

vices of the national clergy, says this writer, had reached such a pitch that a change was inevitable. The political and social condition of the people was deplorable. In this

2. The third Kajar King of Persia, who ascended the throne on the death of his grandfather, Fathi Ali Shah.

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state of affairs a young Mullah of Shiraz, Mirza Ali Mohammed, supposed to be a Fatimide by descent, who had studied much, had travelled a great deal and made the pilgrimage to the holy cities, and had for many years resided in Arabia and Syria, began to preach a social and moral reform. He denounced the hypocrisy of the ordinary mullahs, and their reception of the most doubtful traditions to justify practices condemned by Islam. His words struck a sympathetic chord in minds already prepared for the reception of his views, and evoked extraordinary enthusiasm. He obtained numerous disciples, among them a young lady of Kazwin, whose learning and eloquence supplied a powerful support to his cause. She is venerated now as Kurrat-ul-'Ayn, "Light of the Eyes." Mirza Ali Mohammed, either carried away by the enthusiasm of his followers, or unhinged by his own exaltation, in a fit of pantheistical insanity, assumed the title of Bab Hazrat-i-a'ala, and styled himself a part of the Divinity. His followers rose in arms against the constituted authorities and failed. The fanaticism of the clergy and political expediency gave rise to a persecution, for which even Gobineau thinks the Babis were primarily responsible. The Bab was killed with most of his prominent disciples. But his teachings have survived. His social precepts are said by Gobineau to be much in advance of the received doctrines. He attached great importance to the marriage-relations, and during the continuance of the first marriage he allowed the taking of a second wife only under certain conditions. He absolutely interdicted concubinage, forbade divorce, and allowed the appearance of women in public. The custom of seclusion, as Gobineau justly observes, creates infinite disorders, and exercises a pernicious influence on the early education of children. The usage itself does not depend on any religious prescription, it is simply a convenience. The ancient kings of Persia observed it as a sign of grandeur, and the Moslem sovereigns and chiefs imitated their example, and adopted the custom. Among the Arabs the women of the tribes are perfectly free to move about as they wish. The ladies of the Prophet's family conversed with the disciples, received their visits, and often shared in the repasts of the men. Mirza Ali Mohammed therefore, says

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Gobineau, made no innovation in endeavouring to free women from the bondage of a mischievous custom. His religious doctrines are essentially pantheistic, and his code of morals, far from being lax, is strict and rigid.¹

Some Moslem writers have divided the religious sects into two comprehensive groups, viz. the Ahl-ul-bátin, the Intuitionists, and the Ahl-uz-zahir, those who look into the meaning of precepts, and those who look only to the literal sense. The Ahl-ul-bátin, however, must not be confounded with the Batinis.

The Ahl-ul-batin include the mystical Sufis, the philosophical mutakallimin, and the Idealists in general, "all those," to use the words of Zamakhshari's comment, "who strive to implant in their hearts the roots of divine perfection," who strive and struggle to attain the highest standard of human excellence, and who, whilst conforming to the prescriptions of the law, perceive in them the divine intent to promote concord and harmony among the races of the earth, peace and goodwill among mankind.²

1. The most recent account of this remarkable religious movement, from the Babi point of view, is to be found in Professor E. G. Browne's *New History of the Bab*, which purports to be a translation of a Babi work called *Tarikh-i-Jadid*. Professor Browne's Introduction is extremely interesting. From the *Tarikh* one can picture the fascinating personality of Kurrat-ul-'Ayn; see Appendix III. This great scholar has given to the world in his new work, called *Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion*, considerable additional information regarding its development and diffusion. Bahaism, its latest phase, which flourishes chiefly in the United States of America, appears to have largely assimilated the doctrines of Christian Science.

2. See post, chap. xi.

APPENDIX III

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Whatever the sins of the Babis may have been, their punishment, in its barbarous inhumanity, far exceeded their deserts — a punishment borne with sublime fortitude which cannot help evoking the admiration of every heart not steeped in racial or religious fanaticism and which is bearing its natural fruit. The sect, instead of dying out, is increasing in number, and judging from the few professed Babis I have met, actuated with bitter hatred against the Mullahs whom they believe to be the primary cause of their persecution.

The cruelties to which the Babis were subjected were the acts of an ignorant populace and a frightened governor hounded on by fanatical

priests. In China, in our own times, under the eyes of the civilised world, disciplined troops of certain civilised Powers perpetrated the most diabolical and nameless horrors upon unoffending citizens and helpless women and children. Crimes like these destroy one's faith in humanity and progress. (p. 359)

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Bábis. — The Babis, who have now split up into several sections, are to be found chiefly in foreign countries. They are said to abound in the United States ; many of them are settled in Beyrout and not a few in Bombay and Calcutta. The greatest authority in England on Babism, Professor E. G. Browne, says that the Babi cult has nothing in common with Sufism. One fundamental difference between the two cults lies in their mentality; whilst Sufism shows great charity towards differing systems, Babism is intensely exclusive, not to say fanatical.

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