

Teheran, Persia.
July 7, 1926.

Dear Friends,-

Another summer has rolled around and we are beginning to feel like old timers in Persia, having lived here for a whole year. Just about a year ago I was writing to you about our very first impressions of Persia but now I must write not of first impressions but of a years work--I wonder whether I could really say of a years accomplishment. Our impressions as one of our group very aptly expressed it, an impression of walls--many kinds of walls. There are walled in cities, walled in gardens, walled in women; there are great walls of ignorance, walls of poverty and almost insurmountable walls of many false religions.

Our limited knowledge of the language has, of course, been a great handicap but we have been very happy to find that it is possible to do a great deal of work among the young people of our schools for they have learned English. And so most of our effort this year has been put directly into the school and what a fertile field it is! They are so eager to learn, so ready to receive. Sometimes we are prone to worry about the result of our teaching but faith and prayer are really all that are needed. Whenever good seed is planted into fertile soil it grows. What cause have we for anxiety? We are planting the good seed of the Gospek of Christ and it cannot die.

This seed was planted one year in the heart of one of our school girls who was of a very strict Mohammedan family. The seed grew and the day came when the girl, with a courage we can scarcely comprehend, announced to her family that she could no longer continue a Moslem outwardly when at heart she longed to be a baptised Christian. Her parents quite contrary to Persian habit and custom, kept their tempers but with very calm determination told their daughter that her mind was her own and if she so chose to disgrace her own name they would not interfere. However they did not intend to let her bring contempt and disgrace on the whole family and so she must understand that the day she received baptism she would have to find another home. In lands where girls and women can find work and support themselves this would be trouble and sorrow enough but in the Orient where there is no way for a girl to support herself a step like this is fatal. However the seed had grown and the little school girl then about sixteen years old, with tremendous faith, told her parents that, come what may she would not could not deny her Lord and Saviour and to be faithful and true to the One whom she had learned to love better than her own life she must be baptised in His Name. The mother was heart broken to lose her child but she knew that the father would remain firm. The day of Baptism approached. The father was suddenly called out of the city. In a few weeks he returned to find that his little daughter had received baptism and that the mother had not carried out his wishes. He was so glad, however, to see his whole family again that he never said another word about sending away the one who had brought disgrace on them. Others of this family have been lead out of darkness in to the light, out of death into life and though the father has not yet accepted Christ he is unspeakably proud of his Christian children who have graduated from our school and perhaps he himself is not far from the Kingdom.

The work in our school is fascinating because the children are so responsive. A teacher in Persia need never urge the students to answer questions more fully. In fact they are inclined to be a little too

loquacious. In giving an examination this year I asked the children to answer the questions briefly and to the point, emphasising the briefly. They catch on to new ideas quite readily and this was the result.

Question- What important event took place at the Red Sea?

Answer- Pharoah was drowned.

At the close of our school year the most striking and the most encouraging thing occurred, something that has not happened before in the history of our Persian Mission. At the Commencement time according to the custom, we held, in the big auditorium of the College, commencement exercises on two different days. The first day was for women only. We do this because the girls want to have pretty, normal graduation exercises and wear pretty new dresses that do not have to be hidden behind veils, screens etc. The second day men are invited for, of course fathers and brothers want to see their daughters and sisters graduate. In the class there are both Armenian and Persian girls. Of course the Armenian Christians do not veil but all Persian women no matter what their religion may be never appear before men without their veils. It so happened that one of the brightest and most capable girls of the class was a Persian. Because of her ability we all wanted her to give the opening address at the commencement and thought it could do no harm to ask her. She not only agreed to do it but, much to our astonishment, informed us that she was going to take off her veil on her graduation day never to put it on again. Though a Persian she is not a Mohammedan. Her people are Zoroastrians and she said that she saw no use in being hampered by a purely Mohammedan custom. Commencement day arrived and the Armenian girls with this one Persian girl marched in and took their places in the center of the platform while the Persian girls heavily veiled but in white chuddars instead of black ones, took their places behind a screen made of green vines hung from the ceiling, and were soon forgotten. Their diplomas were handed to them back of the screen. The one little Persian girl with the courage of her conviction got up and gave a beautiful address in Persian with no Armenian accent so every one in that great audience of a thousand men and women knew that at last one Persian girl had freed herself from a long established custom that is slowly losing ground all over the Moslem world. The next day when we called at the homes of these girls to congratulate them we found one mother-a Jewess, quite provoked at the head of our school for not making some sort of an announcement before Commencement day that a Persian girl was going to appear without her veil. "My daughter would not have had to wear her chuddar had she only known" said the exasperated mother.

It is just such things as these that arouse in our hearts new hope for the future and new encouragement to work while it is day.

There is one other thing that is making us very happy this year that I must tell you about. Many discouragements have come to us recently in connection with the college. It has been hounded quite a bit this Fall by both the Ministry of Education and the government probably because it is the only Christian school here. But inspite of all the trouble the college is having an incident that happened recently shows us that Persia is beginning to show some signes of religious liberty.

A young Persian woman who has been an inquirer for two or three years has so far been afraid to take the final step and join the Christian Church because she feels that her faith is not yet quite strong enough. Recently she was walking down one of the main business streets of Teheran and was rudely approached by a Persian policeman (as is quite common here in the East) who had mistaken her for a woman of ill repute. She immediately told him that her religion was one that did not permit such conduct. Upon being asked what religion that might be she replied that she was a Christian, whereupon he arrested her. For three days the girl was held in prison merely on the grounds that she had openly confessed faith in Christ. Meantime her Mother who missed her and was searching every where, heard that her daughter had been imprisoned. She at once took the matter before the court and the girl was brought before the highest court in Persia to be examined by the Sayd (these are discendents of Mohammed) who is a Mollah or priest and the religious advisor of the court. He questioned the girl concerning her imprisonment and her faith in Christianity and finally with many appologies for the way she had been treated he advised the Judge to free her. The judge expressed his regret that she had given up her faith in Islam but said that he did not feel it was the duty of any court to imprison any one because of religious belief. To you folks in America this may not sound like much of a step toward progress but when you know that according to Mohammedan law the girl should have been killed for having persisted before the court that she is a Christian and then see that she was freed with many apologies it does seem like a step toward religious freedom. We are all hoping and praying that the girl will become a baptised member of our little Church. She who hesitated to receive baptism because of doubt in the strength of her faith has preached her Christianity before Mohammedan courts.