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THE NEW AND THE OLD.

Oh maiden of ancient romances,
  So modest and stately and fair,
Knowing nought of the power of your glances,
  Of your loveliness all unaware,
And full of fine words like a poet,
  Of tears as of water the sea,
Of love (but you don't seem to know it)
  And innocent glee;

I seek you in Smith's and in Mudie's,
  But ever I seek you in vain;
Though many a heroine wooed is
  And won, it is not in your strain.
And a novelette now is your medium,
  Replacing the folio of yore,
Your sentiment's voted a tedium,
  Your virtue a bore.

Clarissa, Pamela, resplendent
  In virtue, and all of your kin,
Do you blush for your modern descendant,
  For Dodo, the Aster, the Twin?
Do you ask of what *genus* this maid is,
  (Whether maiden or man do you know?)
In that ultimate region of Hades,
  Where dead heroines go.

Yet were you so hemmed and so girt in,
  Oh, maid of the past, as we think?
Had *you* never the pleasure of flirting?
  Did that maidenly eye never wink?
Were your feelings forever the Stoics
  They seem; did you always preserve
Your fine words, or when tired of heroics,
  To slang did you swerve?

We hear *you* were never exponent
  Of theories, a novelist's X,
Your sweet lips were never resonant
  With views on law, marriage, and sex.
You were dainty as china of Dresden,
  You were pedestalled far from all vice,
Oh, maiden, immured and compressed in
  A strait Paradise.

At times when the fair but pedantic
  New woman proves rather a bore,
More logical she than romantic,
  Too prosy by far to adore—
We sigh for that heroine less clever,
  That light o'er old folios cast,
Though we know you have left us forever,
  Oh maid of the past.

Chambers' Journal. W. H.

A SHETLAND SUMMER.

Now breaks a wave of golden light
O'er half the Earth, and stars are dim;
Glad birds the gleaming waters skim;
A dreamy glory gilds the night.

Now wake the dreary Northland isles
And beauty decks the lonely shores,
No more the wintry tempest roars;
And Ocean's face is wreathed in smiles.

It is the Sungod's Wooing, this
A moment to his heart to hold
His Northland love, so coy and cold—
In all the year, but one sweet kiss!

J. J. HALDANE BURGESS.

Chambers' Journal.

THE ISLAND OF IONA.

[St. Columba, though a priest, had joined in an Irish battle. The penance imposed on him was perpetual exile from Ireland. He made Iona his abode till death, preaching on the adjacent shores. Montalembert affirms that later his Irish monks converted nearly three-quarters of Anglo-Saxon England.]

Not for the tombs of old Norwegian Kings
Or Scottish, iron-mailed, and crowned at Scone;
Not for those "Island-Lords"[1] the Minstrel sings
As sang his sires in centuries past and flown;
Not for yon grassy terrace breeze-o'er-blown,
Yon crags to which the storm-'rocked shepherd clings
Eying far lights on isle and mountain thrown
As though from onward-sailing Angels' wings;
Iona! 'Tis not these that yearly draw
Thy Pilgrims hither o'er the Northern sea
And hold them there spell-bound in loving awe:
That spell, Columba, is the thought of thee!
They gaze; they muse; "these shores that Exile trod—
That Exile's sons gave England to her God!"

AUBREY DE VERE.

September, 1895. Spectator.

[1] The "Lords of the Isles."

From The Nineteenth Century.

THE BAB AND BABISM.[1]

In 1845, in the city of Shiraz, the seat of learning, as the Persians say—of rose-gardens and of nightingales, as I would call it—a young Persian began to preach. He had made the pilgrimage to Mecca, and came back full of ideas of his own—mystic and enthusiastic ideas, which evade definition and perplex the downright Anglo-Saxon understanding. However, he made it quite clear that, in his opinion, the people in general, and the priests in particular, had departed widely from the cardinal doctrines of Muhammadanism, and that the priests, in their lives, were far from practising what they did more or less erroneously preach. Now my readers will say that this is very vague; but I will make bold to say that Bab was at first as vague as myself, but his mystic hints and unintelligible suggestions were taken for the significant, if not for the magnificent. Let any one who has studied Eastern writings on religion deny, if he can, that to get anything definite out of them is as difficult as the proverbial extraction of a needle from a bundle of hay. However, the young man called himself the Gate of Heaven —the "Bab;" and it is said that he possessed a handsome appearance, engaging manners, and an eloquent tongue—powerful agents at all times for the accomplishment of any ends. A little later, and the Gate of Heaven represented himself as an emanation from the Divinity itself, and then assumed the title of "Highness," by which, also, Jesus, the son of Mary, or Miriam, is habitually known amongst Muhammadans. Next he gathered about him eighteen apostles, not that he might have half as many again as had his Highness Jesus, but because a peculiar sanctity, in his opinion, attached to the number nineteen. He, the prophet of God, the latest revelation, was the central point, round which revolved eighteen satellites, and, like the French Revolutionists, he would have renumbered and renamed everything, only with him everything would have had reference to the whole, or to the component parts of the mystic number.

Among his disciples were several persons of courage, eloquence, and resolution, probably superior to his own. Among them was the warrior-priest Hussein, who at once saw that a nation which awaited the coming of the Mahdi —the hidden one, the twelfth imam— would be more likely to believe in the new religion if its prophet were represented as the Mahdi himself. He thus traded on the ignorance of his public, for this pretension was never asserted by Bab. It is impossible, however, as we have reason to know, to keep the Mahdi out of Muhammadan politics, and this confusion of ideas was almost inevitable.

We have to thank Hussein for giving clear expression to two of the chief aims set before the Babees—viz., the abolition of polygamy, and of the doctrine of pollution. It may here be remarked that, of the many unfair criticisms directed against Islam, there is none it deserves so little as that of encouraging polygamy. When the prophet restricted the number of wives to four, he made an immense advance in morality on the state of things existing in his time amongst the Arabs, where practically every woman in a man's household was in some respects in the position of a wife. If he could have gone further, there is little doubt from his teachings that he would have, and, as a matter of fact, his followers are for the most part husbands of one wife, notwithstanding the indulgence allowed by law. It may safely be affirmed that the English are in one sense, and in a manner that is more demoralizing and degrading than the authorized polygamy of Islam, at least as polygamous as the Muhammadans themselves. It has been reserved for a canon of the Church of England to stigmatize a great moral reformer as "an ignorant and immoral Bedouin," and "a lecherous Arab," to whom Ma-

[1] This article was written before the assassination of the late shah of Persia.—ED. *Nineteenth Centnry*.

homet bore, in fact, no greater resemblance than an agricultural scarecrow does to an impaled Bulgarian.

At the town of Kazveen, on the southern side of the Elburz, and not far from the ruins of the castle of the chief of the Assassins, dwelt, at the time of which I write (1845), the beautiful daughter of a Mussulman doctor of the law. Her name was Zareen Taj, or Golden Crown. Her virtues were equal to her beauty; she was eloquent and well instructed—an ideal heroine. We have to thank her for the enunciation of another of the tenets of the Babees —the abolition of the veil. She showed her beautiful face without any reserve, perhaps the more readily because it was beautiful, embraced the cause of Bab with heart and soul, and, so say the historians, had no share whatever in the murder of her father-in-law—a priest, who naturally was scandalized beyond all measure by her behavior, and strove, with her other relations, to reclaim her from perdition.

Now these times were pregnant with other great events; and just as the Babees were beginning to feel their strength, the king died, and his Majesty, Nasir-ed-Din ascended the throne of Persia. This was the opportunity for the warrior Hussein, who gathered about him the converts he had made in Khorassan, and accompanied by Golden Crown, the Hypatia of this new religion, entrenched himself in an inaccessible spot in Mazendaran. Here Hypatia and Hussein preached the Church Militant, whose kingdom should be of this world as well as of the next. Like the Empress Theodora, when the heart of her husband sank within him. and his advisers counselled flight, she was ever present to instil courage into the doubting, and to promise those who fought, and those who lost their lives in battle, a golden crown in heaven. Like Theodora, she would not stop to consider if it became a woman to play the man against men. She urged that those were times when women should abjure seclusion, tear off their veils, not wait for what the men might do, but act themselves. Her eloquence and beauty kindled incredible enthusiasm amongst the Babees in Mazendaran, a Caspian province of the Persian realm, whose thick forests and green foliage form so striking a contrast with the barren rocks and interminable deserts on the other side of the Elburz, beyond the talismanic peak of Demavend. The plan of the campaign was the conquest of Mazendaran, a march to Ré, the ancient Rhages of the Apocalypse, around the venerable tower of which ruined city a great victory was to be gained over the forces of the shah from the neighboring capital. The new prime minister sent one of the royal princes with a large army against the Babee chief, who, however, defeated prince and army. The second attack, though successfully repulsed, proved fatal to the brave Hussein, who died, declaring, with glorious mendacity, that he would reappear in forty days and carry his work to its completion. The prime minister continued for four months to besiege the mountain stronghold of the Babees, who, pushed to the last extremities, made flour from the ground bones of the dead, ate the boiled leather of their sword-belts, dug up and devoured buried carrion, and suffered all the horrors of a protracted siege. At last, the few survivors capitulated, their lives being guaranteed them, but all were slain in cold blood next day, including women and children. All refused to recant.

Contrary to the hopes of the king and his minister, this success did not stifle the insurrection. Another of the disciples, the priest Mahomed, successfully defied the royal troops in Zendjan. Mortally wounded in one of the last engagements, he, like Hussein, exhorted his followers to hold out for forty days, at the expiry of which time he would return to lead them on to victory; but soon afterwards they were overcome by the king's general, who opened the tomb of his deceased enemy and found him peacefully lying in his coffin with his sword by his side. They dishonored his corpse and cast it to the dogs. Three of his chief lieutenants were taken to Teheran and condemned to

death by having their veins opened. They died prophesying that their persecutor the prime minister would die the same death, as in fact he did not long after in the peaceful country palace of Fin by Kashan, where nothing recalls the tragic end of a powerful and erewhile successful minister.

And now the hour of Bab himself was come; summoned to Tabriz by the prince-governor, he was confronted with the doctors of the law, and, according to the side from which one hears the tale, either vanquished them, or was vanquished by them in debate. The prince himself argued a long while with Bab, but finally proved his adversary to be in the wrong by condemning him to death without further ceremony. He probably cared little who won the wordy war. He had conquered the Babees, and might say with Achilles in his grandest speech:—

> In council what if others mouth the question and reply?
> In battle 'midst the brass-clad Greeks, what other strikes as I?

With Bab was his faithful disciple the priest Mahomed, whose loyalty to his master was cruelly tried in his last extremity. His persecutors called in his wife and children to work upon his weakness, if perchance he had any. They tempted him in vain, and, just before sunset, master and disciple were bound with cords, and suspended from the ramparts within a few feet of the ground in the face of a multitude of spectators. A company of soldiers was told off to shoot them as they hung, and, just before the word was given, the priest Mahomed was heard to say to Bab, "Master, art thou content with me?" Hardly had he spoken when he received his death wound, but Bab miraculously escaped, and the bullets aimed at him merely cut the cord by which he hung. For a moment all were stupefied, and Bab might have yet escaped had he, in the confusion which ensued, mingled with the crowd, which would have shielded an *enfant du miracle* to save whom God had manifestly intervened. He took refuge, however, in a guard-house close by, where one of the officers of the firing party cut him down with his sword. That there might be no doubt about his death, his corpse was paraded in the streets, and finally cast to the dogs.

So died the Bab at the age of twenty-seven; but his place was at once taken, if not filled, by Baha, a youth of sixteen years, who, for reasons not very clearly established, was considered by the leaders of the faith to be destined to succeed. Pursued by the emissaries of the prime minister, this youth established himself at Baghdad, where, amongst the crowds of Persian pilgrims to the tombs of the holy imams at Sandy, Kerbela, and gilded Kazimain, he continued to preach the doctrines of his predecessor and to show the way to the gate of heaven. By some in Persia I was told that, following the example of the veiled prophet of Khorassan, he never shows his face, though he interviews all comers. I must confess that to my annoyance and disappointment I could learn nothing of himself in Baghdad. Some said the sultan kept him in prison to please the shah, but I could discover the existence of no well-known captive, save Suleiman Pasha, who since the Russian war in the city of peace drags out a dishonored old age. I learnt even less in the Pashalik than in Persia.

All the above events passed in the decade between 1842 and 1852; and one day in the latter year, when the shah was out riding, three men approached him with a petition, and when his Majesty drew rein, his attendants being a little before and behind him, one of the supplicants seized his bridle and fired upon him, as also did the two others, whose hands were disengaged. The king showed great coolness and courage, the escort galloped up, the men were seized, the shah was taken home, where his wound proved insignificant. The assassins avowed themselves to be Babees, denied that they had accomplices, and gloried in their act.

When the first alarm had subsided the police set to work to arrest all per-

sons in the capital suspected of being Babees. Among them was Zareen Taj, or Golden Crown, who had left the camp in Mazendaran before its fall. The assassins meanwhile continued to protest that they merely obeyed the orders of their chief away in Turkish Arabia, and declared that the king deserved death for having slain their prophet Bab. No tortures could extract anything else from them.

The king and his minister, perplexed in what way to deal with their captives, offered life and liberty to all who would deny Bab, and began by making the offer to Zareen Taj, who refused unhesitatingly to purchase life by recantation; whereupon she was strangled and burnt in the citadel, and her ashes scattered to the winds. Her dreadful fate, contrary to expectation, had no effect whatever on her fellow-captives, who were distributed among different officials for punishment, to accentuate the public indignation which had been excited by the attempt to murder the king.

Most travellers in Persia have seen by the roadside the little pillars in which robbers have been built up and left to starve, and must have heard fairly credible accounts of crucifixions and other cruel punishments. Nowadays these things do not happen; but there seems no reason to doubt that extraordinary barbarities attended the execution of the Babees in Teheran.

I have been myself told by a nomad chief, who had been an eye-witness, with whom I camped in Fars, that some were shod like horses, some cut to pieces with knives and whips, and some made to carry torches in apertures made for the purpose in their bodies. My informant may have exaggerated, but it is certain that extreme cruelty was the rule. Nothing that is related is beyond belief. To this day robbers are starved to death in cages in China, and parricides are sliced to death (ling-chih), while the purest and highest morality is the ideal set before the individual Chinaman and the imperial government alike.

No tortures that ingenuity could devise sufficed to shake the constancy of these martyred men, women, and children, who died repeating the familiar Arabic text: "Verily we are God's, and to him we return." In the provinces, as well as in the capital, all suspects were hunted down. A relative of my friend the nomad chief was particularly active in this service, and conceived the idea of handing over so many captives to tradesmen of different guilds, whose professional instincts might devise some distinctive and characteristic torture.

These terrible reprisals, which probably far exceeded those ordered by the government, produced, outwardly at any rate, the desired effect. No man dared name Bab or Babee without a curse as deep as that deserved by Omar. The very subject became a dangerous one to speak of, and it still continues to be so. An official at Teheran, who was I knew conversant with the whole subject, denied all knowledge. Officials all declared not one of the sons of burnt fathers remained. Princes, who are plentiful in Persia, considered a reference to the matter in bad taste and would change the subject. Traders, sitting cross-legged amidst their grain and wares, would suggest that if you wanted to buy nothing you had better move on. The result is that even those Europeans who have been long resident in the country really know extremely little about the tenets of the Babees, or their present position, numbers, and prospects. The writings of Bab and Baha are hard to get, and when got still harder to read with understanding.

In the course of this brief narrative I have already said that Bab abjured polygamy, and removed from woman's face the veil. These were no light innovations. The whole weight of tradition and of the law was bound to uphold polygamy to the extent sanctioned by Mahomet, and every father and every husband in the country looked on the veil as one of the safeguards of women's honor. This appears strange only to those who do not know their

Eastern sisters, with their burning love and their simple sins.

> The cold in clime are cold in blood.

But the Eastern father must keep his daughter from the sight of man till she is safely married, and her husband thinks the same precaution as necessary in the case of his wife. Both are as jealous of the honor of their women as an English gentleman, and perhaps they know best how to maintain it among their own people. They are aghast at customs which prescribe that women's legs shall be carefully covered, while their faces, by which they are recognized and known, may be exposed to the gaze of any passer-by.

To argue the question is hopeless, and it may be allowed at once that no bolder or more radical reform could be proposed, or one more likely to entail hatred and contempt upon its proposer. The women themselves are at least as bitterly opposed to such reforms as the men. Nor indeed do they suffer such restraint as is generally supposed to result from the custom. It does not occur to a well-conducted Persian woman that any one but her husband should see her face; and should she stray from the straight path, what costume so favorable for assignation and intrigue as the loose trouser, long blue baggy robe and veil, clothed in which she can pass her husband or any one else in the street without fear of discovery, walk to the bath with a female attendant, or gossip with her friends all day, making known her identity only when she desires to do so?

The commission which Bab asserted he had received to expound the nature of the Godhead included no power of lucid composition, but thus much is clear: that God is held to be one, unchangeable, and that the last revelation was more complete than those of previous prophets which it superseded. The prophets themselves were emanations from the Deity:—

> partem divinæ mentis et haustus Ætherios.

The revelation of Bab was not one of the individual, but was made to the mystic nineteen, of whom one at a time was necessarily the guiding spirit and spiritual chief, but whose acts and deed were those of a corporate body.

Though more complete than that of former prophets, the revelation of Bab was not itself complete, and his bible comprises but eleven chapters of an inevitable total of nineteen. The next revelation after Bab was, however, like that of Christ at his second coming, like that of the Imam Mahdi when he reveals himself, to be the last. An intermediate day of judgment was provided for the termination of the penultimate prophetic period, but the dead were all to reappear at the last day, the good to be reunited to God and the wicked to be annihilated.

So much for the outlines of the doctrines of Bab. A few details must be supplied. Society and government were to be constituted on a basis something like that existing in Persia, and included a king, a sacred college, pontiffs, priests, and all the paraphernalia of patriarchal government.

Unlike Mahomet, Bab preferred silken hangings and decorations for the house of prayer, and music and singing, and all the pomp and circumstance of priestly celebration. He was a great believer in talismans and the virtues of particular stones. This fits in well with the temper of the modern Persians, who to this day will tell you solemnly that the great volcano Demavend is talismanic, who believe implicitly in the virtues of a turquoise ring inscribed with the name of Allah. Unbelievers might legally be deprived of all their possessions, which, however, should be returned to them on their professing the true faith. They were on no account to be put to death. Business and other relations with infidels were not forbidden, and, as a matter of fact, the Babees entertain very friendly relations with Jews, fire-worshippers, and Christians, while in their hearts they hate the Mussulman, much as among Mussulmans the Shiahs hate the Sunis, from whom, however, they

differ on a merely dynastic and historical question.

The Babees only pray on formal occasions like the Christians. A Babee will not roll out his prayer-carpet and bow his head in prayer on the deck of a steamer, in the public street and on the sands of a desert, as will the devout Mussulman. Nor does the Babee admit the doctrine of legal impurity. Indeed amongst them, ablutions have no religious significance whatever. This doctrine of impurity is said to be a great impediment to free intercourse amongst Asiatics. As understood by the Brahmins and high-caste Hindus it may be; but as amongst Mahomedans, it merely prescribes ablution before prayer and on certain other occasions. I do not see how this can prove the obstruction it is represented to be. However, it is one of the many refinements of the law which Bab hoped to sweep away. In regard to alms-giving, his doctrines are much those of the Mussulmans. Torture and death are entirely excluded from his penal code. He punished every offence by fines calculated, of course, in nineteens. He held that the rich were only depositories of the bounty of God, and were bound to provide liberally for their less fortunate brethren; at the same time he altogether forbade mendicancy, which is recognized and encouraged in Islam. Those who have been tormented by sturdy beggars demanding money as a right, and supported by public opinion, will understand what a blessed innovation this was. He exhibited the same favor towards trade as is displayed in the present day everywhere in the East, where there is no suspicion of social inferiority attached to its pursuit, whether in its retail or wholesale aspect. The practical Asiatic mind cannot fathom European ideas on this subject. Everywhere the merchant is held in high esteem and no calling is superior to his. Bab was as sound on this point as are the most despotic Eastern governors, who generally grasp the fact that the oppression of merchants means the ruin of a province. I have dwelt for a moment on the practical nature of the Eastern mind. One may emphasize this, remembering how generally romance is looked upon as the attribute of the East, and how the Asian mystery has become proverbial. It is difficult to imagine whence this belief sprung. I think the "Arabian Nights" may have had something to say to it; but surely the "Thousand and One Nights" are full of imagination, but not of romance. Everything is practical, nothing more so than love-making, most romantic of occupations. When the king's son becomes enamoured of the moon-faced beauty, he goes to bed and refuses food until she marries him. He becomes so ill and woe-begone that all his female relations make a point of bringing his wishes to accomplishment. This is very practical, and quite unlike the knights and troubadours of the West, who went to the crusades trusting to the constancy of their mistresses, and found them on their return married, and the mothers of large families. In the East men do not greatly strive to arrive at "self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control," nor will they eat their hearts away from hopeless love. They make known their passions and endeavor to gratify them, be the object who she may and the consequences to her what they may. Of imagination there is enough and to spare in the East, but for romance one must go to the Celts, the Saxons, and the Scandinavians:—

To the bountiful infinite West, to the happy memorial places
Full of stately repose, and the lordly delight of the dead,
Where the fortunate islands are lit with the light of ineffable faces,
And the sound of a sea without wind is about them, and sunset is red.

Sunset is still redder in the East, but let that pass. There is sense in the lines.

To return to our subject. The new prophet's mild and gentle disposition prescribed politeness as a counsel of necessity, but exhibited something of the narrowness of mind which induced

the Caliph Omar to destroy the library of Alexandria, for he held that such books as disagreed with the Word of God were pernicious, and ought to be destroyed. He "commended mirth," however, and precious stones were not forbidden to the Babees, who were positively encouraged on festival days to clothe themselves in purple and fine linen, and to "rejoice in their youth and walk in the ways of their heart," remembering only "that for all these things God would bring them to judgment." In regard to marriage Bab departed in many respects from the precepts of Islam. He allowed a second wife. In this respect he seems to me to fall short of Mahomet, who in a time of unbridled licentiousness allowed but four for the frailty of human nature, and because it was the only means of legalizing in Bedouin life an inevitable *liaison*. No excuse can be found for Bab, unless he would urge "the exigencies of modern society," any more than for the Mormons, whose hideous polygamy the United States government has happily suppressed with a strong hand. If it is necessary to quote others in support of my assertion that polygamy is the exception among the Musulmans, I will quote M. de Gobineau, who says, "en réalité les gens qui ont plusieurs femmes constituent l'exception même parmi les musulmans. La majorité se contente d'un unique mariage." The Sheikh-ul-Islam at Constantinople, and Dr. Leitner have testified to the same effect, but there is in fact a cloud of witnesses. In another respect also Bab improved greatly upon Musulman law in regard to women. Besides the abolition of the veil already spoken of, he abolished the existing law of divorce. The facility with which women are divorced is perhaps the greatest blot in the religion of Mahomet. It will suffice here to say that Bab removed the legal obstacles which exist to prompt reconciliation between husband and wife, when the simple formula of divorce has been hastily and inconsiderately pronounced. For their weakness, Bab prescribed for women short and easy prayers, and he discouraged pilgrimages, saying that wives and mothers were better at home. Other innovations, which, so far as my inquiries went, are at all times honored in the breach, were his decrees that beards should be shaven, circumcision abandoned, and pipes put out. He was no timeserver and attacked some of the most cherished institutions of the country, amongst which I would certainly include pipes, beards, and circumcision. To the sharers in the property of a deceased believer, Bab added the family tutor—a benevolent addition.

To come to any conclusions as to the extent to which Babees now exist in Persia is most difficult. At Kazneen a Georgian who had been many years in the country, and was at that time in the service of a high official there, told me that he thought that amongst the rich and educated perhaps one-third were followers of Bab. This is probably an over-estimate, but that among the classes named there is a large proportion which is dissatisfied with the Islam of the priests is well known. Among the nomads of the Hills, the Turki tribes and others, there are no Babees, and these tribes form a large proportion of the population of Persia. One "old White Beard"—to use the phrase of the country—with whom I breakfasted one day, assured me that such a thing as a Babee had never been seen amongst the wandering tribes. He added, however, that he had seven daughters who ate and slept, and that he did not trouble himself much about religion, beyond saying his prayers regularly and observing all due conventionalities. Near Kermanshah one day I met a Seyyad, or a descendant of the Prophet, who was collecting fleeces—suggestive tribute from the faithful—and he said that there was not a Babee left in all Persia. They had been a polyandrous and immoral set of unbelievers, but their fathers were all burnt, that is to say, consumed in hell, and there was an end of them. In Hamadan—one of the largest towns in Persia—I have reason to

believe, from inquiries made on the spot, that there are very large numbers who in secret hold to the faith of the young and martyred prophet. At Abadeh there certainly are many such, though gruesome pits full of Babees' skulls exist within the walls of the town.

In Khorassan and the western provinces of Persia I have not travelled, but my inquiries went to show that in the holy city of Mashad, around the shrine of the Imam Reza itself, Babees abound. It will be obvious from what I have said that I can give no reliable numerical estimate; but this need not be considered a serious omission, as no one knows whether the population of Persia at this day is five or, as I think, nearer eight millions. It will suffice to say that Babees abound, and chiefly among the richer and more educated classes.

J. D. Rees.

From Blackwood's Magazine.

DEATH IN THE ALPS.

There was bustle and excitement inside of the principal hotel in Vargues, for a party was preparing to attempt the ascent of the formidable Pic d'Aube. Once upon a time the attempt to ascend the dreaded Pic had caused a wave of emotion to run through the little community and a fierce sensation to agitate the hotels. The departure of the daring band—looked upon as curiosity's forlorn-hope — was something between a funeral procession and a triumphal march. Gentle eyes gazed tenderly after them, and telescopes lay heavily upon them till the mountain hid them from view. Small wonder that many have climbed to heaven up this snowy ladder of the sky.

Nowadays the good people of Vargues only shrug their shoulders when they see a party with guides pass through their quiet streets, and wonder if life is so unattractive in their own country that these foreigners care to risk losing it to hear an avalanche roar. So, not unlikely, thought the guides and porters who hung waiting, ready booted and furred, and carrying in their hands the ropes with which some have played the part of their own executioners. But they laughed and talked, and thought chiefly of the golden guineas which would jingle in their pockets when the toil was over.

In the doorway a man stood smoking. His dress and general air of aloofness proclaimed him to be a Briton. His age could not have been accurately determined, so much did he contradict himself. He seemed to be in his prime, but his prime had evidently come early. He was so well-proportioned that he did not look his six feet of height. But for his head and face you would have taken him for a soldier, so erect was his carriage. But his broad, white forehead and thoughtful cast of face spoke of the intellectual life. Hugh Rainer in his day had been a great athlete. But there is in these days a belief or a superstition — which you will — that brawn and brain do not go together, and that whoever holds by the latter must slight his biceps and calves. The minister's robe must hide thorax and thigh discreetly out of sight, lest religion be scandalized; and in later years he had demurely dropped his gown over his early ways. But a week ago he had kicked gown and bands into a dark cupboard, and had started for that happy corner of the North dropped by nature in the South as a playground and a refuge for the peoples that cluster about its knees. To him the Pic d'Aube was as familiar as Ben Lomond—or more so. Every year he struck a match on the loftiest rock in Europe, and every time he left on the summit of the Pic a handful of earth brought from his garden at Perth, that he might have something of his own there, and thus feel a sense of proprietorship in it.

Presently he looked round as a man lounged out to join him, cigar in mouth.

The new-comer was a man of fifty, clean-shaven, military-looking, heavily moustached, with the unmistakable look of a cavalry officer in undress.