

admixture of the secret sect of the Babis. In some

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respects the Shiah are more fanatical than the Sunnis, as, for instance, it is quite possible to visit a mosque in Turkey, but here a Christian is not allowed to cross the threshold of the outer gate. Certain customs are also more rigidly observed. A Persian woman would be in danger of death from the mob if she appeared unveiled in the streets. When I walked through the town, though attended by a number of men, the major-domo begged me to exchange my gauze veil for a mask, and even when I showed this deference to custom the passing through the bazars was very unpleasant, the men being decidedly rude, and inclined to hoot and use bad language. Even the touch of a Christian is regarded as polluting, and I nearly got into trouble by handling a "flap-jack," mistaking it for a piece of felt. The bazars are not magnificent. No rich carpets or other goods are exposed to view for fear of exactions. A buyer wanting such things must send word privately, and have them brought to his house.

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... I did not get away in less than two hours. The Amir and Mirza, used to each other's modes of expression, found no difficulties, and Mirza being a man of education as well as intelligence, thought was conveyed as easily as fact. The lady kept her fine eyes lowered except when her husband spoke to her.

The chief topics were the education and position of women in England, religion, politics, and the future of Persia, and on all the Amir expressed himself with a breadth and boldness which were astonishing. How far the Amir has gone in the knowledge of the Christian faith I cannot say, nor do I feel at liberty to repeat his most interesting thoughts. A Sunni, a liberal, desiring complete religious liberty, absolutely tolerant to the Babis, grateful for the kindness shown to some of them by the British Legation, and for the protection still given to them at the C.M.S. house, admiring Dr. Bruce's persevering work, and above all the Medical Mission, which he regards as "the crown of beneficence" and "the true imitation of the life of the Great Prophet, Jesus," all he said showed a strongly religious nature, and a philosophical mind much given to religious thought. "All true religions aim at one thing," he said, "to make the heart and life pure."

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... However, Isfahan is full of religious intolerance which can easily be excited to frenzy, and the arrogance of the

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mollahs has increased since the fall from almost regal state of the Zil-i-Sultan, the Shah' eldest son, into the position of a provincial governor, for he curbed them somewhat, and now the restraint is removed. However, it is against the Jews and the Bábis, rather than the Christians, that their hostility is directed.

A few weeks ago some Bábis were peaceably returning to a neighbouring village, when they were attacked, and seven of their number massacred under atrocious circumstances, the remainder taking refuge for a time in the British Telegraph office. Several of both sexes who escaped are in concealment here in a room in the Hospital compound, one of them with a broken jaw.

The hiding of these Bábis has given great umbrage to the bigots of Isfahan, though the Amír-i-Panj justified it on all grounds, and about the time I arrived it was said that a thousand city fanatics purposed to attack the mission premises. But at one of the mosques there is a mollah, who with Gamaliel-like wisdom urged upon them "that if 300 Moslems were killed nothing would happen, but if a single European were killed, what then?"¹

¹ I have written nothing about this fast-increasing sect of the Bábis, partly because being a secret sect, I doubt whether the doctrines which are suffered to leak out form really any part of its esoteric teaching, and partly because those Europeans who have studied the Bábis most candidly are diametrically opposed in their view of their tenets and practice, some holding that their aspirations are after a purer life, while others, and I think a majority, believe that their teachings are subversive of morality and of the purity of domestic life.

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