter, and the men are generally very good in taking in their mothers-in-law.

Poor little girl wives! They are taken away from home before they are grown up, and although they are now married women they cannot help behaving as children. There was one young wife of a Government official who received her visitors with the utmost dignity and propriety, and then could not resist the temptation to pinch the old black woman who was handing the tea and make her jump.

And they hardly know what to do with their babies. They love to nurse them and play with them, but they get very tired of them and are oftengladd to hand them over to the grandmother. I went to condole with one girl on the death of her dear little baby, and she said, "It was just as well it died before the winter. It would have been such cold work getting up in the night to look after it."

Even when the children grow older their mothers, grown-up children themselves, do not know how to manage them. What do you think of mothers who lose their tempers with their children, and fly at them and bite them? And they are not ashamed of it, and their neighbours do not seem surprised or horrified. One woman bit her little boy's hand, till it bled badly. He was about seven, and had cried to have his best coat on when he went to see the missionary. Another woman bit the cheek of a poor little consumptive girl of eight or nine, so that there was a great bruise, and the skin was broken. She told a neighbour, with a laugh, that she had got angry with the child because she was tiresome about taking her medicine, which was very nasty.

There is no command in the Quran that girls should be married so young, but the mothers declare that it was the command of Muhammad, and certainly he himself set the example by marrying a girl of nine. So when a mother thinks her girl is getting old enough to marry she begins to look out for a suitable husband, and talks things over with the mother or sister of any man she thinks likely. The man's mother is allowed to see the girl, but not the man himself, so you see even the men cannot choose their own wives. Then the money matters are arranged. It is settled how much

the girl's father will give her, and how much her husband will settle on her, and there is often a great deal of haggling over this.

If a girl has a cousin who is the son of her father's brother, he is considered the most appropriate husband for her, and it is considered an act of merit for him to marry her.

If a girl has a large dowry she can generally get a good husband as husbands go out there. If she is poor she has more difficulty, but a capable, industrious girl may do fairly well. But a penniless girl with nothing to recommend her fares badly indeed. When her mother fails to get any husband who is at all desirable instead of letting her girl remain single, she marries her to a madman or a drunkard or a deformed man, or someone utterly undesirable.

The engagement is celebrated by a formal sweet-eating to which the friends on both sides are invited.

The bride and her family prepare her trousseau, and she also has to make a complete suit of clothes for the bridegroom. In one town now it is customary for every well-to-do bride to have one European dress in her trousseau, and for her father to give her a table and chairs.

The wedding itself is a great affair, lasting a week, if the bride's father can afford it, but only a day or part of a day in the case of poor people. The little bride in her finest clothes, of which she is very proud, looks very disconsolate and cries a great deal. No doubt the tears are sometimes genuine enough, for the child is leaving her home and going to people she knows little of, but even if she feels inclined to laugh and smile she must not do anything so improper.

After the wedding she must not leave her husband's house for a year, but she may receive visitors.

As we have seen the marriage and wedding are arranged by the women, but generally the bridegroom has more say in the matter than one young man I knew. He had been engaged for some time, and on going home from work one evening found his wedding prepared without his having been consulted, and had to be married then and there. He was fond of children, and quickly won the heart of his little wife, who cried when he had to go back to his work.

We do sometimes find happy family parties in Persia, the husbands treating their wives with consideration, and the wives being very fond of their husbands. One old lady told me, with tears in her eyes, how good her husband always was to her, and how he always got up and made a cup of tea for her in the morning if she was not well. But this is the exception and not the rule. There does not generally seem to be any great affection between husband and wife. The husband expects implicit obedience from his wife, and is prepared to enforce it. On the other hand she has certain privileges. She generally has the best courtyard in the house, to which no men are admitted but near relations, and the smaller courtyard is given up to her husband to receive his guests in.

Except in the highest classes Persian women go about a good deal, but always have to wear a veil in the street or draw the *chādar* over their faces.

The man is absolute master in his own house, and unless his wife has powerful relations he may do what he likes to her and her children, and no one will take any notice.

I knew one woman whose husband treated her like a slave. He forced her not only to do all the work of the house, but the work of the stable too, for he was well enough off to keep a horse. He killed one child in her arms, and twice stole another away from her, sending it once to a town a week's journey off, and once to another part of the town. Finally he divorced her, without giving any reason, and left her ill and destitute. And she had at no time any redress.

Certainly Muhammadanism does not tend to make good husbands, nor perhaps good wives either. The Persians are many of them kindly people, however, and treat their wives better than Muhammad taught them to do. Otherwise the lot of women in Persia would be harder than it is. One great evil they are spared, for the widows are not despised and ill-treated as the Hindu widows are, but are allowed to marry again, and generally do so if they are of a suitable age.

Still the condition of girls in Persia is not a happy one, and I think that all of you who have Christian mothers, and know what the love of such a mother can be, will have something to pray about, when you think of mothers and their children in Persia.

CHAPTER XV

SICK CHILDREN

MEASLES, scarlet fever, whooping cough, mumps, chickenpox, Persian children have them all. Typhoid fever, diphtheria, rheumatic fever are all common. But almost the commonest illness of all is smallpox.

A woman brought a child into the dispensary waiting-room one day covered with a smallpox rash. The doctor, new to the country, ordered her out, condemning her reckless disregard for infection. "Is there anyone who has not had smallpox?" she asked, looking round at the thirty or forty other people in the room. As she expected, all had had it, and she came in.

It is considered a children's illness, because people hardly ever grow up without having had it. In fact, their parents take care they shall not, for they are so afraid they will take it badly at an awkward time that they choose a convenient time, and either put the child with a person who has smallpox mildly, or, oftener, inoculate him with it, just as we inoculate our babies with vaccine.

My cook asked me one day, with tears, to go and see his baby; they had given it smallpox to get it over, and it had taken it badly. I am glad to say it recovered. He had not thought it necessary to make any difference in his cooking for us, while he was spending his nights with a baby with smallpox. Another missionary's cook brought his little boy with smallpox to the kitchen because it was more cheerful for him than being at home; he could lie and watch his father cooking.

So the Persians do not take much trouble to prevent their children from getting ill. How do they care for them when they are ill?

First of all they start doctoring them themselves, except in smallpox, when they say it is dangerous to give any medicine. For other illnesses they give plenty of

medicine, not in little teaspoonfuls, but in nice big bowlfuls, and the nastier it is the more good they think it will do. On the whole Persian children are exceedingly good about taking their medicine, but whether they are or not they have to take it. One way of giving it to naughty children is to pour it through their noses from a little tin cup with a long narrow spout.

If the child gets no better the doctor is consulted ; very often two or three doctors are called in, and sometimes the parents follow the doctor's advice, but very often they do not. It depends partly on the beads, and a good deal on how much they have paid. If they pay much they generally make the patient take all the medicine for fear their money should be wasted. If the doctor seems unable to cure the patient a reader is called in, sometimes a man, sometimes a woman, who reads the Quran over the patient in the hope that it may effect a cure where medical treatment has failed.

In the case of a long, tiresome illness, or when they despair of recovery, it is not uncommon for the patient's friends to hasten the end by giving a dose of poison.

One girl, who had very little the matter with her, but was always making a fuss over her ailments, gave her family a great deal of trouble with her fancies. They found her recovery was likely to be slow, and although she was going on well they one day told the doctor that " they had *given her sherbet* and she had died."

I myself was several times asked to give poison in the form of medicine, and I think they were rather surprised when I told them how Christians regard such a thing.

When the medical missionary starts work he may be puzzled by the very common request that he will give the second medicine first. It appears that the people think, with how much truth I cannot say, that their doctors give first a medicine to make the patient worse and then one to make him better.

Perhaps that was what the devoted old grandmother was thinking of, who had brought her poor little granddaughter in from a village many miles away, very, very ill with rheumatic fever. She called in the English doctor, and got her medicine from the dispensary, but when the doctor called next day, she said she had not given the child any, because she remembered she had never asked if it would do her good and so she was afraid to try it.

It must surely have been in the minds of the friends of one patient who came to the missionary, and said their friend was worse every time she took her medicine, and they wanted some more, it was doing her so much good.

When you are very ill, Mother keeps you very quiet and does not let you see visitors, but when a little Persian is very ill all the neighbours crowd in to see him, and the more ill he is the more people come in. And they do not tread on tiptoe and talk in a whisper, they all talk quite loud out and smoke *qaliāns* and drink tea, and make noise enough to give anyone in good health a headache, much more a sick child.

One day I was called in to see a child who was dangerously ill. Instead of showing me into her room, the mother, together with a variety of aunts, sisters, and other relations, escorted me to their receiving-

room. I asked for the sick child, and was told I should see her after tea, which meant at least half an hour's delay. As the account they had given of her sounded very bad, I said I could not wait, that it was not our custom to think of tea-drinking and entertainment when our patients were perhaps dying. With great difficulty I managed to persuade them to take me to the poor little girl, whom they had left alone while they all came to have tea and sweets with me. She was, as they had said, very ill, her recovery was very doubtful, yet as soon as we left the room, and had sent for the medicine, they were all eager to entertain me, and I do not think anyone would have stayed with the child if I had not insisted, and they were all as gay and lively as if they had had no one dangerously ill in the next room.

The Persians are very hospitable and like to put their best before a visitor, and they consider it very necessary to provide something nice for the doctor. Some Persian doctors send word beforehand what refreshments they would like got ready.

Sometimes this deters the very poor from calling in even the mission doctor, who, they know, would treat them free. They cannot even provide tea and sugar. It was a great relief to more than one poor person, when it was discovered that the mission ladies were fond of boiled turnips, for a plate of turnips was within the reach of the poorest, costing only about a halfpenny. The news spread, and several sick people were able at once to have a doctor.

But it is in surgery that one sees the Persian doctor at his worst.

Here comes little Husain with his head plastered

up with mud ; on removing the mud we find a broken skull and a large wound in a foul condition. Next comes little Sakīneh with both hands burnt ; the burns are smeared with sticky white of egg covered over with leaves ; it will take days of proper dressing to get the wounds clean. But she is not so badly off as Rubābeh, whose burn has been dressed with camphorated oil, and is so inflamed that she screams and cries the whole time.

A more fortunate child was the little girl who was scalded nearly all over, but not deeply, and who looked like a little nigger with the *ink* they had put on. She got well very quickly. It is like Indian ink, and seems to be the best of the remedies the Persians use for burns.

With broken bones the Persian doctors are not very successful either. Little Hasan, aged four, fell and broke both arms. The Persian doctor as usual tied them up with splints that were too small to be any real use, but he tried to make up for that by tying the bandages very tight, and poor little Hasan had both arms partly destroyed. How proud he was when, after some weeks at the C.M.S. hospital, he was able to carry an English doll clasped to his heart with the two poor bandaged stumps.

There was some truth in what one doctor said, that more than half the cases that came into the hospital had come there in consequence of the Persian doctors' treatment. The remedy is generally worse than the disease.

There are exceptions, and I have met Persian doctors, who not only had real knowledge of medical treatment, but had some of the true doctor's spirit of pity and self-sacrifice. Especially I would mention the brave

Persian doctor who stayed at his post in Shiraz in the cholera epidemic of 1904, and fought that terrible disease instead of yielding to the panic that had seized his fellow countrymen.

It is evident, however, that there is a great and crying need for dispensaries and hospitals in Persia. So in the north the American Presbyterians, and in the south the Church Missionary Society, have founded them in a number of towns.

As a rule a dispensary is started first, to which out-patients can come to get medicines and have their hurts attended to. Later a hospital is opened. Generally the first hospital is a very poor affair, but as the work grows money is collected, and nice, clean, convenient hospitals are built and furnished. Armenian and Persian boys and girls are trained as nurses and assistants, the boys for the men's hospital, the girls for the women's and children's.

Here Hasan and 'Ali, Fātimeh and Rubābeh, and a great many other little Persian children are made as comfortable as their illness allows, and are kept clean and happy in comfortable beds, and well fed and cared for.

Morning and evening they hear prayers read, and soon they too venture to join in the "Our Father." And every day someone reads and explains in the ward something about the Lord Jesus Christ, and His love and His teaching, and they learn that He knows and loves each little Akbar or Sakīneh and wants them for His own, and they learn to love Him because He first loved them. They learn hymns too, and love to sing them, the same hymns that you know so well, "Whiter



than snow," "Simply trusting," "Here we suffer grief and pain," and many others.

The last recalls the story of little Bāgum, the child-wife, who was deliberately and cruelly burnt by her husband, and was brought to the mission hospital. There was no hope of recovery, but all was done that was possible to relieve her pain and brighten her last days.

She had heard something of the Gospel story from a missionary who had paid a visit to her native village, and she had been so interested that she had asked two Persian children to teach her more. When she was brought to the hospital even the terrible pain she was suffering did not make her forget the wonderful story, and she begged to be told more and more. And resting in the love of Christ and trusting wholly in Him and His salvation, she loved to sing of the joy to which He was going to take her and kept begging for "Here we suffer grief and pain," and repeating over and over the refrain, "Shādī, Shādī," (joy, joy), until even the Muhammadan women would sit beside her and sing the hymn that comforted her so much.

In a small village in another part of Persia lived a little lame girl. She could not walk at all, and her leg was drawn up so that she could not straighten it, and she suffered very much. She was a good deal of trouble to her parents, and they got tired of taking care of her, and neglected her a good deal, till at last her father heard of the mission hospital in the neighbouring town, seventeen miles off, and took her there to see if the *Ferangis* (Europeans) could cure her. She was taken in, washed, and dressed in clean clothes and

put to bed. At first she used to scream when her leg was touched, but it was operated on, and gradually, very gradually, the pain grew less, and the leg grew straighter. But still, as the months went on, the recovery was very slow, and when the weather grew so hot that the hospital had to be closed and her father took her home, though free from pain while she lay still in bed, the pain was so great when she tried to stand that she could not walk a step. But as she lay alone on her bed at home she thought over all she had heard at the hospital, and one day a new thought struck her. Surely the *Khānums* had told her that the Lord Jesus Christ, Who used to cure people so wonderfully, was alive still and could hear when anyone spoke to Him. Why had she never asked Him to make her leg well? And then and there, in her ignorance and simple faith, she asked Him, Who in the old Gospel days had made the lame to walk, to make her walk, and, confident in His love and power, she "arose and walked."

When the hospital was reopened she came back again still lame, still in pain, but able to walk about with a stick. And she loved more than ever to hear of Him who had not only done so much for the sick Jews of old times, but had done so much too for her.

CHAPTER XVI

CONCLUSION

A PERSIAN was one day talking to an English missionary and asked why our King did not annex Persia.

"It is not right," said the missionary, "to take what belongs to someone else, and Persia belongs to your Shah."

"Still your King is surely bound to do as the Bible tells him, and the Bible tells him to annex it."

"Where does the Bible say that?"

"Does it not say that if you see your neighbour's ox or ass fallen into a pit you are to pull it out? And Persia is an ass fallen into a pit, and your King should pull her out."

Yes, Persia has indeed fallen into a pit, and we must pull her out, but the pit is not simply one of political difficulty, it is the pit of Muhammadanism, Persia's most real difficulty, and we must annex Persia for the King of Kings. As long as the Persians are Muhammadans lying and dishonesty will be the rule, cruelty and injustice will go hand in hand, the poor will be oppressed, the girls and women will be treated as inferior creatures, the children will be liable to overwork and cruelty, and religious persecution will continue. And the Persians are finding out that they are in the pit and they are struggling to get out, they are crying to us for help. Are we going to help them?

Thousands of Muhammadans in Persia are dissatisfied with their religion, and are looking for something better. Many are trying a dissenting form of Muhammadanism, called Bābiism, but many are looking to Christianity for help.

At first they distrusted the Christians, and Christian work was constantly hindered or stopped. Now they have learnt to know and trust the Christians, and the work is not greatly interfered with. Indeed every-

where the Persians are asking for teachers and doctors, for schools and hospitals, and for Christian teaching.

If we do not help them in their search after the Way, the Truth, and the Light, Muhammad's mistake, which has caused so much misery, may be repeated, and Christianity rejected in favour of some new religion made to suit the needs of the moment, but not the needs of eternity. We must all put our shoulder to the wheel to prevent that.

The Persians are well worth an effort. Numbers of Babis went to their death in 1903 rather than deny their prophet, and even children have stood persecution for Christ. "I have a foolish husband," said one little girl. "He says he will beat Jesus Christ out of me, but he can only beat my body, and Jesus Christ is in my heart, so he cannot beat Him out."

And the Persians are naturally a religious people, and if their religious energy could be turned from dead works, formal prayers, fastings, pilgrimages, divining, —turned to the service of the true and living God, what a splendid people they might be again, what a force for God in Asia, and in the world. For the wave of true religious life would act again on us and help us on. God grant we may yet see the Persian, stunted as he is by Muhammadanism, grow up to a perfect man to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. And what is *our* part in this great work? It is threefold.

1. *Prayer.* Persia wants our prayers. God wants our prayers for Persia. We none of us know all the power and possibilities of prayer, and most of us are surprised when we get direct and obvious answers to

our prayers. It takes us a long time to find out that God answers all our prayers, but He does. And there are many in Persia who need our prayers : the missionaries ; the converts, often standing alone in a Muhammadan house or even in a village or in a quarter of the town, with no Christian friend to encourage them ; the inquirers, perplexed as to the truth, or struggling with their fears of confessing the Saviour in Whom they have learnt to believe ; the untouched Muhammadans, oppressing or oppressed ; the schools, the hospitals and dispensaries, and the services held week by week in the name of Jesus Christ.

2. *Giving.* We may help to send out missionaries and to keep up the schools and hospitals, either by giving some of our money, or our time and work. Have you only five loaves and two small fishes ? Our Lord can use them to feed five thousand men besides women and children.

3. *Personal service.* We cannot all be missionaries in the foreign field. No, but those who cannot give themselves for foreign service can do " garrison duty " at home. People often try to dissuade missionaries from going abroad, telling them they are wanted at home. But they ought not to be wanted at home ; every Christian who cannot go abroad ought to be doing his share of the work at home, so that those who can go abroad may be spared.

And you who read this book, if you want to help forward God's kingdom in heathen and Muhammadan lands, set to work now at once to fit yourselves to work as Christian teachers, that you may be ready to take your place in the ranks here or there as the great

Captain places you. Get to know your Bibles well, studying them if possible with commentaries or aids. Do not let shyness stand in the way of your undertaking direct Christian work if you are old enough. Do your lessons or your work thoroughly and well, and so make yourselves more fit to be used when the time comes. Get into good habits of healthy living and simple food. Put away all unkind words and thoughts and learn to live in charity with all men. Be regular in your prayers morning and evening, and if possible get a regular time for midday prayer, even if it is only two minutes, but speak to God too all through the day—get into the habit of turning to Him at all times. For whether we work here at home or far away in foreign lands we can only do God's work by keeping in close touch with Him.