



sleeves, minus a collar and tie, and with a hat on. It is so much like a military cap that it appears much more incongruous than the fez or tarbouche, which is a smart headgear.

As we lingered on in the public gardens, sipping our tea, and enjoying the little cakes, we went over the history of that sect, the Babis or Bahais, which has found many adherents in Persia to-day, and to whom Tabriz is a hallowed place. For here, near the spot where we were sitting, the young prophet of Shiraz, Mirza Ali Mohamed, better known as the "Bab," was executed in 1850. He was the founder of the Babi religion, the word Bab meaning the Gate, whereby men might learn great spiritual truths and mysteries. Mirza Ali Mohamed was born in 1820, and at the time of his death had a large following. His life appears to have been not only exemplary, but he had that charm and magnetism that all leaders of great movements possess. His writings which he compiled for the use of his followers, have as their keynote the universal love of mankind, and incorporate some of the great ethics and poignant teachings of both Christ and Mohamed, and none of the fierceness and sensuality often to be found in eastern religions. Naturally enough the mullas of Islam began to be alarmed at the rapid growth of this new sect, and took measures to check it. Persecutions followed and the Bab, with several of his most noted followers, were shot just outside the Citadel, being first suspended to a gallows while their bodies were riddled with bullets. It is said that many of the Babis looked on the Bab as the Imam Mahdi, who, according to the Shiite sect of Mohammedans, is to return one day as Saviour of the world.

On the death of the Bab his mantle fell on a youth, Mirza Yahya, called also Subh-i-Ezel, the Dawn of

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Eternity, and who had been designed by the Bab himself to be his successor. After the events of 1850, many of the Babis, and with them Mirza Yahya and his family, fled to Baghdad, hoping to find protection under the Turks, but they were removed by the Porte to Adrianople. In 1866 occurred an event which rent the sect in twain. Mirza Husein Ali, the half-brother of the now acknowledged Bab, who possessed a more assertive character than his half-brother, suddenly announced that he was the true Bab who should succour the world, the others having been the forerunners, and he called himself Beha'u'llah, the Splendour of God. He called on all Babis to acknowledge him as such; many, however, refused to do this, adhering to the supremacy of Mirza Yahya. Meanwhile both sections of this religion were again deported by the Turks—Mirza Yahya of the Bab, with his followers, to Famagusta, on the island of Cyprus, and the Bahais, the adherents of Mirza Hussein Ali, the Beha'u'llah, to Acre in Syria. From here the Bahai faith has spread widely, over Asia, America, and through Europe, and numbers over two millions, while the Babis have dwindled to almost nothing. When the British took over Cyprus in 1878, they found Mirza Yahya a state prisoner. He remained on the island till his death in 1912, surrounded by a few faithful disciples, as a pensioner of the Cyprus Government, as he had no means of subsistence, other than the

allowance made to him. Mirza Hussein Ali, Beha'u'llah, died in Acre in 1892 and was succeeded by his son, known as Ghun-i-Azam, the Most Mighty Branch. Now that religious persecutions have been temporarily stopped, at any rate in Persia, the Bahais are no longer afraid to acknowledge their religion. They have a large colony in Tabriz and are considered a very law-abiding and industrious sect.

Tabriz at the present time is neither an interesting,

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nor is it a beautiful city. What fine buildings it may have possessed have been ruthlessly pulled down by the modern town architects, and poor erections are being put up in their stead. Even the bazaars, that used to rank among some of the finest in Persia, are being gradually demolished. One which has been partially pulled down, and whose present entrance gives on to a new wide street built on the site of a vanished bazaar, looked exactly like the entry to a railway tunnel, the vaulted arch of the bazaar being exposed without the customary gate or tiled portal. The old ones which we did penetrate into, had handsome wide streets, chiefly full of Russian goods, the conical sugar loaves, wrapped in purple or blue paper, being very conspicuous. The foreign wares come chiefly from Russia, Czecho-Slovakia and Germany, being brought through Russia, and only the food shops still retain their Persian characteristics....

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