

THE BOARD OF FOREIGN MISSIONS
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DEPARTMENT FOR SPECIFIC WORK

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American Mission
Teheran, Persia,
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Dear friends:-

Spring is here and with it will come flowers, green trees and birds, and it just seems as though happiness should come too, after a very severe winter in a land where the majority of the people cannot afford the fuel to keep them warm. But I am wondering just how much happiness the spring can bring to the many, many desolate women, whose lives are so utterly empty. They are not only deprived of education and freedom, but they are even deprived of their childhood. This deplorable situation was brought to my attention more vividly a few days ago than ever before. I was having tea with the mother of one of our Christian boys. The mother is rather strict Mohammeden, but neither she nor the father have cast the son out of the house. The parents take a rather unusual attitude toward his conversion. The mother said to me that if her son could get any peace or satisfaction out of his new religion, they were perfectly willing that he continue to be a Christian. They want him to be happy she said.

The mother made some remark over her tea-cup concerning her great age. I looked at her in amazement for I am sure she is not over forty. "Yes", she said "I am old now. I have brought up a large family, and now my youngest child is eighteen", Then she went on to tell me how she had been married when she was ten years old, and of the loneliness of those first few years of her married life, how she had wanted to run and play, but such a thing was quite beneath the dignity of a married woman. But she said her husband's people had been very kind to her, and had given her a big doll for a wedding present. I think I have never heard of a stranger wedding present. Her husband allowed her to play quietly with this doll, to make clothes for it, and once in a while to take it out into the garden. The wedding gift was fourteen years old and was an unusual one, but the marriage was not. Today a little mother brought her baby to our hospital for treatment. "How long have you been married" the nurse asked her. "Six years" the child replied.

This is the month for the fasting of the Mohommedens. Again the little girls demand my greatest sympathy. Boys are not

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required to keep the fast until they are fifteen years old; but little girls must keep it at the age of nine. What a brutal thing it is! These little children are made to go without food all day, and are kept up late at night, to join in with the feast that is held just after midnight.

But what is there of encouragement for me to tell you about? We have felt recently that there is a step toward progress in the fact that the government has recently passed a law allowing music to be in the homes. According to the Moslem law, music of any kind is sinful. And so it had been barred from many homes where it might have been such a joy, especially to the women so closely confined to the house.

There has been started here in Teheran a music school by a Persian educated in Europe, and the Persian Parliament has recently granted a sum of money to this music school, as well as passing the law making music in the home legal. Of course there was opposition in the Parliament headed by the Mollahs, who are not in favor of breaking the Moslem law; but these were evidently in the minority and so Persia will be able to have music in the future. I do not mean that there has been no music at all in the country, for there is such a thing as Persian music. But it is merely a series of weird and mournful wails. I wonder whether the grewsomeness of oriental music has not been due to the fact that any music is sinful, according to the Moslem law. In this new music school, the students will not be taught Persian music, but a very pretty combination of Persian and European music.

One more sign of encouragement came to us the other day when the Persian Government indicated that they will withdraw their insistence on all schools in Persia, teaching the Moslem religious law. And so part of our worries with regard to the school problem are over. Persia is showing signs of progress, in spite of the fact that the women are still held down. But the progress will reach them eventually and lift them up.

Very sincerely yours,

Estelle Crawford Groves.

(Mrs. Walter A.)