

but a Babi, or rather a Behai, of which sect there are hundreds of adherents in Najifabad, and most of them, if not all, believe that Jesus Christ came again in the person of Beha, some fifty years ago.

I did not have any other visitors this evening, and, being very tired after dinner, was glad to have prayers and go to bed early.

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Thursday, July 13th, 1893.

Began the day with reading and prayer in the dispensary, with the patients, who listened attentively and reverently whilst Johannes conducted prayers before proceeding to attend to their bodily necessities. I have a little room in the caravanserai, close to the dispensary, so that it is very easy for any of the people to drop in and see me, and to-day I have had a succession of visitors, both Mohammedans and Behais, all day long for conversation and Bible-reading. Amongst others, the man with whom I had a little talk about salvation yesterday evening.

The Behais assured me that, without doubt, Christ returned to this earth fifty-two years ago, but I found it very easy to point out to them from the Word of God how utterly they are mistaken in this matter; for we have such numerous signs given and distinct statements as to the Second Advent, every one of which has been falsified if we say that He came again fifty-two years ago and again died! After reading to them five or six passages about our Lord's coming, proving that He will come in glory as Judge and King, with the saints and angels, &c., &c., I generally find that they are completely silenced by the Word of God; then they go and read, and discuss the subject again with their friends, to try and find some new argument, after which they return to me for further information. Many of them read the Gospels (which they accept as a true revelation), and I trust our conversations will gradually lead them on to study them more, and thus find salvation through the only Mediator and Saviour.

Most of these people have something of mysticism and pantheism in their views. They argue against Creation and Resurrection, and have no adequate conception of the nature of sin. Some of them denied that Christ actually, in a material sense, rose from the dead, or ascended in a bodily form into heaven; and they explain His miracles of healing by saying that He did not really give sight to the blind or cleanse the lepers, but only in a spiritual sense, as He now gives cleansing from sin and sight to the spiritually blind. It is, however, of the greatest importance that they accept the Scriptures as the undoubted Word of God, and consequently, by reading with them, it is possible to point out to them the errors into which they have fallen.

Thirty-two patients came to the dispensary to-day, and, whilst I was busy in my little room reading and conversing with those who came to me, Johannes was frequently occupied in the same way with others, teaching them the truth as it is in Jesus.

Friday, 14th.

At prayers this morning I noticed, amongst others, a Persian official who was listening most attentively. He paid me a visit in my little room afterwards, and, thinking that I was not very comfortable in the caravanserai, with its publicity, noise, and dirt, he most cordially invited me to come and stay at his house, promising to give me a nice room to myself, and pressing me to have my things moved at once and come to take possession of it. I pointed out to him that I wished to be near the dispensary, and also that in the caravanserai all classes of the people had free access to my room, which could not so well be the case in a private house, for the Mohammedans and the followers of Beha do not freely visit each other's houses, whereas both parties are able to come to my present quarters. I of course thanked him most warmly for his kind consideration, and, after a nice conversation, presented him with a copy of the entire Persian Bible. Before leaving, he made me promise to come to his house in the afternoon for tea, told me that he was "nearly a Christian," and wished to know more about our religion. Later on in the day he sent to ask for a second Bible, as he has several children, and was anxious to have one for himself and one for his children; but I did not give a second copy for the same house, as we have not many complete Bibles with us.

At the appointed hour Johannes and I went to his house for tea, and were pleased to find that, after the example of Cornelius (Acts x. 24), this official had called together some of his "kinsmen and near friends," all of whom were ready to hear the Word of God. One of his sons, a bright, intelligent lad of twelve, was anxious to read to the company a chapter from the new Bible which I had given to his father in the morning. Afterwards I gave them a little Bible-reading, and we spent two hours or more very pleasantly and, I trust, profitably, chiefly considering the question of our Lord's Second Coming.

Saturday, 15th

This morning again

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I had visitors in my room, both Mohammedans and Behais, with whom I had interesting conversations and reading; twenty-six patients came to the dispensary. In the afternoon a friendly bachelor undertook to show me all the best gardens, or rather orchards, of Najifabad, well stocked with apricots, almonds, peaches, plums, pomegranates, walnuts, &c. In passing from one garden to another it was necessary to creep through a small hole in the wall on hoods and knees, and, this naturally gave an opportunity of speaking to the guide about the "strait gate" and the "narrow way." He was also a follower of Beha, and listened with the greatest respect and attention to all that I said about our Lord Jesus Christ.

These dear people all listen to the Gospel with the greatest readiness, and admit that they know no other way of salvation; but, on the other hand, they seem to have absolutely no sense of sin, and consequently do not understand the

necessity of earnestly seeking the Saviour. Oh, that they may learn truly to know Him whom to know is life eternal, that thus they may become a blessing to the Mohammedans all around them!

In the evening we went to dine with one of the Behais, who also invited, two or three of his friends to meet us, and there, for fully two hours, we were able, with open Bibles, to give them our message of life. Some of them are, apparently, very ignorant of the truths of the Gospel, but all are willing to listen, and all are agreed that the Christian Scriptures contain a real message from God to their souls.

Sunday, 16th.

We had a little Persian service this morning, and seven or eight Mohammedans and Behais came in, or sat at the door, and listened most attentively to my sermon, which took rather the form of a Bible-reading. Four or Five of them remained for conversation afterwards. Later on in the morning a Mohammedan with a large white turban seated himself at the door, saying, as they very often do, in a purely mechanical way, "La ilaha illa Allah" (i.e. "There is no god but God"), so I at once responded by quoting the passages, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord," "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all," and told him that we most firmly hold to the doctrine of the Unity of God. He seemed much surprised, both at my noticing his ejaculation and also at my agreeing to the truth of it, and I had an interesting talk with him, but, unfortunately, he was not able to read.

There are no Jews living in Najifabad, but during the afternoon I noticed a big boy standing at the door, and in response to my inquiry if he knew the way of salvation, he replied, without hesitation, "Through Messiah." I found that he was a Jewish lad who had come into the caravanserai for an hour or so on his way through the place to trade in some of the neighbouring villages, so I invited him into my room, read some passages to him from the Prophet Isaiah, and preached Christ to him. He admitted that the Prophets foretold the sufferings and death of Messiah, and told me that he had, seen me before, and heard me explain the same truths, on one or more Saturday afternoons, in the Jewish quarter of Ispahan; but then he brought forward the argument which they often use now, viz. that there must be two Messiahs - Messiah Ben Joseph and Messiah Ben David - and, though willing to admit that our Lord was the suffering Messiah, they still deny that He was the true Messiah, the Son of David, who is yet to come. Surely it is an important point gained when the Jews admit that our Lord Jesus Christ was the suffering Messiah, for a further study of the Scriptures must convince them, if they really seek for the truth, that Messiah is not two, but One.

This Jewish lad was presently called away, but I was very thankful for the opportunity of delivering my message to one of the lost sheep of the House of Israel, as well as to the followers of Mohammed and Beha.

In the evening I had a short walk, and a young Persian, who was very much

struck by the shape and appearance of my double-terai hat, came up and asked me what it was made of! After a few general remarks, I asked him if he knew the way of salvation, and he promptly replied "Ali," but he had no notion as to the way in which Ali (the son-in-law and kinsman of Mohammed) was to save him, and I took the opportunity of pointing him to "the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world."

Monday, 17th.

As usual I had a

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good many visitors, both morning and afternoon, and it is encouraging to see many of the same faces again and again, apparently eager to hear more and more about "the Way, the Truth, and the Life."

One Mohammedan came in and asked me for a copy of St. John's Gospel, which I gladly gave him; some hours afterwards he returned and said, "It is good, very good, but I want more, let me have the whole New Testament." I gave it to him, but he was afraid to take it away by daylight and preferred to leave it with me till dark.

Twenty-seven people came to Johannes in the dispensary to-day, for medicine, &c., and some of those who dropped in to see me remained two hours.

Tuesday, 18th.

There were about ten Persians present for prayers in the dispensary this morning, Johannes read 1 Cor. xiii. and gave them a little address on "Love;" and after prayers I had a nice talk with them about the Love of God in Christ. The Mohammedan who read St. John's Gospel yesterday, came to see me again this morning, but he was afraid to stay more than a few minutes, as he had been seen reading the Gospel in his shop yesterday, was abused for reading bad books by other Mohammedans, and was advised by them to have nothing more to do with me.

One man who came this afternoon, stayed two hours listening to Dr. Pfander's well-known book, Mizan al Hakk (or "Balance of Truth"). At the close of the reading he placed the book on his head, in token of respect and obedience, and took it away with him, evidently with great satisfaction.

Wednesday, 19th.

My last day in Najifabad, and I arranged for an interview with the leading man amongst the Behais, who was away when I came last week, but has now returned. Before going out to see him, I had visitors in my little room, and they were much interested in another of Dr. Pfander's books, viz., the Tareek ul Hyal (or "The Way of Life"), which we read together for some time, and discussed various points connected with the reading. I gave away a few copies of Pfander's books to those who were anxious to read them, as they are exceedingly useful in leading inquirers to the Truth

In the afternoon Johannes and I went to the appointed house to meet the chief exponent of Behai principles, and had a most interesting time with him, and a room full at his co-religionists. We had, of course, taken the Word of God with us, and for three hours and a half we studied it together, and pointed out passage after passage bearing upon their particular views, and especially combating the position that our Lord's Second Advent took place fifty-two years ago. They were all most friendly, and it was evident that many of them were much struck by the accumulation of proofs from God's Word that Christ has not yet come again as He promised: even their leader admitted that perhaps Christ will after all come again in glory, but then he added, "See how few Mohammedans you Christians have as yet won for Christ! Now, there are thousands upon thousands of us who have been brought away from Islam by one man; all of us were previously just as much bigoted Moslems as any in the country, like them we blasphemed and denied that the Gospel is the Word. of God, but now by the instrumentality of one man we have been brought to acknowledge the Truth, and to acknowledge the Gospel as without doubt a true revelation from God. Is not that a sufficient proof that the one man who has accomplished this in fifty years must be Christ Himself, who has returned as He promised?"

I answered that we were most thankful for any means by which they had been brought to read and. believe the Gospel, and I desired to say nothing against the man who had accomplished this really wonderful work, on the contrary I thanked God for it, and trusted that it would help to prepare the way for Christ's Coming by raising up witnesses for Him in the country; but of course I added that this argument did not in the least affect the statement in God's Word as to His Second Coming, which most certainly had not been fulfilled up to the present time. We had a little further conversation as to the necessity of baptism and public confession of Christ for those who believe on Him, and I was assured again and again that they know no other way of salvation but the death of Christ for their offences, and His rising again for their justification.

Johannes (the dispenser) was, as

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usual, a great help to me during these three and a half hours' conversation, in supporting my arguments, returning very good answers to some of their objections, and calling attention to passages of Scripture which met many of their views.

One thing which especially draws out one's sympathy for these poor people is the terrible sufferings which they have undergone for what they believe to be the Truth. Many hundreds of them have been put to death in different parts of Persia; here in Najifabad itself seven have suffered martyrdom, many others have been killed in the villages round, and they are always being more or less persecuted on account of their religion. The man who sat immediately opposite me during the conversation just mentioned, had been imprisoned for six months, beaten, and then mutilated by having part of his ears cut off. The man who sat on my left hand told me that his own father was murdered for being a Behai. But

one and all declare that they will die rather than renounce their faith, and though very many have been killed, I have not yet heard of one who has abjured his faith, This makes one long still more that these dear people should become true followers of our Lord Jesus Christ, as "the fear of man" which "bringeth a snare" is certainly one of the greatest difficulties over which we have to contend, and we specially need in Persia a little band of converts who are prepared, if necessary, to lay down their lives for the Master and Saviour who laid down His life for them.

Thursday, 20th.

This morning I saw a good many of my friends of the past week who came to say good-bye to me, and in the afternoon I rode back some twenty miles to Julfa.

After being for eighteen months in an Armenian village, it has been a great pleasure to spend a week really amongst the Persians, to hear nothing but the Persian language, and to see something of Persian customs. One was constantly reminded of such passages of Scripture as Matt. xxvi. 23, "He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish..." as of course such a thing happens at every meal, and it was interesting to observe at the end of supper that the host rises and brings water, and himself washes the hands of all his guests, by pouring water over them, bringing to one's remembrance St. John xiii. 4, 5, where our Lord in His humility washes the disciples' feet.

I left Najifabad with feelings of very great thankfulness that I had been permitted to meet with so many who are apparently seekers after God, but I also came away with other thoughts and feelings of sorrow and even shame that the Church of Christ (and the C.M.S., which represents that Church in this part of the world) should be so backward in entering doors which God Himself has opened for the extension of Christ's Kingdom. Less than a year ago (May, 1892) Dr. Bruce wrote, "There are glorious openings just now in Persia for Mission work," but in spite of constant appeals for more workers, we are still terribly undermanned. We are indeed thankful that the Rev. W. St. Clair Tisdall has come to Persia, but it must be remembered that his coming is not a reinforcement, as he came to take Dr. Bruce's place, and since the Rev. H. Carless has been temporarily transferred to Baghdad, our numbers are less than before, and we are now only two men for the whole of this immense district, so that we are only really able to occupy our one centre, and must leave the rest of the country practically untouched. What I have written above of my experiences of Najifabad shows, I think, how much may be done in the way of removing prejudices, and gaining the friendship of the people by a young Armenian with some knowledge of medicine; but unfortunately we have no other young man with this knowledge to send forth for similar work in other places, and we have no young men acquiring this knowledge, for the simple reason that for the last three years we have had no medical missionary, either to work himself or to train others.

May the great Lord at the Harvest, who has opened so many doors for the entrance of His children, speak to many hearts at home, and may they hear His

voice, saying, "Son, go work to-day in My vineyard," that, coming forth in the power of the Holy Spirit, they may bring home many sheaves for the Master's glory in this ancient land of Persia!

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