

BABISM.

wisher of his fellow-men will extend to them, as they do to all, the hand of fellowship and good-will.

Growth of a Peculiar Form of Moslemism the World Over.*

IT may be novel to most of us to learn that, according to Prof. Edward Granville Browne of Cambridge, the number of believers of the Beha'i religion are now to be counted by the thousands in the United States. As an enthusiast the professor adds: "Once again in the world's history has the East vindicated her claim to teach religion to the West, and to hold in the spiritual world that pre-eminence which the Western nations hold in the material." How, when, and where originated this new faith is told by the authors of this volume, "Abbas Effendi: His Life and Teachings."

The movement began in Persia in 1844 when Ali Mohammed, a youth of twenty-five, "announced himself to be the 'Bab,' (Gate,) a term familiar to Moslems, by which is understood an avenue for the transmission to men of messages from a superhuman source." Ali's prerogative was to teach to mankind the Divine Will. He supported his claims by the Scriptures and the traditions of the Moslem creed.

Missionaries went all over Persia, preaching Babism. Then followed an "era of bloody and relentless persecution. * * * Singly and by hundreds the Babists were hunted down and slaughtered." The Bab was executed at Tabriz in 1850. As the Babists increased in number so did the persecutions. Some of the leaders of the faith sought a refuge in Bagdad, and were sent by the Turkish Government to Adrianople, and five years later to Akka. Among the exiles was Mirza Haseyn Ali, who had long been regarded by the Babists as their leader. On him had been conferred the title of "Beha Ullah" (Glory of God.) He died at Akka in 1892, and was succeeded by his son, Abbas Effendi, who is styled "Our Master" and "Our Lord." Prof. Browne writes: "Meanwhile the faith has shown undiminished vitality in Persia, where the number of its adherents is now estimated at several millions, and is said to be steadily increasing."

When in London in 1902 Mr. Myron H. Phelps became interested in Beha'ism, and determined to visit Abbas Effendi at Akka. The book is an account of conversations held with Abbas Effendi, with an analysis of the belief of the followers of Beha'ism. Irrespective of creed, we think that no one can read Mr. Phelps's first chapter relative to the master of Akka without emotion. It describes a beautiful character. It is charity and love personified. It may be Oriental in coloring, but it is singularly impressive. Here is pictured a man who distributes food and clothes to the poor and needy, indifferent as to their belief. Christians and Moslems never apply for help that it is not cheerfully given them. Abbas Effendi strips off his cloak so that the naked may be clad. He shares his food with the hungry. Differing from many of the inventors of new religions, Abbas Effendi will not countenance "any interpretation of his acts by his followers which could lead to the imputation to him of miraculous powers." As to miracles, he rather seems to question them, for the reason that if "miracles" are ascribed to the founders of a new religion and become engrafted upon it, they will inevitably be simulated by priesthoods and other pretenders to authority to mislead, delude, and defraud the ignorant masses of mankind.

Abbas Effendi, according to Mr. Phelps, is familiar with the teachings of Christ, and makes frequent references to the Christian Gospels. The law of love and brotherhood to all is strictly enjoined. There should be no resentment or retaliation for injuries received. Here is an expression of the Effendi's worthy of remembering:

The essence of the nature of God is love. His favor cannot be won by hatred or strife. He is never angry. He curses nothing. It has been said otherwise; but such teaching is heathenism—of the teachers of the time—not that of the messengers of God. When you see men doing evil things, you should not be angry with them—you should pity them, for their evil deeds are due to their ignorance, and for them they must suffer.

Monogamy is an essential feature of Beha'ism. Education is not to be neglected and should be given when necessary by the general community. One language is recommended and the Master writes: "Teach a common language to the children in all schools, that the whole world may become one land and one home." Absolute toleration seems to be the basis of Abbas Effendi's teachings. The instance is given of a Christian seeking the Master for religious instruction; this the Master consented to, providing the instruction was followed out in the name of Christ. There is sound honesty in a belief of this character. "God is to every human being as great as the individual mental capacity permits one to see Him. * * * To the simple as to the great, He is the same; but some see Him in one light, some in another, according to their capacities to perceive."

Are we to decry Abbas Effendi because he wears a fez and long, flowing robes and discredit him as an interpreter of the living truth? Mr. Phelps's volume impresses one with the idea that here is an Oriental possessed of unheard-of liberality and breadth of thought. Mr. Phelps's conclusion is as follows:

However we may judge the pretensions of the Beha'is, they have a most substantial claim to our respect, and every well-

*LIFE AND TEACHINGS OF ABBAS EFFENDI. A Study of the Religion of the Babs or Beha'is. By Myron H. Phelps. With an Introduction by Edward Granville Browne. Pp. 259. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. \$1.25.