

AL HIJAB

OR

WHY PURDAH IS NECESSARY

*Presented to
Gertrude Marwin Williams*

BY

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FOREWORD.

THIS book, in which light has been thrown on all the aspects of the Purdah System, has been compiled simply because this time-honoured institution has now become a problem for Muslim ladies, on the right solution of which depends their moral progress. It is necessary to go into this question very fully, so that our sisters-in-faith may think out what course they should adopt in the matter, as cultured persons following the Islamic moral code.

I have hardly expressed any personal opinion of my own throughout this book, but have collected the religious injunctions from the Quran and the Sayings of the Prophet (may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), together with the views and opinions of famous divines, having a direct bearing on the subject.

Of those, whose opinions have been quoted in this book, Shah Wali-Ullah and Maulana

Bahr-ul-Uloom belong to the older generation of divines, who are still considered as the most famous jurists and traditionists. While among modern writers, Maulana Shibli and Maulana Nazeer Ahmad, are considered eminent authorities, whose views are unquestioned in the circle of enlightened and educated Muhammadans of to-day.

As regards the results of the non-observance of Purdah, in countries where it is not observed and where the weaker sex is rapidly covering the stages of advancement, I have contented myself by giving extracts bearing on the question, from the opinions of the leading men of light and learning, and also of the countries concerned.

I realize that a certain group of Mussalmans will severely criticise this book ; but I hope those sisters and daughters of mine, who still retain Islamic traditions and feelings of modesty ; and honour and respect the tenets of their faith, will read this book with care and attention. I feel equally confident that they will listen, and try to act, according to the advice of a sympathiser whose heart is

full of all good wishes for her sisters-in-faith,
and who wishes them well both here and
hereafter.

SULTAN JEHAN BEGUM,

of Bhopal.

INTRODUCTION.

THE problem of the seclusion of women is one of the most important and serious questions that have been engaging the thought and attention of the Islamic world for the last thirty or forty years. It has been discussed and debated much more vehemently in countries which have, to a large extent, come under the influence of western civilization than anywhere else. Among such countries, Turkey, Egypt, and India deserve special mention where, with the dawn of the new era and the spread of new learning, the education of women has also received considerable attention, along with other national reform movements; and, as a part of the greater question affecting their rights, education and position in society, the question of their seclusion has also come under discussion, and divided the people into three distinct groups:—

- (1) Those who are totally opposed to the seclusion of women ;
- (2) those who wish to lessen the hardships of Purdah by modifying it according to *their* interpretation of the religious injunctions ; and

- (3) those who want to retain the Purdah System in its entirety and consider any modification in the system as dangerous for national honour and repugnant to the spirit of the Islamic Law.

There is a very sharp difference of opinion among men belonging to these groups, which is frequently expressed in newspapers, magazines, periodicals and books. Each group tries to bring round the other to its own way of thinking by defeating the arguments of its opponent ; and this has now gone on for a long time past in the Islamic world.

India, too, is in the throes of this controversy. Its influence has penetrated even the seclusion of Muslim homes. Certain families seem to be inclined towards breaking with the Purdah System. Many educated Muslim ladies have begun to regard their seclusion as an imprisonment. While among those women who do not think so themselves, the authority of their liberty-loving husbands is being brought to bear upon them to discard Purdah. The evil has not yet become common even in the sections of society affected by these ideas ; still, certain families have given up the veil in favour of modern show and fashion, and I wish these emancipated ladies had utilized to some good purpose their newly adopted freedom and, like their western sisters, worked for the material welfare of their people. They should have opened and worked

schools ; or studied medicine and served their less enlightened sisters. If they had diverted their energies to some such work of public good, the evil would have possessed at least some redeeming feature ; but I do not find a single instance of this among the “ progressive ” section of our society to-day. So I look upon this change with great concern and anxiety ; and consider it as the harbinger of our national downfall and religious degradation. I do not hold this view because it is a part of my religious belief but I have come to this conclusion as the result of much anxious thought and deep meditation, and after an elaborate study of the subject from books and a careful observation of the conditions I witnessed during my travels abroad.

A great portion of my life has been spent in thinking over the important and grave problems touching the welfare of my own sex ; and the most interesting and important among them are the education and seclusion of women. I have expressed my views on education publicly, on more than one occasion, and have tried, to the best of my ability, to encourage the same in my sex. But I had few occasions to speak about the Purdah System. On my return from Europe, in 1911, I delivered a speech, at the local Ladies' Club, in which while narrating the story of my travels and speaking in very high terms of the civilization and culture of Europe

and the advancement of its women, I also happened to say :—

‘In spite of their education I am not in favour of the freedom enjoyed by women of the West where it has passed certain well-defined lines. Our uneducated and even educated sisters in the Purdah cannot even imagine such a freedom. It is possible that the liberty enjoyed by the women of Europe is suited to the conditions prevailing there ; or that it is permitted by the teachings of the Christian Faith, but for Indian and, especially Muslim ladies, I think such freedom can, under no circumstances, and at no time, be proper. We must, therefore, always act upon the old adage, “ *Khuz ma safa wa da ma kadir*, ” i.e., “ take the good and discard the evil.” Musalman women should never hanker after greater freedom than has been granted them by their religion ; a freedom, which, while permitting them the fullest enjoyments of their rights, also shields them against all manner of evil.’

Since then I made up my mind to write a book on the Purdah System ; and began collecting materials for it. I also felt that a study of the works of the divines of Islam alone would not answer my purpose, so, I decided to consult the publications of Western writers also who have come to some definite conclusion after thinking about the freedom of the women of their countries and

published the results of their thoughts for the careful consideration of their countrymen.

I have met many missionary ladies, of great fame and virtue, who have consecrated their lives to the service of their religion. A cursory glance on their mode of life shows how very near, in certain aspects of life, they approach the saintly ladies of Islam. They dress themselves in a manner which does not expose any part of their body ; and then, how simple is their dress ! Embellishment and adornment are foreign to them. Especially, the Roman Catholic nuns, living in convents, or nunneries, are constrained by the rules of their community from mixing with the members of the male sex, nor are they permitted to marry. Although from the Muslim view-point, celibacy is as objectionable as mixing freely of the two sexes, still their manner of living clearly shows that the commandments of Christianity are opposed to too promiscuous intercourse of men and women ; and that Christian tradition and conscience look with disfavour on the free exhibition of beauty and adornment in women. The religious bodies have kept themselves always aloof from the false freedom prevailing at present among the women of Europe. I have also had opportunities of conversing with many self-respecting Europeans belonging to higher walks of life and have invariably found them dissatisfied with, and complaining against, the

unchecked freedom prevailing in their community and whose pious prayer is to see the institution of Purdah introduced in their countries.

Having collected all books and other materials bearing on the point I went through the whole subject carefully. Some matters in these books are discussed with such frankness and directness, and evils of freedom of women exposed in such a manner, that no woman who possesses an iota of Islamic virtue and modesty would condescend to peruse them, much less republish them as extracts, in her own work. But since the toleration of a small evil for a greater good is an accepted human principle, I deemed it my solemn duty to leave such a book behind me, for the guidance of my sisters-in-faith, who out of their profound regard for me, hold me up as a model for others, in the hope that when they think of freedom, they may be warned in time, from its perusal.

I, therefore, ordered the translators in my office to put before me only such reviews and articles as were of comparatively less offensive nature ; so that I may carefully go through them. In spite of all these precautions a good many of these had to be rejected as unfit for publication. I have, however, selected some typical passages and given extracts from these, in the succeeding chapters, as samples of social condition obtaining in the West.

I have also, whenever suitable, drawn on excellent books written in Arabic, on this subject, by the *savants* of our own day, in Egypt, in which they have given expression to their views quite freely and openly.

I should like to mention here that the facts given in this volume are not intended to disparage or lower the reputation and honour of any country, or to deny the high qualities of the Western people, which have raised the standard of their material civilization so high, and are the main cause of their worldly superiority and greatness to-day. Neither is it intended to run down any particular civilization, organization or society. My sole object is to establish the superiority of Islamic injunctions regarding the retention of Purdah among women, as compared with the evil effects of the non-existence of this wholesome institution, and the license enjoyed by women, in other societies. I really admit that in countries where women observe Purdah the evil consequences of their uncontrolled freedom are entirely absent. But we are here concerned with the question of the excessive and the scarce, the normal and the abnormal. There are greater chances of evil in freedom than in seclusion. Doctor Le Bon also admits this, when he says :—

‘What is abnormal in the East is normal in the West.’

For fear of robbers and thieves men keep their precious things in underground cellars and secure their hoardings in strong-rooms. Yet robberies and thefts do occur. Yet it does not follow that we should become careless about our valuables, and give up all precaution.

It is clear that the Commandment of God regarding Purdah that, "O! Thou Prophet! Speak to thy wives and to thy daughters, and to the women of the faithful, that they draw their wrappers over them. That is nearer for them to be known, and they will not be affronted. And God is Forgiving and Compassionate," (Sura xxxiii, Ayat 59) * was revealed to our Prophet because we women used to be insulted and molested by men. But similar conditions prevail even to-day, and shall endure, so long as the two sexes co-exist in this world. It is sometimes contended that the present is not the age in which man would do deliberate injury to women. But harm can be done in several ways. Injury may be inflicted by means of deceit, fraud, or seduction and, what injury can be more heinous than the complete and total ruin of the entire future of a woman?

The former type of crime, *i.e.*, injury by force, can perhaps be checked by the laws of the

* As translated by Abul Fazal. See page 826 of the Translation of the Quoran published by G. A. Asghar.

realm, but the latter kind can only be stopped by the moral and unwritten code of society. When the laws of the realm are silent on this point, what other remedy is better suited to the purpose than the seclusion of the weaker sex ; a seclusion so perfect in its way as was practised by the " Mothers of the Faithful," the wives of the holy Prophet, the following of whose example is incumbent on every daughter of Islam.

I concede, that after the glorious days of the Prophet the injunctions about the seclusion of women became rather strict ; but it was never intended to lower the status of women. As the circle of Islam grew wider and wider, it came increasingly in contact with different civilizations, creeds, thoughts and convictions ; wealth and prosperity increased in Muslim countries. Islamic culture advanced and became complex, with the result that the possibilities of social evil and disintegration also multiplied. Greater strictness therefore became necessary, in order to guard against the dangers that threatened Muslim society.

There is such a thing as " piety " recognised in Islam as well as by all human beings. " Piety " means restraint from every such thought and deed as is likely to do some material or spiritual harm to anybody. When society reaches a stage where all manner of sin and evil are found in it ; when the difference between lawful and unlawful perilously

reaches a vanishing point ; when the distinction between acts allowed and forbidden almost disappears ; when music and dancing and free intercourse between men and women in public places is openly tolerated ; when men and women, boys and girls sit shoulder to shoulder and side by side in theatres and cinemas where scenes violating the sense of decency and modesty are exhibited on the screen and the stage ; when fashion and the demands of high life are on the increase daily ; when social temptations multiply and "wants create more wants" almost every day, and the law of the realm be so mild that in the infringement of certain extreme cases (where Islam inflicts 100 lashes, in the case of an unmarried person, and, orders stoning to death, in that of a married one)—if it punishes the particular offence with only two years' imprisonment at most, and that also, in the latter case, when the husband institutes proceedings ; and when a husband goes to court for the restitution of his conjugal rights, the Highest Court of the realm lays down that :—

"In these days of progress and civilization no woman should be compelled to live with a husband she does not like." At time like this, I ask, what will be the predicament of the women following a religion in which chastity and modesty are held in the highest esteem, and in which, even to look at the faces of men, and to talk to them in

private or to expose their charms is strictly forbidden, and in which according to the saying of the saintly Ali, the very modesty of women should be secluded? Is it possible I ask, for those women who have discarded *Purdah* to act according to the Commandment as laid down in ("La yubdina zinatahunna,") "do not show your beauty and grace;" and would it be possible for them not to adorn and embellish themselves when they go out on business, or for their drives and joy-rides? And how can men be compelled not to look at them?

It should also be borne in mind at this stage that punitive laws alone, however hard they may be, can never be an effective safeguard for the chastity of women.

Ancient Rome too has passed through such a period when the punishment for social sins of this nature was that both the culprits were bound together and thrown into the fire, and yet this was the very period when immorality had reached its highest point in Rome. The Pentateuch has laid down stoning as the punishment for this crime. Christianity too adopted this law and did not repeal it: "He that is without sin among you let him first cast a stone at her." (Dr. Moffat's Translation.)

At the present day in Canada the crime is punishable with stripes and imprisonment, with hard labour for five years; and, in some special

cases, with penal servitude for life. But as the country also permits absolute freedom to both sexes, the object of this law is not attained.

Since Islam is the most perfect of all religions, it kept intact the punishment enjoined in the code of Moses on the one hand, and provided against the recurrence of causes of such immorality on the other ; and it must be admitted that there cannot be a better method of reaching the goal in view. If men and women do not get opportunities of free social intercourse and their places of enjoyment and recreation are kept apart, if women are stopped from going to theatres and public shows, and if evil-minded men get no chance whatsoever to tease them ; also if adultery be recognized in the criminal law of the country, as one of the capital offences punishable with death, like murder, then and then only, can women be permitted to content themselves with mere veils. But so long as other conditions prevail, our ladies should strictly adhere to the injunction : " Abide in your own homes."

The following extract from a book : ' Hamari Mushkilat,' written by a *Hindoo lady, Chand Rani*, deserves our serious attention :—

' Many of our brethren regard the Purdah System as an evil, and are making attempts to abolish it. But the existence of the Purdah System shall remain a necessity so long as our men do not purify their hearts.'

It is possible that such a time may come ; but it can come only when men and women are as pure as angels, and then this world is changed into a paradise.

In truth, seclusion of women is fundamentally connected with that modesty and self-respect which are the means of guarding honour and good fame of a family. Modesty is the chief and distinctive attribute of human beings, and for a man, it is the essence of all that is brave and chivalrous in him. A portion of this quality has been bestowed by Providence upon certain animals also with the result that a male never tolerates separation from its mate or the presence of another of his own sex, in his domain ! Man is the last word in the evolution of God's creation and consequently his share of modesty should be commensurate with his exalted position. Where Islam has ordered women to live within the four walls of their homes, not to mix freely with the other sex ; it has, on the other hand, given them such legal rights and privileges as are not enjoyed by the women of even the most civilized and advanced countries, in spite of their having attained to the highest pinnacles of social and political glory, and which are envied by the leaders and reformers of other communities. It is a fact worth noting that the women of the West, notwithstanding the recommendations and support of great commissions and the persistent

demand of their societies, have not yet won those rights which Islam accorded to its women-folk, more than thirteen centuries ago. Let us grant, for the sake of argument, that Purdah is only another name for imprisonment, even then these rights so far outweigh this restriction, that liberty itself might very well feel jealous of it. If these rights are fully granted then woman could never have cause to complain of any physical or spiritual privation, and her mind would never remain fresh and happy as the beautiful flowers of spring. Such conditions do generally obtain in all good families, and where they do not exist, the reasons for it are either violent disagreement in the temperaments of the husband and wife or the ill-temper of one of them.* Hundreds of incidents bear testimony to the fact that the peaceful and calm life spent by a Muslim lady, inside her home, is never the share of her sister in the civilized West. The domestic happiness and peace of mind which a Muslim lady generally derives in her own home are seldom found in those countries where outwardly total freedom is granted to women. Here, in the East, the husband or other male members of the family are the bread-winners ; while there, in the West, a large portion of the female world

* *Note* :—On this subject I have written a pamphlet entitled the “Hadyat-uz-Zaujain,” in which I have described the rights and privileges of the married couple in great detail.

has to suffer unmentionable hardships for the sake of earning a livelihood, the very idea of which is painful.

It is said that women here, in Purdah, suffer in health, but there, in the bracing climate and open air, conditions are still worse. The real fact is that in both hemispheres the real causes of bad health are the same, and they are generally neglect of the first principles of sanitation and insufficient and unwholesome food. With all her freedom, woman, in the West, has fallen so low that she is described as the root cause of all immorality and crime, and men hurl imprecations and anathemas on her head. In the East, on the contrary, she is an innocent spirit in the seclusion of her home. To quote a Western lady* :—

‘The seclusion of Moslem women, instead of being, as is generally assumed, a result of their “degraded position,” is, on the contrary, the outcome of the great respect and regard entertained for them by the men of their own nation.’

She is the personification of honour and virtue. The more we study history and the deeper we investigate the causes of the existing conditions of to-day, the more we shall be forced to the conclusion that all moral evils can be traced to the free and

* The Women of Turkey and their Folk-lore. (p. 444) by LUCY B. G. GORNETT.

unnecessary intercourse of the two sexes. The ordinary sort of education imparted to her now-a-days generally does not, and cannot, stop these evils ; on the contrary it lends a helping hand to them. Facts and figures conclusively prove that in the countries where, along with the freedom of women, education is comparatively general, cases of immorality are, as a rule, greater. That is to say, this excessive liberty has changed even the antidote into poison.

It is sometimes vehemently asserted that Purdah is a great obstacle to all progress and advancement of women ; but we have first to determine the object and the standard of advancement of women, and to fix the stage at which they become entitled to be called "*advanced*" and "*civilized*."

In western thought, we find that * :—

‘ The whole idea of women’s position in social life, and their ability to take their place, independently of any question of sex, in the work of the world, was radically changed in the English-speaking countries, and also in the more progressive nations beyond their bounds, during the nineteenth century. This is due primarily to the movement for women’s higher education and its results. To

* Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. XXVIII, pp. 785 and 786.

deal in detail with this movement in various countries would here be too intricate a matter ; but in the English-speaking countries at all events the change is so complete that the only curious thing now is, not what spheres women may not enter, more or less equally with men, but the few from which they are still excluded.....

.....

The temperate, calm, earnest demeanour of women, both in the schools and in university life, awakened admiration and respect from all ; and the movement brought into existence a vast number of women, as well educated as men, hardworking, persevering and capable who invaded many professions, and could hold their ground where a sound education was the foundation of success.....

In the literary field they soon invaded journalism, and took an important place on the staffs of libraries and museums..... They form an important section of the teaching profession in the state schools.....It is not possible for every woman to be a scholar, a doctor, a lawyer. Women have long practised law in the United States. In France an Act was passed enabling women to practise as barristers. In Finland and Norway women have long practised as barristers and in Denmark they have been admitted as assistants to lawyers By the law

of the Netherlands they are admitted as notaries...
 It is not possible for every woman to be a scholar, a doctor, a lawyer, or possibly to attain the highest position in professions where competition with men is keen, but the development of women's work has opened many other outlets for their energies. As members of school-boards, factory inspectors poor law guardians, sanitary inspectors, they have had ample scope for gratifying their ambition and energy. The progress made in philanthropy and religious activity is largely due to their devotion, under the auspices of countless new societies. And increasing provision has been made, in the arts and crafts, for the furtherance of their careers. There are successful women architects ; a large number of women travel for business firms ; in decorative work, as silversmiths, dentists, law copyists, proof readers, and in plan tracing, women work with success ; wood-carving has become almost as recognised a career for them as that of typewriting and shorthand, in which an increasing number are finding employment. Agriculture and gardening have opened up a new field of work, and, with it, kindred occupations. Women have always found a peculiarly fitting sphere as nurses, but their admission to the medical profession itself was one of the earliest triumphs of the nineteenth century movement '

The above refers to the social and economic progress woman has made. Her political status has been thus described* :

‘ Women in England may fill some of the highest positions in the State. Among the public offices a woman may hold, are those of county, borough, parish and rural or urban district councillor, overseer, guardian of the poor, churchwarden and sexton. She can vote in county council, municipal, poor law and other local elections. The granting of the parliamentary franchise to women was, however, still withheld in 1910.’

But now, as all the world knows, Women’s Suffrage movement has obliged the Government to do away with that restriction also.

Commission after Commission has sat to investigate her position and status and Bill after Bill has been brought forward to improve her condition. Some of these efforts have succeeded while others have failed and certain measures are still under consideration.

But the backward progress that has followed this material advancement can be gauged only after a perusal of the painful revelations which have created such a great sensation in the civilised world of the West and which are engaging the deep and serious attention of the thinkers and reformers

* Encyclopædia Britannica, Vol XXVIII, p, 786.

of those countries. They are now lamenting over the position given to the members of the weaker sex in the political and social life of the country, in consequence of which woman takes her share in every department of human activity and works shoulder to shoulder with man, in the most unrestrained manner.

Dr. Le Bon says :—

‘ According to this creed, woman demands equal rights and treatment similar to man, and she forgets the difference which exists in the mental capacities of the two sexes. But if she succeeds in her object, there will remain neither home nor family for men in Europe.’

As opposed to this, the meaning and object of the progress of woman in Islam, is that she should perform the duties natural to her, as has been explained by the Holy Qur'an :—‘ And one of His signs is that He created mates for you from yourselves that you may find quiet of mind in them, and He put between you love and compassion ; most surely there are signs in this for a people who reflect.’ (Sura Rûm.) She should be the means of comfort to her husband. She should bring up and train the children. She should make her home an abode of peace and rest for her husband, and the male members of the family ; and she should be always ready in time of need, to undergo hardships and suffer privations.

She should be a bright example of chastity, courtesy and piety, and above all she should be a living personification of righteousness, adorned with modesty and bashfulness.

Now, I ask, can a woman, taking active part in the bustle of social and political life of the present day, attain to this ideal? Is it possible for her to become an advocate, a solicitor, a clerk, an inspectress, or to work in the many departments of active service now open to her, and still be what has been said about her? Is it within the bounds of possibility for her to enter into electioneering campaigns and discharge her domestic duties also, or to have free intercourse with members of the other sex and guard herself against its evil consequences, by overcoming her natural weakness?

It should also be kept in mind that no intelligent human being will ever tolerate such restrictions and limitations as retard human progress, whether they affect only one sex or both of them. Islam claims to have revealed to the world the hopeful message of human progress, material and spiritual, and to have granted the two sexes the rights which open for each the paths to liberty and advancement. How could it, therefore, be possible that any of its commandments should come in the way of progress? Islam would have remained imperfect had it not paid due regard to human nature. But, because Islam is Nature itself, all its commandments and

injunctions are based on the Laws of Nature. It is an admitted fact that the natures of the two sexes, male and female, are quite distinct from each other ; therefore, their natural duties and functions in this life are poles apart. Consequently, the laws and rules for each sex are based on this divergence of natures. And finally, with the existence of this natural difference in the sexes, it is but obvious that the meaning and import of the word “ *progress* ” and “ *advancement*,” when used with reference to men and women, cannot be identical.

It is self-evident that when God has divided humanity into two sections, the very division is proof positive that He must have marked out different fields of activity for each sex. For the physically stronger of the two, the field is larger and wider, and for the weaker it is proportionally smaller, and more restricted. It is incumbent on the weaker sex that it should not step beyond the limits of its own sphere of activity in order that the discharge of its primary and natural duties in life may not be interfered with, and that it may be kept guarded against evil influences, fraught with misery, to domestic life. This is the *raison d'être* of the Purdah System ; and this is what the reformers of Europe and America have been yearning for.

How far are we justified in abolishing the Purdah System, is a matter deserving our deep and serious consideration, especially when there is

unquestionable historical evidence before us of untold misery wrought by non-seclusion of women, and also when we ourselves are witnessing its results in modern times. Where is the need of exchanging the peace and happiness, we now enjoy, for a life full of misery and troubles? If we desire to get out of our present misery and rise to eminence, which the times loudly call for, we must retain this custom, which is a guarantee of our domestic peace and happiness. Why should we hanker after the so-called freedom of women, a course every step of which is beset with temptations and troubles? If our women are allowed to come out of Purdah it can never lead to any good; on the other hand it shall surely spell the end of our national existence. Experience of our young men, who apishly imitate everything that is defective and evil in the life of the West, instead of adopting the good points of Western civilisation, warns us that if women are freed from the restrictions of Purdah, a similar fate awaits them also. Morality and virtue will then be conspicuous by their absence inside and outside of a Muslim home, which will then become the centre of empty show and ceremony, of extravagance and wastefulness. As for the enjoyment of married life there shall be nothing left to speak of. May God Almighty save our people from this calamity and may He lead us on to the right path.

Woman has been built differently because of the difference in the duties she has to perform in this life. She has been endowed with power and capacity suited only to the performance of her natural duties ; and this difference is noticeable in all stages of her life. There is, no doubt, a kind of woman who, out of a perverted sense of fashion and show, delights in putting on masculine dress, and making herself a caricature of man ; just as there are some men who dress effeminately and behave like women. In time, this habit becomes their second nature. It is for such people that the Prophet Muhammad (may the peace and blessings of God be on him) said,

“ cursed is the woman who counterfeits man and cursed is the man who counterfeits woman.”
(Bukhari : Book of Costumes).

In controversies like the question of observing Purdah among women, and the cognate problem of female education, our opponents often cite examples of ladies of bygone days of Muslim progress who were renowned for their erudition, who founded large colleges and seminaries, and themselves used to impart knowledge and instruction to advanced scholars ; and, in literary controversies and discussions, used to carry away the palm in knowledge, learning, wisdom and statesmanship even against the sterner sex. Whereas, in bravery and courage, they were the equals of men,

and sometimes even surpassed them in manly qualities on many a battlefield. Along with these truly noble examples, proofs are brought forward from the chronicles of the times of Khalifas and other Muslim sovereigns, that in those days of Muslim greatness women moved about freely, went about the market and bazars without any let or hindrance; took part in the assemblies of men; and their presence in the mosques lent dignity and grandeur to the congregations where they looked like beautiful flowers of spring in a bed of green grass. In fine arts, it is said that Princesses and exalted ladies possessed great skill in music and poetry and that it was quite a common thing to see in those glorious days, women playing skilfully upon flutes and guitars. As regards fashion, we are told that the dresses of these exalted ladies who were mad after fine raiments were the best specimens of the fashion of the day; that powder and scents were in common use then, as now; and that they were very fond of ornaments and were pastmistress in the art of personal adornment, and their houses used to be filled and decorated with the best specimens of the fine arts of those days.

But in presenting these examples and in stating their facts, our opponents do not draw a correct outline of those days. In their narratives they indiscriminately mix up the good with the bad,

with the result that their description fails to draw a true picture of the times before our eyes.

Instances of laxity in the observance of Purdah, brought forward by our opponents, are only to be found in works which are classed as fiction in Islamic literature, and which cannot, therefore, be treated as authentic facts of history. Even if we count them as historic verities, they only prove that the moral tone of Muhammadans had gone down in certain periods of history, which led to their downfall, and these were the evil consequences of acts which are to be abstained from. During the lifetime of the Prophet, and in the days of early Khilafat, the life of woman was entirely subject to Qur'anic and Traditional Law, and it was impossible for anyone to transgress these laws and escape punishment. The restrictions placed on the intercourse of the two sexes, the conditions on which women could lawfully go out of their houses and the emphasis laid on modesty and chastity are clearly recorded in the sayings of the Prophet, the traditions of his Companions; and these alone are fit to be followed by Musalmans at every stage of their lives, and in every period of their history. Islam has, on all occasions, opposed promiscuous publicity between men and women, even to such an extent that a woman is not allowed to stand at prayers in the same line with men in the mosques, and, according to some leading

Imams and theologians, prayers become nullified, if a woman passes by men or stands near them, during prayer time. In the Prophet's own mosque, at Medina, the arrangement was, that at prayers, women used to stand behind the boys, and, they, in turn, took their places behind the men. On the termination of prayers the men had to remain in their places until all the women had left the mosque and reached their houses. In the same mosque there was a separate entrance for women which Hazrat Umar (God be pleased with him) had opened specially for them. Similarly, other mosques also had separate entrances for men and women. Men and women used to make the round of the Ka'aba too separately. Whenever women used to take part in the battles of Islam, in which they displayed such splendid valour and gave proof of their exemplary sense of honour and self-respect they always maintained their Purdah intact, and ever kept their places in the rear of the army. After the first four true and blessed Khalifs, begins the Umayyad period of Islamic History. During this age strict adherence to the injunctions of Islam began to be slightly relaxed ; yet it was not in any way a bad time for Muhammadan women. They still, for the most part, adhered to the letter of the law. In the days of Abbaside Khalifs, when Islamic civilisation had reached its high-water-mark of grandeur, the intermingling of different

races created a synthetic and highly composite civilisation in Baghdad, which had very little in common with primitive Islam. Of course, there were exceptions to this general statement as in everything else. In this period, on the one hand, the power of Islam was gradually rising; on the other hand, the reins of Government sometimes came into the hands of such Khalifs who resorted to all kinds of religious excuses to justify their excesses; while greedy and worldly minded theologians were not wanting in those days as now, who were ready to give without the least hesitation, religious sanction to every royal wish. Witness those forty divines with flowing white beards who, in the reign of *Yazeed bin Abd-ul-Malik bin Marwan*, laid it down that "the Khalifa will neither be called upon to render account on the Day of Judgment, nor will he be punished for any of his misdeeds!" This Khalifa's impudence reached such a height that he decided to make a pilgrimage to *Ka'aba* for the sole purpose of drinking wine on the roof of that sacred place!! While, another Khalifa dressed one of his wives in male garb; and sent her to the mosque to lead the Friday prayers!!! Keeping slave girls, drinking wine, composing passionate poems and singing such tunes were the common practice of the courts of some of those rulers. They kept hundreds of concubines and slave girls, to satisfy their lower nature; and one of them

Mutawakkil had as many as four thousand. Islam has sanctioned the keeping of slave girls only under certain circumstances, and with severe restrictions; and it has entirely forbidden their being trained as dancing girls and musicians; and it is also unlawful to trade in such women. This practice became extensive during the period under review, until it reached the stage of open debauchery. The palaces of the Khalifas became veritable music halls and it is said that three hundred girls were kept in the Harem of Haroon-ur-Rasheed, to sing and dance to his royal pleasure. These were the girls who were trained in dancing and music as a profession, and who were brought up for that very purpose. These alone attended such royal parties; and were openly bought and sold in the bazars. In spite of all that, general freedom among women did not exist even in such lax-times. On the contrary, ladies of noble birth spent their lives in Purdah; and kept to their homes.

In the form of an imaginary journey to Baghdad an Arabic book named "*Hizarat-ul-Islam fi Dar-is-Salam*," has been recently published by some one, purporting to give an authentic description of its old-time civilisation. A chapter in this book has been exclusively devoted to the luxury and debauchery of the Royal palace. The contents of the chapter refer to the slave girls only, while

some of the anecdotes related, about the ladies of gentle birth, prove quite the contrary.

In short, these facts do not constitute the good points of the period. They are, so to say, spots in the sun. Just as it would be incorrect to produce the wickednesses of the present times as an argument for justifying misdeeds in future, so it is nothing short of deceitfulness and fraud to use the bad and weak points of a past age, clearly forbidden by law and religion, to prove to-day that they have the sanction of that religion. Even in those days when these vices existed, moralists, divines and reformers were not wanting, who openly denounced them and declared them to be contrary to the law and spirit of Islam.

Moreover, these objectionable and unorthodox manners and customs are not to be found in any standard work of history. They are mentioned only in story-books and works of fictions which do not possess any historical value whatsoever. Still, leaving aside the evils prevalent then, it can never be proved historically that, even in those days, women went about without their veils. Leaving alone History, even the Arabian Nights, and other books of fiction, never mention the case of any Muslim lady walking about in the markets and streets of the town, without her veil and *burqa*. It conclusively proves that Muslim ladies have never discarded Purdah, in any period of its history, and

that it has always been a part and portion of Islamic Polity?

Let us now examine the historical evidence on this point. In the reign of Mamoon-ur-Rasheed, which is the Augustan age of Arabian history, legal Purdah was strictly observed, and it was considered improper on the part of women to come in the presence of men without being veiled.

The story of the marriage between Haroon-ur-Rasheed's sister, *Abbasa*, and his Minister Ja'far, is considered by some historians to be apocryphal, while many recognise it to be authentic. But even those writers who consider this story to be true, say that Rasheed never felt happy in his drinking bouts until Ja'far and Abbasa were by his side. He, therefore, proposed to marry the Minister to Abbasa so that Ja'far's presence at such times might become permissible.

When Ameen lost his life at the instance of Tahir in his struggle against Mamoon, his famous mother Zubaida Khatoon, the most renowned empress of the period, wrote an elegy, and thus addressed Tahir: "May God never forgive *Tahir** and may he never become pure nor the means of making others pure (because) he has driven me out of my house with face uncovered and hair dishevelled."

* *Note*.—There is a play on the word *Tahir*, which means "pure."

In the halcyon days of Islamic civilisation and culture in Andalusia, when Muslim women were renowned for their literary attainments and personal valour, they never used to appear in public without their veils. A remarkable incident of the Abbaside period is mentioned in the History. A certain lady observed Purdah so strictly that once she gave up using a very costly apparel simply because a stranger had inadvertently happened to see it ! The dress was so costly that a magnificent mosque was erected out of its sale proceeds.

In the fourth century, Al-Qahir Billah forbade the keeping of slave dancing girls, and ordered that they should be sold away, arrested all male singers, exiled every eunuch found in the city, and had all instruments of luxury and pleasure and wine cups broken to pieces. This very Khalifa declared the sale of liquor illegal ; although he himself used to drink very hard, and was never tired of music.

In the beginning of the fifth century, *Al-Qahir-Billah*, a famous Jurist and learned Khalifa, promulgated a decree, that no women should be seen on the roads ; be it night or day. It was *Muhammad bin Haroon* who stopped singing and music altogether in his time.

In the same century the famous traveller Hakim Nasir Khusru, writing of the reign of the Egyptian King, *Moizz-o-Le-Deen-i-Illah*, says :—

“ In the days of this Ruler no one used to drink wine in Egypt, and no woman ever left her house unveiled.”

Writing of Cairo and Alexandria of the sixth century of our era, Ibn-e-Jubair, the famous traveller, narrates that one of the many good points of these cities was that women used to lead a very chaste and secluded life and kept to their homes ; and that the institution of Purdah among Muslim women had influenced even the Christian ladies of those days. He further remarks :—

‘ The mode of life of the Christian women of this city conforms to those of the Muslim women. They attended their “ ’ID ” service covered and veiled. They wore fancy silk dress and socks embroidered with gold, and they were veiled in many coloured BURQAS. They went to their church adorned with ornaments, henna, and scents like Muslim ladies.’

About Mecca he writes :—

‘ Thursday has been set apart for women, and thus opportunity was given them to go round the KA’ABA. No man remained near it at that time.’

When *Ibn-i-Batuta*, the well-known traveller of the eighth century Hijri, saw Turkish and Tartar ladies, without their veils, buying precious stones in the shops of jewellers in Tabriz, where handsome youths were engaged as salesmen, he wrote that he found much room for mischief in such kind of

shopping ; and invoked the protection of God against it.

In Zubaid, the famous city of Yemen, which was famed for its elegance and highly polished life, the ladies used to visit their gardens in covered conveyances.

In short, Kings and Khalifs, who were true followers of ISLAM always respected and obeyed the law with regard to Purdah, and tried to remove existing evils.

Turning to India, we find the same conditions prevailing here also ; and we see that Amir Khusro, the famous poet-saint of the Tughlaq period, lays special stress on Purdah, in the course of his advice to his learned and beloved daughter Afifa.

Muslim civilisation reached its height in the days of the Great Moghuls. Although many of these Sovereigns had their HAREMS full of concubines and themselves were of very dissolute disposition, spending most of their time in luxury ; still they stoutly upheld the Purdah System.

Many Princesses of the house of Taimoor were noted for their accomplishments, but nowhere is it written that they ever attended public assemblies without their veils. (Dur-rat-ut-Taj-i-Khusrawi.)

The late *Maulana Shibli*, in his review on "The Humayun-Nama," of Gul-Badan-Begum, has cited several instances of the freedom enjoyed by women in Islam. But along with these he says :—

'The opponents of the Purdah System, in our day, will be disappointed to learn that, with all this freedom women never came unveiled before strangers in those days. When the Emperor Humayun called Hameeda Banu Begum in his presence, before she was married to him, she sent word to the Monarch that she had gone to pay her homage to him once before as demanded by court etiquette. Doing so a second time would be exposing her face to a stranger. The actual words of Hameeda Banu Begum were these :—

'Looking at the face of Kings for the first time is permissible ; but a second time it is not allowed.'

And consequently she never permitted herself to be seen by Humayun until she was married to him.

A further instance, in support of our contention is of the time when Humayun was about to die. The Princesses of the blood royal had assembled round his death-bed while the Ministers of the Crown wanted them to leave the room. But no efforts prevailed upon the ladies to leave the Royal Chamber. Ultimately the ruse, that the Physicians and Hakeems were coming to see His Majesty, succeeded, and the room was cleared of all ladies for the Ministers to approach their dying Monarch. Gul-Badan-Begum, describing his incident, says :—

'They removed my aunts and my mother on the false pretext that physicians were coming

to see the Royal patient. All of us got up. My mother and the other Begums were removed to the big palace.'....(Humayun Nama.)

It is related of Nur Jehan Begum, famous in history for her ability and bravery, that she was very strict about Purdah. One day, the eyes of a stranger fell accidentally on her, as she was standing at the window of her palace; she shot the man dead on the spot.

Jehan Ara Begum, the enlightened daughter of the Emperor Shah Jehan, was a highly educated and learned lady. One day, as she was proceeding to her garden, for recreation, *Mir Saidi of Teheran*, a bold and unscrupulous Persian Poet, hid himself to obtain a glimpse of the Princess' procession. As the elephant of the Princess passed by, the poet uttered the following couplet:—

'Her delicacy of feeling, and her sense of refinement, are conducting her to the garden with a fine veil thrown over her face; so that the sweet odours of flowers may reach her, purified through her delicate veil.'

The Begum ordered the poet to be forcibly brought in her presence, asked him to repeat the couplet, gave him five thousand mohurs for his brilliant verse, and then banished him as the penalty for his impudence. (Maqalat-i-Shibli: Tazkira-e-Zebun-Nisa.)

Generally, Purdah was observed in a much stricter form among the Muslim public than among the royalty and the upper ten. Even about such women, who were engaged in imparting instruction, the idea very largely obtains, that they did so either when they had reached an age at which wearing of veils had become quite unnecessary for them, or that they used to teach with the veil on. For surely it would have been ridiculous for them to teach those very laws which they broke every day of their life. This matter will be further discussed in succeeding pages.

We are, therefore, justified in saying that a deep and searching inquiry into the facts of history leads to only one conclusion, that in all ages Muslim women kept in-doors, and when they had occasion to get out, they did so, strictly observing the code of their religion regarding *PURDAH* ; so much so, that even in the reigns of sensual and immoral Khalifas, such observance was maintained fully. If any instances of the absence of Purdah are found anywhere, they apply, without exception, to those slave girls who were bought from various nationalities, and different countries. Moreover, even in the reigns of Khalifas, who considered themselves to be above all laws and rules of religion, no mention is found of assemblies where men and women mixed with one another freely ; nor do we come across crowded cafés and restaurants where

the two sexes intermingled promiscuously ; nor even do we hear of any such places of amusement, where immodest pictures were shamelessly presented to the human eye.

Then, again, stories of the hospitality of the Bedawi women are sometimes brought forward in support of the abolition of Purdah System. But the truth is that the case of the Bedawi women is exactly similar to that of the village women who, in the simplicity and purity of their mind, do not observe so strict a Purdah as the women who live in cities. Besides, these Bedawi women lead a simpler life and live on simpler food than those who dwell in cities and lead a fashionable life. Those who have had an opportunity of performing the Hajj, can speak as eye-witnesses, that such of the Bedawi women who know anything about the injunctions of Purdah as laid down by Islam, never go about, without their veil and *burqa*. At the same time it must be mentioned that the Bedawi is usually of strong moral muscle and bears an excellent character. The author of the "Hizarat-ul-Islam fi Dar-is-Salam" says :—"The Bedou never commits adultery ; on the other hand, he punishes the adulterer with death." The reason for this is that the Arabs have a highly developed sense of chastity, are extremely jealous of their reputation, and have a deep regard for their honour. Besides this, one nearly always finds

country life immune from those unhealthy and immoral influences which are to be found in towns, as veritable concomitants of modern mode of life.

All over the world, the necessity of keeping women in Purdah, is comparatively greater in the cities where men, of all descriptions, good and bad, live together; and the more complex the citylife becomes, the more pressing is there the need for Purdah. Even now women do not observe Purdah in the villages so strictly as they do in the towns, because in villages the simple and pure lives of the men and women, and the absence of any means of satisfying a sensual mode of living, as also their innate sense of morality, are a sufficient guarantee for their chastity.

At the present time when the sun of women's advancement and progress is at its meridian in the West, and the western woman takes an equal part with man, in all walks of life, good and noble families still prefer the simpler life of the country to the high and fashionable life of the cities, and as a rule are very chary of mixing with strangers. This is not peculiar to any special country or nation, as it is admitted by all that everywhere the women of the village lead purer and cleaner lives than those who dwell in big cities.

Miss Lucy M. G. Garnette, in her book "The Women of Turkey," describing the observance of Purdah among the Kurds, says :—

' The village women veil themselves when they leave their homes ; and the nomads, when on the march, partially screen their faces with a cotton kerchief or scarf. Menservants are not, as with the Turks, excluded from the rooms occupied by the ladies of the house, and male visitors are freely received by the assembled family.

Notwithstanding, however, this apparent freedom of manners, Kurdish women conduct themselves with the utmost dignity and propriety, displaying neither the timidity common to the Armenians, nor the forwardness too often seen in the behaviour of the Osmanlis. Their standard of morality is, indeed exceptionally high among the races of the country, any lapse from virtue on the part of a married woman being, as a rule, summarily punished by the injured husband with death ; and her partner in guilt usually shares the same fate. No social odium attaches to the man who thus takes the law into his own hand ; on the contrary, such an action is considered highly meritorious. Various stories are current among the Kurds illustrating such retributory vengeance. One relates how a Kurd, the captain of some irregular troops employed at Bagdad, hearing of his Kourmandji wife's suspected unfaithfulness during his absence, returned secretly to his native town, entered the house by night, and shot dead both her and her lover. Another of these stories describes the murder, by a

boy of fifteen, of his stepmother and her partner in guilt, during the absence of his father, whom a feud with a neighbouring chief had obliged to remove temporarily to a distance. In both these cases the deed was considered highly meritorious, and its perpetrator treated with every mark of consideration by friends and neighbours. The relatives of the guilty persons made no complaint to the authorities, nor did they manifest any resentment. On the contrary, the crime which had occasioned the murder is so abhorrent to the Kurdish mind, that the customary visits of condolence were not paid to the families of the dead.'

The same writer observes as follows about Albanian women :—

' To such an extent is respect for women carried by the Albanians, that it is contrary to their notions of propriety ever to make women the subject of jokes or humorous stories. Insult or annoyance offered to a girl, or carrying off one without the consent of her parents, almost invariably results in bitter feuds between families, or fierce battles between tribes. As with most mountain people, the moral code is with the Skipetars exceedingly strict. Among many of the tribes any lapse from virtue on the part of a woman is punished with death, a subsequent marriage not being allowed to condone the fault. The penalty of adultery is of equally Draconic severity. The unfaithful wife is

placed up to her shoulders in a pit, and then literally buried under a heap of stones, which are piled upon and around her; and her husband has a right to slay the partner of her guilt wherever he may find him. Such cases are, however, of extremely rare occurrence.' (*Ibid*, pp. 230-231.)

Even the women belonging to the nomadic tribes of the Tartars, in going out of their dwellings, use the veil, and the custom is common among Muslim as well as Christian women.

'The Miridite women wear a coat of thick white woollen stuff, red trousers, an embroidered apron with fringe half a yard long, and on the head a blue kerchief. The dress of the Christians is similar in form but usually of a violet colour. The yashmak and feridge (veil and cloak) of the Turkish women is worn out of doors by the Moslem women in the towns, and also, if they live in close proximity to Moslems, by the Christian women. The cloak of the latter is, however, of a different shape and of a light red colour, with a cross embroidered in front.' (*Ibid*, pp. 219-220.)

The Christian women are in no way inferior to their Mohammadan sisters in modesty and chastity.

'Social morality is pushed to its extremest limit by the Miridite mountaineers. Though their women enjoy the greatest freedom, and unmarried girls cannot, out of doors, speak to a man not a relative of her family without risking the loss of her

reputation, a calamity which few would care to survive. M. Hecquard cites a case in point, related to him by an Albanian abbe, which well illustrates the value that an Albanian girl sets on her honour. A man happened to remark in joke to a girl, the sister of one of his friends, and before several other persons, that he had seen her in conversation with a young man, whose name he mentioned. On the following Easter Sunday, when all the tribe were congregated, the girl, who was under fifteen, on leaving the church after partaking, as is customary on that day, of the Eucharist, called God to witness to her innocence, and seizing a pistol from one of her relatives, shot herself through the heart. Two days afterwards, the man whose careless words had been the cause of the tragedy fell by the hand of the victim's brother. (*Ibid*, p. 233.)

Describing this fact in the different Muslim countries of the world, a writer in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* observes :—

‘ In Mohomedan countries theoretically a woman must veil her face to all men except her father, her brother and her husband ; any violation of this rule is still regarded by strict Mohomedans as the gravest possible offence... If any other man make his way into a harem he may lose his life. The attempted escape of a harem woman is a capital offence, the husband having absolute power of life, and death, to such an extent that, especially in the

less civilised parts of the Moslem world, no one would think of questioning a man's right to mutilate or kill a disobedient wife or concubine.'

(Encyclopædia Britannica, Vol. XII, under the head Harem. Page 950, col. 2.)

In the highlands of Afghanistan, although owing to defective religious instruction, the standard of Purdah is not so high, still the feeling of national and family pride is so strong in the Afghans that every man defends the good name and fame of his neighbour as his own, and if any crime is committed, the guilty party is punished by the whole tribe. A woman, named Kundan, once described an occurrence of this nature to me, of which she was herself an eye-witness, in the following words :—

' My husband was an Afghan who had married me in India and taken me with him to Afghanistan. We lived for many years in our home, in a certain village. A certain widow, who received clandestine visits from a stranger, lived near my house. My neighbours spoke to the widow about this and advised her to marry again ; but she did not listen to this advice. People now grew suspicious and began to watch her house. At last, one day, being certain of the man's presence in the widow's house, her neighbours surrounded it, in order to arrest him, when he came out. The culprit got wind of this and did not come out, but the neighbours knew for certain that he could not have vanished

into thin air, so, making known their presence at the door, and after giving due notice, they entered the house. A regular search was then made, with the result that the man was found hiding himself in a room full of straw. They caught and bound him flat to a bed, with ropes. The widow was also tied similiarly to another cot. Then they covered both with white sheets and carried them in funeral processions to an open space, outside the village, next morning. A number of men now started dancing round the beds, to the accompaniments of pipes played by the others, while the women began to beat drums. Some of these dancers held naked swords in their hands and shouting "*Wai-Wai*" whirled round the beds. Whenever, in their wild whirlings they approached the cots, cuts and thrusts were made in the bodies of the culprits, followed by claps and shouts of joy from the people who stood by to witness this awful scene, and there, once more they would start whirling round and round and shouting "*Wai-Wai*," repeated by similiar cuts and thrusts, until both man and woman were hacked to pieces. Then the villagers buried the bodies of these culprits and returned to their houses.'

No doubt many will consider such rough and ready justice barbarous. But it is nevertheless certain that emancipation from Purdah is not

surely so harmful where the inhabitants belong to the same race and religion, and possess such an exalted sense of morality and decency. But where the sense of national pride is not strong enough, and national life does not permit of such deterring punishments, and one has to spend his life among people of different races and religions, Purdah, and that also of the strictest type, becomes an absolute necessity.

Surely, Purdah System can never come in the way of philanthropy, education or any other movement for general national good. Even now absence of any punitive law in a society would make no difference if men and women were kept apart and women allowed to take only their due share in works of public and national good. I say, they will still be saved from all evils, if such a division of labour were adopted in any society. Separate institutions for women are neither forbidden by religion nor are there chances of harm in them. But, of course, if ambition be the motive, and to show off superiority and lead a foppish life the main object of the establishment of a society, then, any institution based on such empty show, is bound to prove harmful. Women can impart education and get themselves educated even at the present time, but that does not necessarily demand their giving up Purdah. In many houses and private schools to-day only women work as teachers. Both girls and

boys receive co-education in such schools, but only during their childhood. And, we expect Muslim women of to-day to show the same characteristic bravery and courage as did their sisters of yore ; yea, we expect much more of them to-day, and we also read of such exalted deeds in newspapers, occasionally. But these qualities have nothing to do with non-observance of *Purdah*. Rather they are directly related to such communal and national sentiments which receive their impetus from religion and patriotism. In times of national calamity and danger the help rendered by women is based on their feelings of patriotism and is the result of their personal ideas of national ruin or regeneration. But such occasions occur very infrequently in the lives of nations.

In 1814, when Bhopal was besieged by a powerful enemy and there was imminent danger of the fall of the city, even *Purdah* ladies fought most valiantly against, and saved the city from, falling into the hands of the enemy. Similarly, when the fort of Islamnagar was attacked in the year 1800, its defence was entrusted to a *Purdah* lady, *Moti Begum*.

Among the many duties which woman has to perform there are undoubtedly some which require the assistance of well-organized institutions and societies ; for example, education, treatment of diseases, etc., etc. But all this work can also be conducted by women. Women can educate women ;

women can render medical assistance to women ; women can deliver public lectures and speeches on morality and education to other women ; and inculcate among them feelings of patriotism and mutual help. There cannot be any objection to this, all of which can be done behind the Purdah, for which we have before us the noble example of the Muslim women of by-gone days. If woman is not prepared in this wise, to perform her task in life, and hankers after a false freedom in society, then she will be over-stepping the limits fixed for her by the Creator of the Universe, and so doing she can never prosper in this or any other world.

I.

“ PURDAH IN ISLAMIC LAW.”

(A) *The Holy Qur'an and Purdah.*

The universal custom of observing Purdah among women, which obtains throughout the entire Muslim world, is not any arbitrary enactment of men, but is based on the law and teaching of Islam. The Qur'an, the Traditions, the Acts and examples of the Prophet's companions, and the dicta of the theologians are full of injunctions bearing on this point.

The Holy Qur'an has so completely and elaborately described how, when and where to observe Purdah that no room is left for any doubt in the matter. Usually the Holy Qur'an deals only with

general principles while the details of minor points are left for the Holy Prophet to interpret and expound. For, example, it orders praying, fasting and giving of the obligatory "alms" for the Faithful; but their details and limits are to be found in the Traditions of the Prophet. Hence if, along with the principles, their details be also given anywhere in the Qur'an, we ought to consider them equally authoritative with the principle itself. Now, the injunction in the Holy Qur'an about the observance of Purdah for women not only lays down the principle but gives its fullest details also. This proves that the whole law relating to Purdah is not an ordinary one but possesses a highly obligatory character, and is binding for all Mohommedans.

We now proceed to place before the reader, all the verses in the Holy Qur'an, bearing on the subject.

The holy wives of the Prophet were the first to be ordered to observe Purdah. Authorities differ as to the exact date of the revelation of this verse. It was probably revealed in the month of Ziq'ada, either in 3 or 5 A. H.; and the Book lays down that:—

'O! Ye who believe! do not enter the houses of the Prophet, unless leave be given you, for a meal, not watching till it is cooked! But when ye are invited, then enter, and when ye have fed, disperse,

not engaging in familiar discourse ; verily, that would annoy the Prophet, and he would be ashamed for your sake but God is not ashamed of the truth. And when ye ask them for an article, ask them from behind a curtain, that is purer for your hearts and for theirs. It is not right for you to annoy the Prophet of God, nor to wed his wives after him ever, verily, that is with God a serious thing.'

But this verse did not forbid the holy wives of the Prophet to go out of their houses. Therefore they were next enjoined to keep to their houses ; and were forbidden to expose themselves to the public gaze, as women used to do in the days of Ignorance :—

‘ (O ! Wives of the Prophet) stay in your houses, and display not your finery like the displaying of the ignorance of yore ; and be steadfast in prayer and give alms, and obey God and His Apostle ; God only desires to take away the uncleanness from you, O people of the Household ! and to purify you thoroughly.’

Again, as Arabia had not made much progress in sanitary matters and there were no latrines in private houses, so the desert served the purpose, and thither women resorted after sunset. And since there was generally no difference in the costumes of slave-girls and Muslim ladies the (مذايقين) hypocrites used to molest the ladies on the road, and when they were reprimanded for

the insult, they used to reply that they had mistaken the ladies for slaves. Then the following order was given to the Prophet:—

‘O! thou Prophet, tell thy wives and thy daughters, and the women of the believers, to let down over them thin outer wrappers so that they may be more easily known, and thus they will not be molested. And God is Forgiving, Merciful.’

The condition contained in the words “*adná an yurafua*” clearly demonstrates that owing to the distinction established between a lady and a slave-girl, it was essential for a lady to at least cover her face when she went out of her house. But if the restrictions are enhanced, and women are not permitted to go out of their house, unless in a palanquin or in a covered carriage, it would in no sense be repugnant to the mandates of the Qur’an. On the contrary, this will be observing that higher form of the distinctive law, the least of which enjoins that “Ladies of gentle birth should draw their veils over their faces, when they go out of their houses.”

As time passed, and people reached a higher stage of civilisation, and latrines began to be attached to houses, women were entirely forbidden to leave their houses at night time. The great scholar Qastalani in his commentaries on *Bukhari* writes :—

‘Formerly when there were no privies in the houses, women were allowed to go out, but when lavatories were built in the houses they were forbidden to go out at all, except on some urgent business.’

But even this going out “on urgent business” has certain restrictions attached to it; as ordered in the Qur’an:—

‘And say to the believing women that they cast down their looks and guard their private parts, and display not their ornaments, except those which are outside; and let them pull their kerchiefs over their bosoms and not display their ornaments save to their husbands and fathers, or the fathers of their husbands, or their sons, or the sons of their husbands, or their brothers, or their brothers’ sons, or their women, or what their right hands possess, or their male attendants not having need (of women), or to children who have not attained knowledge of what is hidden of women, and that they beat not with their feet that their hidden ornaments may be known; and turn ye all repentant to God, O ye believers! so that ye may prosper.’

Only women of advanced age are permitted to remove their veils or upper covering in the presence of strangers:—

‘And those women who are advanced in age who do not hope for a marriage, it is

no sin for them that they put off their clothes.'

But even this permission has been given with the condition that the object of removing the veil be not vanity and display of beauty otherwise they too would be counted as sinners; thus, the above verse is followed by the words—

“ Without displaying their ornaments. ”

And it would be considered, if they did not expose themselves at all before whom they ought to keep Purdah, meritorious on their part :

“ But that they abstain is better for them.”

And even this carefully worded permission seems to be given with some reluctance, and only for unavoidable occasions, as it is added,

‘ and, if they abstain (from casting their veils or pulling off their upper clothes) it is better for them.’

Thus it will be seen that, after making an exception in the case of aged women, the learned divines take into account four stages in the observance of Purdah :—

(I) The first order is the use of a curtain between men and women, as ordered in the Quran :—

‘ When you ask of them anything, ask from behind a curtain.’

- (2) The second order is about covering the faces of women, as God has ordered :—

‘ O thou Prophet ! tell thy wives and thy daughters, and the women of the believers, to let down over them thin outer wrappers, etc.’

- (3) The third order forbids women to go out of their houses as ordered :—

‘ Stay in your houses.’

- (4) The fourth order enjoins that when going out of the house for some lawful purpose, women should cover their whole bodies, as it is ordered :—

‘ And say to the believing women that they cast down their looks and guard their private parts and display not their ornaments.’

The second and fourth of the above orders are common to all the women of Islam while the first and third according to the Qur'an are specially meant for the wives of the Prophet. But if all Muslim women were also to act as laid down by first and third order, it will be still better for them as they shall then walk in the footsteps of the holy wives of the Prophet.

As a matter of fact, in the lifetime of the Prophet himself Muslim women had begun to act accordingly. Aboo Daood relates that formerly the

Arabs did not use to hang any curtain to the outer doors of their houses. The Prophet, therefore, whenever he went to see anybody, never offered his salutations facing the door. So after a few days the custom of hanging curtains on the doors came into vogue there and ever since it has prevailed in Muslim houses all over the world.

II.

HADIS * AND PURDAH.

As mentioned in the foregoing chapter the Qur'an itself has laid the Principle and fixed the limits of the regulations connected with the Purdah System. These limits were still further expounded and elaborated by the correctly reported Traditions (Hadis) of the Prophet.

The basic principle of the Purdah System has been settled by the Qur'an, as we have already seen, and it has been definitely ordained that it is better for women to keep to their homes. The Traditions also clearly say the same thing and invariably expatiate on the merits of their doing so. Tirmizi and Bazzar report the following "Hadis" from Ibn-i-Massood :—

'Woman is altogether to be kept out of sight. When she comes out of her house, Satan looks slyly at her. She is nearest to the mercy of God when she is inside her own house.'

* Sayings and actions of the Prophet are called "Hadis."

“Jihad,” or religious warfare, under certain well-defined conditions, has been described as the “noblest of deeds” by Islam. Once upon a time some Muslim women went to the Prophet and submitted :—

“O ! Messenger of God, is there nothing that we can do which will raise us to the meritorious position of those who are fighting the battles of God ? ”

The Prophet answered :—

“That woman among you who does not stir out of her house will get the reward of a soldier of God.”

Although the Prophet has permitted women to attend public prayers in the mosque, all the same he has also laid down that the best mosque for a woman is *a corner of the inner apartment of her own house.*

The second point to be considered is whether it is lawful for a woman to meet a man alone before whom she should observe Purdah, and to become familiar with him ? In this connection the views of the Prophet are even stronger than in the matter of women keeping to their own homes. At times, a woman can lawfully—in special circumstances, and with certain restrictions and conditions—go out of her house ; but for her to see strangers alone, and to become familiar with them, is totally forbidden. It is written in the Traditions that—

‘Except in the presence of some near male relatives, before whom the woman does not observe Purdah, no man shall meet a woman in privacy.’

Whereupon, some of the Companions of the Prophet inquired if this order applied also to the younger brother of the husband appearing before his elder brother’s wife? To this the Prophet replied that the brother-in-law is as death to his sister-in-law.

Not only was the meeting of men and women in privacy forbidden, but men were ordered not to come between any two women on the public roads. Ibn-i-Umar (may God be pleased with him) relates that “the Messenger of God has prohibited a man from walking between two women on the road.”

One day as the congregation came out of the mosque, the number of people on the road became so great that men and women rubbed shoulders with each other in the throng. Noticing this, the Prophet turned to the women and said :—

“Keep back, you should walk on either side and not in the middle of the road !!”

After this incident the women used to walk so close to the houses, on either side of the road, that their clothes rubbed against the walls.

The only matter, now left for our consideration is, the mode of dress for a woman which she should adopt when inside and outside her

house ? The Traditions are explicit on this point also. It has been laid down that a woman should never wear such thin apparel as would show her body, nor, under any circumstances whatsoever, is she to divest herself of her clothing outside her house. Hazrat Asma, the younger sister of Hazrat Aa'isha (may God be pleased with them), once came to the Prophet wearing very thin clothes. The Prophet turned his face away from her and said :—

“ O ! Asma ! when a woman reaches the years of puberty it is not proper for her to expose any part of her body except the palm of her hands and her foreheads (at the same time showing his own palms and indicating his forehead).”

And this is what the Prophet has said as regards those women who put on very thin and translucent clothes :—

“ Though dressed they are naked.”

Public baths were the only places, outside their houses, where women could have divested themselves of their clothes. For this reason the Prophet forbade them using the public baths at all. It is mentioned in the Traditions that,

“ Going to the baths is sinful for the women of my fold.”

Another Tradition enjoins women not to use public baths, in these words :—

“ Those among your women who believe in God and the Day of Judgment should not enter public baths.”

Once, in answer to a question of Hazrat Aa'isha's, the Prophet replied :—

“ There will come into existence public baths when I am gone and baths do not bode well for women.”

Whereupon Hazrat Aa'isha enquired of the Prophet where would be the harm, if women bathed there wrapped in big towels. To this the Prophet replied :—

“ No ! They can in no case use the public baths ; not even with their proper clothing on.”

Once, when some Syrian women came to visit Hazrat Aa'isha, she rebuked them for visiting public baths and reminded them of the saying of the Messenger of God who had said :—

“ The woman who removes her clothes outside the house of her husband rends, as under the curtain which hangs between herself and her God.”

III.

THE PRACTICE OF THE COMPANIONS OF THE PROPHET AS REGARDS PURDAH.

All the laws and rules laid down in the Qur'an and the Traditions about the observance of Purdah,

the modest behaviour and correct and proper deportment, and the decency in dress of women, applied in the first instance to the Companions of the Prophet and their women. We have now, therefore, to see to what extent they religiously followed and carried out these injunctions. It is no use logically arguing the matter at great length here when clear and detailed reports are available on these points ; and it will suffice to reproduce a few of these here.

No sooner was the order for observing Purdah given than all women, without distinction, obeyed it ; and this did not in any manner interfere with their religious or educational occupations. It is reported through Hazrat Aa'isha :—

‘ May God have compassion on the women of the ANSAR. The observance of Purdah has not prevented them from obtaining religious knowledge.’

The wife of Abul-Qa'ees had acted as wet-nurse to Hazrat Aa'isha ; and so, the latter did not observe Purdah with the male members of the former's family. But when Aflah, Abul-Qa'ees's brother visited her, after the order for the observance of Purdah had been promulgated, Hazrat Aa'isha did not permit Aflah to enter her house ; and sent him word that it was the wife of Abul-Qa'ees, and not he, who had acted as wet-nurse to her. But the Prophet called him inside the house

with the words that Aflah was like her foster-uncle.*

The wives of the Companions were so strict in the matter of Purdah that even in times of the greatest calamity they never used to take their veils from off their faces. It is said that when Umm-i-Khallad's son fell a martyr in one of the religious battles, she came to see the Prophet, veiled and enquired about her son. The Companions of the Prophet, who were present at that time, wondered how even under such trying circumstances she did not forget to cover her face, and asked her about it. She aptly replied, "My son has been martyred and not my modesty."

We thus see that Purdah in its entirety was observed by the good wives of the Exalted Companions of the Prophet; and they laid great stress on its observance; and adopted all possible means to safeguard the modesty and chastity of their wives.

* On hearing a man's voice in the house of one of his wives, the Prophet inquired as to who he was. Some one answered that he was a foster-brother of one of the Mothers of the Faithful. (The wives of the Prophet are addressed as Mothers of the Faithful.) On this the Prophet said :—

"Bear carefully in mind that foster relationship is established in the case of a woman acting as wet-nurse to a hungry child."

IV.

THE OPINIONS OF MUSLIM JURISTS
AND DIVINES REGARDING PURDAH.

Jurists and learned divines alone are best qualified to interpret those verses from the Qur'an and the Traditions, in connection with the subject under review, which we have quoted in the foregoing chapters. Besides this, the spiritual sway which they have on the minds of the people entitles their views and opinions on this subject, to our utmost respect ; and makes them worthy of being followed and acted upon. Fortunately, we possess a rich store of their opinions on this point. They have solved this knotty problem most clearly with the help of theology, history, Traditions and the Qur'an. We therefore proceed now to reproduce their opinions regarding Purdah in their own words.

Numerous theological treatises deal with the subject, and it is not at all difficult to collect the opinions of the learned in support of our views from these books. But as there is not space enough to quote the views of all the divines on this matter, in a small volume like this, I shall, therefore, content myself by reproducing here the opinions of four recognised and popular divines of India.

I give the place of honour, to the famous Shah Wali-ul-lah of Delhi (may the mercy of God be upon him), whose profound and deep learning is so very

well known to every Musalman, by quoting his opinion first of all. The learned Doctor in his book, "*Hujjat-ullahul-Baligha*" says :—

‘ Men and women’s looking at each other face to face creates amatory desires, which opens the door to all sorts of evil. Therefore, wisdom demands that this avenue be closed.) And as the needs of human beings are diverse, and whether they will it or not, necessity compels them to meet each other ; so, having regard to these requirements, it becomes necessary to fix certain degrees of prohibition in this matter. It was for this reason that the Prophet established several modes of observing the Purdah. One of these is that a woman should never leave her house, except for unavoidable purposes. These are the words of the Prophet :—

“ Woman is meant to be kept out of sight.” When she comes out of her house Satan looks slyly at her (that is to say, he provides all conditions which make for evil).

Then let the reader carefully peruse the words of Maulana Bahrul-Uloom, on the subject of Purdah. The Maulana is the most learned scion of one of the famous families of Lucknow. He has arrived at his opinion, after a very careful enquiry into the subject. Since he flourished at a time not far removed from our own, and had the additional advantage of being fully aware of the conditions

prevailing in this country, it is hoped that his views will be considered as the last word on all such matters belonging to our day. In his book "*Arkaan*", the Maulana has developed the theme of Purdah at great length, and thus he says :—

' It is not necessary for women to offer prayers in the congregation of men. They should recite their appointed prayers in their own homes, for the simple reason that there is always a fear of great mischief in their coming out to join such congregation. All later-day jurists are agreed on this point and having seen the evils of their times they have decided in favour of Purdah. The same decision holds good to-day also. Three of our Imams (*viz.*, Imam Aboo Haneefa, Imam Aboo Yusuf, and Imam Mohammad) have also forbidden young women, for whom there was fear of mischief, to offer prayers with the congregation. Imam Aboo Haneefa allows old women to join the congregation, only for morning, evening and night prayers, because at such times there is less danger of mischief, as few mischief-makers attend these prayer meetings.*

* *Note.*—As in the darkness the dresses of women cannot be seen clearly, so there is not much apprehension of mischief in women joining such prayers. It is reported from Hazrat Aa'isha that in the time of the Prophet women used to join the morning prayer and they could not be recognized on account of the dimness of light.

Imam Aboo Yusuf and Imam Mohammad have allowed old women to attend all the five prayers, as old women are incapable of creating such mischief. This was during the time of those great Imams only. Now, in our days, owing to the moral degradation of the people, the chances of mischief in the indiscriminate intermingling of men and women have multiplied considerably. The book *Fath-ul-Qadeer* mentions that it is reported in the "Traditions" on the authority of Hazrat Aa'isha that "Had the Prophet witnessed the state of affairs which was created by later day women, he would have stopped them altogether from joining the congregation at prayers just as the women of Bani Israeel had been stopped.'

Further it has been reported on the authority of Ibn-e-Umar (may God be pleased with him) that the Prophet once said: "Do not prevent your women from going to the mosques; still their own homes are better for them than the mosques."

Let us then consider the fact that although the glorious days of the Prophet were very far from all possibility of mischief, as every one of his Companions was a godly person; and although the revered Prophet asked his Companions not to prevent their women from saying prayers in mosques at the same time, he virtually put a stop to women saying their prayers there, and declared their own

houses more fitted for offering their prayers than the mosques. He even pronounced the prayers offered by them inside their houses to be of greater efficacy than those offered in congregation. What then is your opinion in this matter regarding these degenerate days ? As for me I hold that this age is far more suited to the exemption of women from offering prayers in congregation than were the days of the Prophet ; and so it would be better now-a-days to prevent them altogether from attending prayers in mosques ; especially as there is no direct order in the Qur'an for a woman's compulsory attendance at public prayers ; while according to the general rules of the Faith, it is obligatory to avoid all occasions of evil. The permission granted to women to say their prayers in mosques has now been annulled, because the absence of any possibility of mischief, which was the *raison d'être* of such permission, is now non-existent.

The words of Hazrat Aa'isha, the Mother of the Faithful, quoted above, therefore, can only mean this that if the Prophet had seen, in his own glorious days, the condition of women of to-day, he would never have granted them permission to go out of their houses. The inference from all this is that if such evil had existed in the days of the Prophet as we see to-day, he would never have permitted women to go out of their houses even in his own day. Thus we conclude that women cannot be

granted permission to go out of their houses in this present age. 'I have laboured this argument at such length, because some people think that the jurists of the later age have nullified the clear injunction of the law by their own interpretations. These people say that the giver of the commandment is the Exalted God Almighty; and when He gave the commandment He had foreknowledge of the state of affairs which women would create for themselves in the present age. Therefore, there is no logical basis for the dictum of the Mother of the Faithful. But people are wrong in thinking so. Without doubt the Lord is God and none else; and undoubtedly God did possess the foreknowledge of the present condition of the women of our times; but I assert that the commandment of God, which He issued through the mouth of His Prophet, about women going out of their houses, was restricted to the time when there was no apprehension of evil. As those good old days are now no more, the command too has ceased to have any binding force. The meaning of the dictum of the Mother of the Faithful, therefore is that if in the glorious days of the Prophet women had created the conditions which they did later, He would not have issued the order about their going out of their houses; for the simple reason that circumstances on the basis of which the commandment of God was issued, would not have been existing. On the contrary,

the Prophet would have forbidden women from going out of their houses as the direct commandment of God.'

This discussion of Maulana Bahr-ul-Uloom, is in reality based on that subtle point of our theology which lays down that those injunctions which are not based on clear Qur'anic texts, but are issued by the Prophet, after taking into consideration the expediency of the case and the special circumstances of the times, they cease to be imperative when those circumstances and the need for expediency passes away. The order about the observance of Purdah System among women is an order of this nature. There was a time when the Prophet said about women that: "If they demand permission to go to the mosques, do not prevent them."

After a while, as mischief began to spread wider and wider their going to the mosques appeared improper to Hazrat Aa'isha, and to many of the Prophet's Companions and Muslim women were then prohibited from going to the mosques. However, if the danger of mischief disappears from any place; and measures could be taken to safeguard against all such evils, the original permission will again hold good; and none can withhold women from attending prayers at mosques or going out of their houses, as allowed by law; of course with all the attendant restrictions and limitations.

It is therefore obvious that even if the order regarding the observance of Purdah among women were not directly established by the Qur'an, or the Traditions, or deduced from the practice of the Companions, this excellent custom could still be upheld on the clear basis of another precept of the Qur'an which enjoins on us to shun all occasions of evil. But when the Qur'an, the Traditions, and the practice of the Companions distinctly prove the existence of the order for the observance of Purdah; and existing circumstances, compel us to adopt the system; who can then question the legality of the obligatory adoption of the institution?

I now proceed to quote the words of the late Moulana Shibli, who is best qualified to give an opinion on the question under discussion, from an historical point of view. Writing under the heading of "*Purdah and Islam*" in the "*Nudwa*," the learned Maulavi says:—

"An indiscriminate imitation of European manners has created many controversies in this land of ours; and the problem of Purdah is one of them. If it were discussed from a purely rational view-point, there would have been no necessity for me to join in this discussion; but the claim is put forward that the religion of Islam does not enjoin the observance of Purdah; and it is further asserted that in the earlier periods

of its history such a custom did not exist at all.” The most famous and eminent author among those who have received modern education, *viz.*, Moulavi Ameer Ali, published an article on ‘*Muslim Women*’ in the Nineteenth century in 1899, in which he wrote :—

‘ This long Burqa, and veil, came in vogue during the latter days of the Seljuks dynasty. The customary Purdah of the present day was non-existent during the period of Khalifas.

On the contrary women of the upper classes used to go out quite unveiled. In the middle of the seventh century Hijra when the Khalifa’s became weak and the Tatar invasion shook the foundations of the Muslim Empire, theologians and jurists differed whether or not women can expose their hands, feet and faces before strangers.’*

It is painful as well as instructive to note in this connection that out of the two groups of men who alone could be considered capable of interpreting the injunctions of Islamic laws and unfold the development of Islamic Polity, *i.e.*, the learned Moulvis of the old school and the educated class holding modern views, the Moulvis are entirely ignorant of the current language of our day, while the views of our modernists can be easily gauged

* The quotation is not a reproduction from the original, but a translation from the Urdu work;

from the remarks quoted above. Unfortunately, the latter group is fast gaining control over our national literature ; and because the voice of this group alone reaches the ear of other people, it is feared that future generations shall recognise its opinions alone as voicing the views of Islam. Therefore I shall only touch upon the historical aspect of this subject in my article ; and shall shew how far the custom of Purdah obtained in Arabia before the advent of Islam ; and what has been the attitude of the Muslim world towards it since then.

Long ago I published a lengthy article on this subject. I am going to quote it *in extenso* here. It cannot be denied that Nature has created men and women distinct from each other in certain qualities ; and the progress of civilisation has established many more points of difference over and above these natural distinctions, and such points of difference are noticeable in various forms in every nation, every creed and every country. It is quite possible that in the earliest stages of the world the dress, fashion, manners, and customs of men and women may have been alike and, except their natural distinctions, there was outwardly nothing to show any difference between them. But with the spread of civilisation these distinctions became more and more marked until at last, to-day, we find very little in their habits and modes of life, which can be called common to both. The history of the

early days of the world is shrouded in darkness. The earliest period which can be termed historical, and about which we know anything, does not stretch back beyond a few thousand years. This is the period when the present distinctions had been already established ; and many distinguishing features had already begun to be noticed in the lives of the two sexes. It is, therefore, next to impossible to definitely lay down how these distinctions first came into being and how they began to be observed, even in the time which we fix as the beginning of our knowledge of history.

If to-day we wish to explain how it first occurred to man to cover his body with some kind of dress, and to what extent such covering was thought necessary for the male and the female, we shall not be able to assign any sufficient reason for it. Similarly, we cannot account for other distinctive features to be observed between man and woman. Consequently, it is futile for us to try to fix the exact date when these pre-historic distinctions arose, and to trace their causes and reasons. On the other hand, to investigate what took place during historic times would not be improper and out of place. Purdah can be divided into two kinds :—

- (1) Covering of the face and all the limbs of the body.
- (2) Not joining the assemblies and society of men.

Purdah of the former type already used to be observed in Arabia before the advent of Islam ; and the system was adopted mostly owing to natural needs. At the time when this kind of Purdah began to be observed it was not peculiar to women alone, but was observed by men as well. Perhaps, this custom first came into vogue in the tribe of Himyar, which had its home in Yaman, and ruled over the country. A branch of this tribe established a small principality in Spain, called the "*Mulassameen*." This family ruled the country with great vigour, and showed much prowess on battlefields by winning many a hard-fought battle. Now, men of this tribe used to keep their faces veiled, and that is why they were called "*Mulassameen*." A member of this family, Yusuf bin Tashqeen, became a very powerful and renowned monarch. The great scholar, Ibne-Khallakan, explaining the philology of this term says that :—

‘ The reason of this is, that the people of the tribe of Himyar used to cover their faces with veils, both in winter and summer, to protect them from the inclemency of weather. At first the custom was confined to the nobles only, but gradually the whole tribe adopted it.’

The learned scholar also assigns a further reason for the adoption of this custom. Whenever the men of the tribe of Himyar used to leave their houses on some business, an unfriendly tribe used to

attack their homes and carry away their women-folk. When they got tired of this, the Himyarites planned a ruse. On a certain day their women put on men's clothes and went out, and the men remained inside the houses, with veils on. The enemy, as usual, made the attack. These veiled men then rushed out and fought very gallantly and killed all their enemy. The victors began to veil their faces in memory of the success which they obtained over their enemies on that day, with the help of the veil. Even after the advent of Islam the men and women of this tribe kept their faces veiled. In his description of this custom a poet of the period uses the following words :—

‘When these people had gathered together all the good qualities unto themselves, modesty got the mastery over them, so they covered their faces with veils.’

Certain other accidental reasons have also been the cause of the establishment of this custom. For example, the handsome and the good-looking among men, in order to protect themselves from the malignant consequences of an evil eye, used to go out with veils drawn over their faces. This custom was not confined to Pre-Islamic times ; we find instances in the Islamic period also. For this very reason *Magna Kindi*, the famous poet of the Umayyad period, used to put on a veil whenever he went out of his house. The custom spread gradually

and people began to go to large gatherings with veiled faces. Men, as a rule, used to go with covered faces to the great market at Ūkāz where, for their feats of minstrelsy, the Poets of Arabia usually received encouragement from the applause of the people.

Allama Ahmad Ibn-e-Abee-Yaqoob, a very old historian, writes in his book that :—

‘ The people of Arabia used to assemble in the fair of Ūkāz ; and veils covered their faces. It is reported that the first Arab who discontinued the practice was Zareef, the son of Ghanam ; thereafter others followed his example.’

There must have existed special reasons for the adoption of Purdah at particular periods, but it was based mainly on two causes : —

(1) Self-protection, such as has been described in the incident of the tribe of Himyar where the rich and the poor alike had begun to use the veil. But, in other tribes, the custom was confined to the chiefs and elders only because such love of ease and fashion are peculiar to the rich alone. By and by reasons of necessity disappeared and people began to use the veil, with or without reason, merely because it was the special and distinguishing piece of apparel of the nobility.

(2) The idea of superiority and distinction.

It took some time to work out this idea in the earlier period of the *history* of Arabia. At first

the Arabs used to live quite a simple and democratic life, in uniform style ; but soon, with the advance of civilisation, differences and distinctions began to appear in Arabian society. The foremost among these distinctions was the adoption of a system of Diwan-i-Khas so that the assemblies of the chiefs and the elders should not become the general meeting place of the whole tribe. Thus we find that even in Pre-Islamic days the offices of door-keepers and guards had been created, and free access had begun to be denied to the common people at the gates of kings and chiefs of the tribes. By and by this custom took such deep root that even when the king held a public Durbar his person was kept veiled from the public gaze, and so some of the Arabian kings are known to have used veils over their faces with this very idea.

And, finally, we find the person of the king being entirely veiled from the sight of the people. For a long time during the Abbaside period the rule obtained that the Khalifa used to sit behind a screen and all royal decrees were issued from behind this Purdah ; and this custom seems to be derived from Arabian kings using veils over their faces.

Thus it will be seen that at the time of its origin the custom of Purdah was not peculiar to women alone. But men could not keep it up for long. So when Zareef bin Ghanam threw off the veil at Ūkāz, the men of Arabia gladly followed his

example. Thereafter if any one used a veil over his face for pleasure or pride, it was considered as opposed to prevailing custom. Veils were, however, used by women till the advent of Islam; and Islam elaborated rules and regulations for, and appointed the degrees of observance of Purdah, and made the system compulsory for women.

No one who has studied with care the Pre-Islamic history of Arabia can deny these facts, but, as the common belief prevails that the custom of observing Purdah among women began with Islam, we shall now produce copious and conclusive evidence to prove that it did obtain even before the advent of Islam.

The best and most approved means of getting at the authentic facts about the observance of Purdah during Pre-Islamic days are the poems of the Arabian poets of that period. We now proceed to give numerous extracts from these poems in support of our contention.

Rabee-bin-Ziad-I'sa, a famous poet of the Pre-Islamic days, in an elegy on *Malik-ibn-e-Zubair* says :—

‘ May he who has felt happy at the assassination of *Malik*, see the faces of our women in day time. He will see them lamenting *Malik's* tragic end with their heads uncovered, and beating their faces with both their hands in the morning.’

Our women always used to cover their faces with a veil, because of their modesty ; but to-day, contrary to their custom, they appear before the people unveiled.

In his commentaries on the Chapter on "*Habiliments*," Allámá Tabrizi writes that they used to hide their faces for reasons of chastity and bashfulness.

Amr-Ma'd-i-Karab in describing a hard contested battle says :—

‘ When the face of Lemais became uncovered it seemed as if the full moon had appeared on the horizon.’

It should be noted that *Amr-Ma'd-i-Karab* was a "*Mukhazrami*" poet, that is to say, he lived to see the days of Islam also, but the above couplet was written before the spread of Islam.

Another poet of the same time, *Seerat-bin-Umar-Fâqall*, in a satire on his enemies, says :—

‘ The faces of your women-folk became uncovered during the battle ; hence they appeared as slave-girls although they were ladies.’

Naabigha Zubyani, a renowned poet of the Days of Ignorance, was a courtier and a great favourite of *Nu'maan bin Munzir*. Once the poet went on a visit to *Nu'maan*. The queen *Mutajarreda*, was sitting by the side of the king. On *Naabigha's* sudden appearance, *Mutajarreda* hurriedly got up and let fall the covering of her head,

in her confusion. At once she hid her face with her hands. This action of *Mutajarreda* greatly pleased Naabigha ; and he has eulogised this event in a "Qaseeda," where he depicts the incident in the following couplets :—

‘Scarf fell down, but she did not let it fall intentionally. She bravely tried to retain the long veil on her head and face, and she delicately hid her face with her hands.’

Another poet, by name *Auf*, in describing how, owing to the intensity of hunger, the women came out and sat in the open air near the ovens, where the food was being cooked, says :—

‘They were sitting near the fire keeping watch, and the girls of the tribe were feeding it. Their faces were uncovered, there was no veil on them, and whenever the fire went out they rekindled it.’

The fact is that the people of Arabia had made much progress in the matter of dress even in the Days of Ignorance. It is true that refinement was to be noticed only among the wealthier classes and the elders of the tribes ; still, in whatever circle it was found, it showed considerable taste and choice, in the domain of dress. Even in those days, a lady’s wardrobe contained several sorts of clothing designed for dress and general wear which were quite sufficient to cover every part of the body. A proper sense of Dignity and Pride of position in life were

mainly responsible for the various styles of dress worn by the nobility ; and that was why common people were denied the use of such distinctive dress. So far as our researches go in the matter, we find that the Ummaiyyads and the Abbasides could not improve appreciably upon the cut and style of the dress worn by the Pre-Islamic women. In other words, no further style of dress was added to those already in existence for the use of women of by-gone-days. This establishes the fact that even in Pre-Islamic days the idea of keeping their women-kind in Purdah, and seeing them decently and elegantly dressed, had laid hold of the minds of men in Arabia.

Women used to wear " blouses " or jackets of no less than seven or eight different varieties ; each having a separate name suited to its cut and style ; and, differing slightly from one another, for example, *Dara'*, *Ab-e-Qarqul*, *Sadaar*, *Majool*, *Shoozar*, *Khameel*. These are very much like our Indian *Mahram*, *Kamari*, *Futuhi*, and *Qameez*. Nearly all these names are to be found mentioned in the poetry of Pre-Islamic period. But as it would be too tedious to quote all the examples, we shall abstain from reproducing the poems here. *Qassaba* and *Maqna*, etc., were in general use in those days. These were worn in such a fashion that a kerchief was first tied round the head covering front and back portions, leaving the central part open. This

was called *Yakhnaq*. On this was tied another kerchief, called *Ghaffara*, to absorb the oil on the head, and so, leave the uppermost head-dress, which used to be of various sizes, unsoiled. The names of these head-dresses were *Sadaar*, *Khimar*, *Naseef*, *Maqna*, *Ma'jar*, and *Rida*. Of these the smallest in size was *Khimar*. *Naseef* was larger than *Khimar*; while *Maqna* was larger than *Naseef* and so on. The women used to wear *Khimar*, etc., in such wise, drawn over the forehead, that a large part of the face remained covered thereby, as the poet says :—

‘ Her scarf fell down but she did not let it fall intentionally. She tried to keep the “Naseef” on her head; and she hid her face with her hands.’ Another poet says :—

‘ He fell to the ground and did not rest on anything; thus, blood became the veil of his face.’

But it was *Burqa* which was specially meant to cover the face of a woman; and several types of *Burqas* were in use in those days. That which reached up to the eyes only was called “*Waswaas*”; while “*Naqaab*” was the name given to one which covered the face lower down. Another style of *Burqa* called “*Laqaam*” reached lower than “*Naqaab*,” and “*Lasaam*” reached to the lowest part of the face. The type called “*Laqaam*” never reached below the lips. The largest size of the

veil which hid not only the face but the figure also, was called "Habsa." All these varieties of the veil were already in vogue amongst Pre-Islamic women in Arabia, as will be seen from the following couplets :—

'The ladies first showed their comeliness, and then concealed it, letting down the "Waswaas" up to their eyes.'

'They exhibited their beauty as "shines the moon in clouded skies;" and their "Laqaams" were removed from over their lips.'

Thus, in those days, with the exception of the lower classes and the slave-girls, Purdah was in vogue in all Arabia. We do find some instances against this custom but they are few and far between.

But of Pre-Islamic days, we cannot say that they observed Purdah to the entire exclusion of women from the society of men. Women were free to move about, and did their own marketting, and as a rule, took part in learned assemblies, and well-contested battles. Poetesses and glee-maidens also frequented the fair of Ūkāz; of oriental minstrelsy fame, where renowned Arabian Troubadours and poets used to show their poetic skill and musical proficiency by reciting their poems in public audience; and here, the ladies also used to hold their courts and their permanent poetic assemblies; recited poems in public, and obtained their due

meed of praise and applause from an admiring audience.

It is related that once a lady, called Khansa, who was unequalled in the whole of Arabia for writing elegies, went to Ūkāz, and recited her poem in the presence of *Naabigha Zubyani*, the poet-laureate of the day. Having heard her poem, *Naabigha* said that it was a pity he had just conferred the title of the "Best of Arabian Poets" on another person, or he would have bestowed it on her. He, however, declared her to be the best poetess among the women. Hearing this Khansa said that she looked upon herself as the best poet among men and women combined.

It was a common custom in Arabia that when a poet of the Troubadour type passed through a village, the women used to gather around him with the request to recite his poems. And because as a rule they could appreciate delicacy of speech and refinement in poetry, the poets used to readily acquiesce to their requests. In short there was no concourse, or assembly, no meeting of poets, no debate, no fair, no market, no tournament, and no battle-field in which women did not take part; and that too, without the slightest let or hindrance from their male relatives. Such was the custom which obtained during the Pre-Islamic days.

With the advent of Islam a new chapter was opened in the history of the world; and the

changes and reforms which were carried out during this period are noted below.

The first reform in the matter of a lady's habiliments which Islam effected was to be seen in the changed style of her blouse. In Pre-Islamic days ladies used to wear rather very low-necked blouses ; and so, in the month of Zilqa'ada, 5 A. H., the verse was revealed " that let them wear their head-coverings over their bosoms."

The Commentator Ainee commenting upon this verse in his notes on "*Bukhari*," says :—

' This verse was revealed because they used to wear very low-necked blouses which exposed their figures and the parts round about ; besides this, they also used to throw their head-dress on their back which left their figures totally uncovered. It was for this reason that they were enjoined to " let down their cloth in front " so as to completely cover their figures.'

Although the custom of wearing the veil, prevailed before Islam, as described above, still the influence of the example of the Jewish women who lived in Medina, had somewhat lessened its use, and women frequently used to go about with open faces. This led to the revelation of the following verse :—

' O thou Prophet ! tell thy wives and thy daughters, and the women of the believers, to let down over them their outer wrappers.'

This verse can be discussed from three different points of view :—

- (1) What was the occasion for the revelation of the verse ?
- (2) What is its meaning ?
- (3) What was the practice of the Companions of the Prophet after its revelation ?

As regards the occasion for its revelation, the commentaries of *Ibn-e-Kaseer*, based on authentic Traditions, give the following explanation :—

‘ There was a group of vagabonds in Medina who used to roam about the city in the darkness of the night and to molest the women. The houses in Medina were small and dingy in those days. At night the women used to go out of their houses to answer the call of nature, and these scoundrels used to cast about to way-lay and molest them. Those whom they found decently veiled, taking them to be ladies, they said nothing to them, but others they treated with scant ceremony thinking them to be slave-girls, and actually used to lay their hands on them.’

The Tabaqat of Ibn-e-Sa’d, an ancient compilation of the third century (A. H.), gives much the same explanation as regards the occasion of the revelation of the verse quoted above. It says :—

‘ There was a hypocrite who used to molest Moslem women, and when reprimanded for it, he said that he had taken them for slave-girls. God,

therefore, gave the order that ladies should not dress like the slave-girls; and that they should cover themselves with long mantles. ’

The Tafseer-e-Kashsháf has it :—

‘ They were therefore ordered that they should put on a different kind of dress from that used by the slave-girls ; and should use ‘ *chadars* ’ and veils to cover their heads and faces.’

A point to be specially remembered in these explanations is that the commentary of *Ibn-e-Kaseer* shows that there was a marked difference between the style of a lady’s dress and that of a slave-girl which consisted in the fact that ladies used to cover their faces with veils while the slave-girls went about with uncovered faces.

Pre-Islamic poems also support this view (as we have already seen above).

The extract from *Ibn-e-Kaseer* also shows that this distinction in dress continued in Islamic period also ; and whenever a lady went out unveiled the scoundrels got an opportunity of molesting her under the pretext of having mistaken her for a slave-girl.

The scholars of a later age have no doubt given many different explanations of the words “ *Jilbab* ” and “ *idna-i-jilbab*,” but the correct meaning seems to be that *jilbab* is a kind of outer covering larger than all the other linen ; and therefore used as an overall ; exactly as the Turkish ladies use their

faraja nowadays. It is written in the commentaries of *Imad-ibn-e-Kaseer*, that :—

Jilbab, means a sheet which is worn over the *Khimar* (veil). *Abdullah bin Masoo'd*, *Ubaida*, *Hasan Basri*, *Saeed bin Jubair*, *Ibraheem Nakhai*, *Ata Khorasanee* and others have given the same meaning of '*Jilbab*.'

The other word, which requires an explanation is "*Idna*." All the great commentators and lexicographers have explained "*Idna-e-Jilbab*" as meaning "to cover the face." A saying of Hazrat *Abdullah bin Abbas*, a companion of the Prophet, and the most distinguished commentator among the Prophet's Companions, reported on the authority of *Ali bin Talha*, has been reproduced by *Ibn-e-Kaseer* in his commentary which runs thus :—

'God ordered Moslem women to put a cloth on their heads and draw it down to hide their faces ; just keeping only one eye open whenever they go out of their houses, on any business whatsoever.'

In the *Tafseer-e-Maalim-ut-Tanzeel*, the same verse has been commented upon as follows :—

'It is reported through *Ibn-e-Abbas* and *Aboo Ubaida*, that God ordered Moslem women to cover their heads and faces with a cloth except one of their eyes.'

The Tabaqat of Ibn-e-Sa'd says :—

' It was reported by *Mohammad bin Umar*, who heard the report from *Aboo Basra*, who heard it from *Aboo Sakhar*, who heard it from *Ibn-e-Kaab Qarzi*, that there was a hypocrite in Medina who used to molest Moslem women and whenever he was reprimanded for it, he used to say that he mistook them for slave-girls. God, therefore, ordered that the costume of the slave-girls be given up and ladies should cover themselves in a manner as would hide the face, except one eye.'

Hazrat Abdullah bin Abbas, Aboo Ubaida, Ibn-e-Kaab Qarzi Baghvi, Ibn-e-Kaseer and Zamakhshari, are men of such high eminence that had any critic given a different meaning to these words, it would have been put down as entirely wrong. But so far as we have been able to make out, almost all lexicographers and commentators, with few exceptions, have explained the words in the same way. How amazing then it is to produce arguments to the contrary based on the vague translation of *Shah Wali-ul-lah* in a question of such a controversial character ! The practice followed by the Musalmans of the whole world, in every age, in the matter of *Purdah*, has ever been that Moslem ladies, when going out of their houses, except under special circumstances, always used the veil for their faces and they always covered their faces in the presence of strangers ; and, this fact alone has come to be

recognised as the most significant feature of Moslem civilisation.

The truth of this statement is to be found in the incidents related below :—

‘*Mugheera bin Shuba* once spoke to the Prophet that it was his wish to get married to a certain lady. The Prophet bade him have a look at her first. He went, and spoke of his intention to the parents of the girl, and gave them the message of the Prophet. It is needless to say here what great respect used to be paid to the smallest wishes of the Prophet by his Companions. Nevertheless, the parents of the girl did not like their daughter to appear before *Mugheera*. The girl, who had all this while, been listening to the conversation from behind a *Purdah*, bade *Mugheera* to appear before her saying that if the Prophet had so wished him to do he was quite welcome to see her, otherwise, she asked *Mugheera*, in the name of God, to refrain from doing so.’

This incident is related in *Sunan* by Ibn-e-Maja, in the chapter on “*Marriage*”

‘Mohammad bin Salma, a Companion of the Prophet, wished to get married to a certain woman and tried to have a look at her unawares. For some time he got no chance of seeing her, until one day the lady went out to her garden, and here he somehow managed to see her. When people came to

know of this, they were much surprised and chided him for his act saying that he being a Companion of the Prophet, should have known better. He answered that he had heard the Prophet say that there was no harm if a person had a look at a girl, in case he wished to get married to her. (Ibid.)

The author of "*Aghani*," writing in the *Memoirs of Akhtal*, relates that :—

Once Akhtal was the guest of Saeed ibn-i-Ayas who extended so generous a hospitality to his guest that his two daughters, Zaoom and Imama, waited on him during meal-time. When Akhtal happened to be there next, the girls had reached the years of puberty and therefore did not come out before Akhtal.'

The actual words of *Aghani* are these:—
'Akhtal became Saeed's guest a second time. By then the girls had grown up and therefore they hid themselves from his view. Akhtal inquired about them, and in reply was informed that they had reached the years of puberty.'

The observance of Purdah among women had become so common in the Mohommedan world that historians and chroniclers have recorded incidents of its non-observance as exceptions to the general rule.

Where Ibn-i-Batuta gives a description of the Turks in his Travels, he writes of a woman that :—

‘ Her face was uncovered because Turkish women do not veil their faces.’

The author of *Aghani* in the “*Memoirs of Akh'al*” incidentally says :—

‘ During that period, among the Arabs of the desert, men used to talk to women face to face and take part in their assemblies, and this was not considered improper. ’

In the same book, in the description of Jameel, a Bedouin poet, it is written as follows :—

‘ Jameel, the son of Muammar, once went out on the day of Id. In those days, on the occasion of the Id, women used to go out well dressed, to exchange visits, and they appeared before the men.’

All these facts clearly establish that the observance of Purdah among women, and the veiling of their faces, was a common practice among the Musalmans. Exceptional cases are either connected with some particular race, or some special period, and are mentioned in books as such. After relating all these facts we draw the attention of the reader once more to the words of Syed Ameer Ali, where he says :—

‘ Until the time of Khalifas, women of the higher classes came before men without veils.’

We need not say anything about it except that “ this is the whole stock of his knowledge.”

The late Moulavi Nazeer Ahmad writes in *Al-Huqooq Wal-Faraiz* :—

‘ We have been told *ad nauseum* that it is not good for our women to be kept in Purdah. Our opponents try to hypnotise us into believing that owing to the observance of Purdah our women are deprived of their legitimate share of amusement and education.

‘ Moreover, it has been dinned into our ears, in season and out of season, that all the charges heaped against our women, *e.g.*, when we are told that ‘ great is their fraud ; ’ ‘ that if the end of women were good their names would have been ‘ mazan ’ and not ‘ zan ; ’ that ‘ whoever came across a horse, a woman, and a sword that was faithful ’—besides much else, are all due to keeping them in Purdah.

‘ In short, according to the opponents of Purdah system, the abject poverty of our race, their degradation, their fall and ruin, their appalling ignorance and all other evils, are put down to keeping them in Purdah. As a corrective to the evils of Purdah we are informed that all human beings, whether men or women, have been created free by nature and should be kept free. It is suggested that when their freedom is compulsorily circumscribed, people try to regain it by means of deception, fraud, and dishonesty. And, for an example, it has been pointed out to us that slaves learn such low and immoral habits merely because of the loss of their freedom. As the last argument in proof of their

contention, our opponents cite the case of the English people who count slavery next to murder. So much for our opponents.

‘ It is easy enough to criticise but unhappily for our critics, they also lay claim to be Musalmans :

‘ Oh ! Drum of loud noise, there is nothing inside thee ! ’

‘ And there is the Qur’an giving the commandment for the observance of Purdah in the clearest of terms.’

The divergence of opinion between the supporters and opponents of the Purdah System has now become insufferably irksome, and in my opinion both the groups have failed to gauge the correct significance of Purdah ; and that is the reason why both have missed the point at issue. The fact is that Purdah is not desirable for its own sake. What, however, is desirable for its own sake is chastity and purity ; and Purdah is merely a means to a chaste life. All that is required of men and women is to lead a clean, wholesome and pure life ; and the co-operation of both sexes is necessary to gain the object in view. But as woman has been created physically weaker compared to man ; and, as besides physical inferiority, she is also weaker in intellect, so she has been enjoined to safeguard her chastity to a greater extent. Under the heading of Purdah you should see that long verse.

‘ And say to the believers that they cast down their looks and guard their private parts, that is purer for them,’ and it has been further revealed for Muslim women that, ‘ And say to the believing women that they cast down their looks and guard their private parts and display not their ornaments, except those that are outside.’

There is one more reason why women should observe Purdah, and that is, that men owing to their physical superiority have to do much hard and rough work in this world to obtain a living ; and since men have to bear the brunt of earning a livelihood, and come across the ups and downs of life more frequently than the weaker sex, their intelligence becomes keener and their courage bolder. The work ordained for women is only this much that whatever income the man earns should be spent by her with care and frugality, and she should look after the house and take care of the children. Just ask of the men the physical and mental worries they have to undergo in order to provide for several hungry mouths at home, and the sacrifice they have to make for it. In the sweat of his brow man earns his living, as the poet has it :—

‘ The dark night, the fear of the waves and
such a whirlpool ahead ;
‘ How can the peaceful dwellers of the coast
realise my condition.’

The opponents of Purdah have come to the conclusion that men are really enemies of the weaker sex ; and have despotically compelled women to live in Purdah. Whereas the truth of the matter is exactly the reverse of it. The relationship between man and woman starts with love and affection, continues in love and affection and ends with love and affection. The very purpose of the creation of man and woman is to love and like each other. To begin with, God has entrusted the duties of motherhood to woman, and she is the mother of her children. All know and admit the greatness of a mother's love. She is the very fountain-head of her child's life. Up to a certain period her child becomes the first care of a woman, and the mother and the child are compelled by nature to love each other. Then, either in his infancy or at a later stage, when another child is born the relationship of brother and sister is established between the children of the house. The affection existing between the children of the same parents when they live and share together the parental love, is another proof of the love existing between the two sexes. Thus, besides, the relationship of mother and child, there is another kind of kinship existing between man and woman, which is in the nature of blood relationship, and this bond has also its root in love. Passing beyond the stage of childhood, the next relationship between

man and woman is that of conjugality and there is not the least doubt that conjugal relationship is a firm link of love and affection. Under these circumstances, the idea that men, in reality, are the enemies of women, and that they have tyrannically compelled them to remain in Purdah, is sheer nonsense. The very nature of man and woman falsifies the notion that the man is the born enemy of woman.

Man is a selfish creature ; and that too, to such an extent that without some personal gain he does not become a friend of anyone ; no, not even of God. If, therefore, you see him acting friendly towards anybody you should put it down to his either acquiring some gain, or warding off some evil. Thus, when the basis of human love is self-interest, where the interest is strong, recurring and permanent, love too would be equally strong. Mark the course of a marital life and you shall see the truth of the observation ; soon after marriage the new couple separate themselves from their parents, and establish their own separate home. They realise that the world is a bullock cart, and the man and his wife are like a pair of oxen, yoked to it ; whose journey can only end at the grave. Now, it is a common custom among cartmen that they yoke the slower of the two animals to the right, and the faster and more spirited one to the left of the cart. This is probably done, because it is

easier to urge a slow-paced animal to run faster when it is yoked on the right hand side in order to keep pace with its faster yoke-fellow. Of course, every one will understand that man and his wife are not a pair of oxen, in reality—I have called them such, metaphorically. Well then, we see man and wife made yoke-fellows, for life. Before becoming yoke-fellows both knew each other very well, and were also friendly towards each other. They decided between themselves as to which of them should be yoked on the right and which on the left side. Woman, being by nature weak, was slow of pace, therefore she had to be kept to the right side. In other words, we find the more difficult and arduous task of earning livelihood taken up by man ; while woman is entrusted with the easier task of housekeeping. But woman could not look after her house so well if the injunction “ abide in your houses ” had not been given. She was therefore forced to subordinate her own wishes to lead a secluded life. This is the *raison d'être* of Purdah among women. You may call it either the tyranny of man or the weakness of woman. But to call it tyranny of man will in itself be an injustice to him.

Further, there is another aspect of the question, which deserves the greatest consideration. Honour is a trust of man, and at her marriage, woman is appointed guardian of that trust ; and her marriage

portion and maintenance, are the recompense for this guardianship. Thus, it is the duty of woman to guard this trust with the utmost care and vigilance ; and it is difficult, I will not say impossible, to guard it effectually and satisfactorily without her observing Purdah. What do we leave undone to safeguard our riches ? We bury it underground, we put strong and double locks to our treasure chests and iron safes ; and moreover we appoint watch and guard to take care of our wealth. Is not a man's honour much more precious to him than all his belongings ? Self-respecting men have laid down their lives for their honour. If Purdah can efficiently guard our honour why not adopt it ? Admitted, that woman herself is the best guardian of her honour ; still, it is unwise for a woman to discard Purdah ; certainly, it would be inexpedient, inasmuch as it would be reminding the intoxicated of the dulcet tones of a lute, and "encouraging the maniac with a shout !" Thus far, for a rational view of Purdah.

Regarding its observance as enjoined by our religion, a collection of verses from the Qur'an and the Traditions also leads us to the conclusion noted above, *viz.*, that Purdah is not desirable for its own sake ; and that what is desirable, for its own sake, is the protection of chastity ; and also, that Purdah is nothing more than a means to that end.

It is a well-known fact that when the Prophet got tired of the constant provocations caused by the idolators of Mecca, He went to Yesrib. At that time it was not even a small town. It was a mere village then. The very name "Medina" did not belong to it. The word "Yesrib," is mentioned even in the Qur'an and in Arabic. It means "ruined and dilapidated." As the Prophet hated evil epitaphs, so he changed its name to "Medina ;" which means "a city," and this has been its name ever since. Even the climate of Yesrib was unhealthy ; and "Yesrib fever" was a dreaded malady in those days. With the change of the name, the blessing of the Prophet's presence created a change for the better in the climate also. There were no latrines or lavatories in Yesrib ; and ladies used to go out of the village, at dusk, to answer the calls of nature. The mischievous young men of the village used to molest them on their way. The saintly Umar felt much annoyed at this and frequently drew the attention of the Prophet towards the question of Purdah among women ; but as no divine order was revealed regarding its observance, the Prophet could lay down no law on this point. One day Umar saw Hazrat Suda, the Mother of the Faithful, thus going out. She had stolen out, well covered by her mantle, but was somehow recognised by Umar ; who thereupon went straight to the Prophet and complained to

him of the fact. At last, it was revealed to the Prophet, and the order was given, that the wives and daughters of the Prophet and Moslem women should draw a veil over their faces whenever they should go out ; so that all might know that they were Purdah ladies and women may be saved from molestation. It appears that when this commandment was revealed, women still used to go outside of their houses to answer the calls of nature. It is possible that as prosperity among the Musalmans increased the system of lavatories was introduced in Medina. This led to a further tightening of the strings of Purdah, and the long verse quoted above about it was revealed. The former verse regarding the drawing of the veil over the face was meant to keep off strangers, when women were forced to go outside their houses, to answer the calls of nature. The latter rather long verse prefers women to keep to their homes. And, lastly, the Purdah System was fully evolved and established by the verse which orders the Mothers of the Faithful (*i.e.*, the wives of the Prophet) to abide in their houses ; and by the verse which orders the Companions of the Prophet (may God be pleased with all of them) to ask when necessary, for a thing from behind a curtain.

Although these injunctions are meant specially for the wives of the Prophet, and refer to them in particular, still we take them to be addressed to

all Musalmans as well, men and women alike. There are many such commandments in the Qur'an which are seemingly addressed to the Prophet only, but are meant for all Musalmans generally. It would be foolish to entertain the idea that the Prophet was more concerned with the protection of the purity of his own wives than those of others. The first injunction ;

‘ Tell thy wives and thy daughters and the women of the believers ’

clearly contradicts any such notion.

To the Prophet the life and honour of a Musalman, yea of the humblest of Musalmans, were dearer than his own life and honour. It is true that the strictness in the observance of Purdah was gradually introduced, yet all the earlier orders still hold good. There are no lavatories even to-day in our small villages in India, neither are there any scavengers and sweepers there ; therefore, the Purdah observed by women in such places applies simply to the drawing of a veil over their faces ; and Canon law requires no more of them than what their custom is in this respect. In short, Purdah is governed by the circumstances of each case. There is a difference in the Purdah observed by a young woman and an old one ; by a town and a village woman, by a poor woman and a wealthy woman ; by the beautiful and the ugly ; and a woman is at liberty to observe whatever kind of

Purdah she likes commensurate with the protection of her chastity. For us, we are accustomed to the sort of Purdah as it obtains to-day; and regard it as the recognised and accepted means of the protection of chastity, and this constitutes our Purdah, as by Canon law established.

‘Listen! O! Ye! Let a man say what he will. Man is taken to task only for that over which he has control.’

Chastity and Modesty are the foundations of all our virtues. Can they be safeguarded without the observance of Purdah?

After having gone through the preceding chapters we now place before the reader a fact, which deserves his serious thought and careful attention.

It is a well-known fact that the laws and regulations of our holy religion are based on some social, moral or political consideration. The commandment regarding the observance of Purdah falls under the above category; its chief object being to protect the very fountain-head of all virtues. Moral philosophers are agreed that morality springs from knowledge, courage, and chastity. Out of these three, chastity is the very foundation of all womanly virtues. And chastity is another name for modesty. The holy Traditions say:—

‘If you do not possess modesty and chastity, you can do whatsoever you like.’

Verily, besides the fear of God, if there be any efficacious safeguard against all kinds of evil, it is the sense of shame, or modesty. It is this restraint caused by a sense of propriety, and bashfulness, that a human being, more particularly a woman, is saved from the ravages of an immoral life. There can be no doubt that some people possess certain virtues, inherent in them, and they manifest these virtues in their lives, without thought of loss or gain. But ordinarily, people are virtuous, because they are afraid of being blamed or censured by other men, and this fear of rebuke and upbraiding of their associates keeps them within bounds of decency—and so the man or woman is called a person of modest or moral behaviour. It is, therefore, quite clear that modesty acts as the main impetus to all good deeds performed by human beings. If this fear of being chided and abused by his people be removed, nobody will feel the least compunction in committing any immoral or unrighteous act. The Tradition, 'If you do not possess morality and chastity you can do whatever you like,' refers to, and is an explanation of this very point. It is also mentioned in connection with this Tradition that the same has been the teaching of all the Prophets since the world began. Just as monotheism forms an essential part of all revealed religions, so in ethics, all Prophets have unanimously declared that modesty and chastity

are the fundamental basis of all virtues. And it is for this very reason that the Prophet's sayings are replete with the excellences of chastity and modesty. One of them says :—

‘ Modesty is a branch of Faith.’

Another has it,

‘ Every religion has its special grace ; and Modesty is the chief grace of our religion.’

Similarly many Traditions have vehemently decried against all immorality and shamelessness. One such says :—

‘ When God wishes to destroy a human being, He takes away from him his modesty.’

Another Tradition expressly points out :—

‘ God loves the modest and the meek, and hates the shameless sinner.’

Although these Traditions, show us in a general manner the excellent way of chastity and modesty, and the wretchedness of immodesty and shamelessness, yet there are some Traditions which describe this quality as a special adornment of woman. Thus it is written in one of these :—

‘ Modesty is a type of beauty ; and in a woman it is still more becoming.’

Consequently the holy Qur'an, and the authentic Traditions, enjoin upon woman to observe modesty in all her ways and manners. They have also described the ways and means to do it. But the observance of Purdah includes all of them.

The followers of Islam have always practised it in all ages, because they had come to the conclusion that abstention from the society of strangers alone was the surest means of protecting the chastity of women ; and without observing Purdah, it was impossible to keep women away from getting themselves mixed up with men. This statement is borne out by present day writers in whose country the custom of Purdah is either not observed fully, or does not exist at all.

An Egyptian scholar has written that :—

‘ It is as necessary for women to observe Purdah as it is for men to possess arms and ammunition. Just as men protect their lives and property by means of these arms, women protect their purity and chastity by means of Purdah.’ (*Umm-mud-Dunya*).

A German scholar writes :

‘ As far apart as is the East from the West so are the ideas of an Easterner from those of a European regarding the honour of his wife.’

He further writes that :—

‘ It is in Purdah alone, or some such seclusion that you will find a great boon for women.’

And adds that :—

‘ Guard your daughters within the four walls of the house and keep them well within the bounds prescribed by the four evangelists.’

The holy Prophet has pronounced a curse on those men and women who meet in secrecy ; and Hazrat Umar speaks as follows :—

‘ When a man and a woman meet in privacy, Satan forms the third party there.’

And there is a Satan in each one of us, in the shape of his or her animal passion. It is a great virtue to keep it under control. It is far better to strike at the root cause of all mischief by observing Purdah.

Moreover, the performance of the special duties of a woman, for instance, the training of the children, and managing the household can well be carried out within the four walls of the house. It appears that the Almighty God has enjoined these duties on women with a view that they may remain inside their houses and for this reason alone are not compelled to go out of the house in search of their daily bread ; and that is the reason why the responsibility of their maintenance has been made compulsory on men.

Purdah is the guardian of their chastity and a protection of their honour. The main object of Purdah is to safeguard their reputation and honour and to prevent any reproach from attaching to their name and fame.

The Public and Private Life of Women.

The restrictions placed on a woman by our religion in the matter of her public appearance

have been described in the foregoing chapters
There are only tow points now left to consider :

- (1) How far should a woman observe the rules of Purdah within her house ?
- (2) In what public affairs can a woman take part, with all the restrictions laid down for her by the etiquette of Purdah ; and subject to what conditions is she permitted to leave her house to perform those duties ?

As regards the first of these points the books of the Traditions relate that the Prophet was as modest and bashful as an unmarried girl leading a life of Purdah. The simile is intended to convey the idea of the extreme puremindedness and modesty of the Prophet ; and it proves that a woman is made by nature to lead a pure and chaste life in her own house. Such women of good report have always been held in high repute and veneration throughout the East. The women of Arabia did practice such purity and chastity and were no exception to the rule.

No woman can be expected to observe Purdah in her own house in the same way as when she is out of it. When inside the house she can uncover her face and her hands, as is enjoined by the Qur'an, the Traditions and the commentaries of the Jurists. It is not only correct and proper for her to appear before the male members of the family, within the

permitted degree, without covering her face, but it is also no sin if accidentally some other part of her body gets uncovered in their presence. A woman is allowed to hear a man's voice from behind a curtain, as was the case with the womenfolk who used to listen to the sermons of the Prophet, and the first four Khalifas, and receive their instructions. The following verse is understood to sanction the same rule :—

‘ And when you ask of them any goods, ask of them from behind a curtain.’

Similarly a woman is allowed to let her voice be heard in an assembly of strangers ; but the condition is that she should speak in a pure and natural way, as the holy verse says :—

‘ O ye women of the Prophet ! be not too soft in speech, or he in whose heart is a disease will lust after you ; and speak a good word.’

That is how the exalted wives of the Prophet, and the wives of the Companions used to talk to the strangers, instruct them in Traditions, give opinions on disputed points of law ; and on occasions of necessity, used to deliver speeches also.

Women have also been forbidden by Canon law, when within their houses, to wear such thin clothes as would expose any part of their body. In Egypt, they weave a very thin kind of cloth called “ Qayati.” Once the Prophet gave a piece of this cloth to Dahiya Kalbi and asked him to make an

upper covering of it for his wife ; but the Prophet, directed Kalbi to tell his wife to wear an under linen also, so that her body may not be visible. It was for this reason that Hazrat Umm-e-Selma never used a “ *chadar* ” of this thin material.

Along with the order to cover their bodies decently, women have been strictly prohibited to imitate the manners and customs of men ; and the holiest of Prophets denounces such women who do not carry out this order. The Saintly Aa’isha was once asked if women could put on the shoes of men. She answered that the Prophet had denounced women who adopted the fashion of men.

Subject to these restrictions of dress and behaviour, women can utilise all lawful means to lead a happy life in their own homes. They can witness decent entertainments and lawful amusements from behind a curtain. The Prophet himself showed Hazrat Aa’isha the acrobatic feats of the Abyssinians, in this manner. Women can hold prayer meetings inside their houses ; and lecture on morality to the audience. It was thus that the Prophet at the express wish of women, used to deliver sermons and preach to them, once a week.

As to the next consideration, *i.e.*, in what matters can a woman engage herself outside her house, the chief point to settle is whether, even with Purdah restrictions, it is lawful for a woman to go

out of her house or not. Regarding this *Bukhari* reports that :—

‘ Hazrat Aa’isha is reported to have observed that whenever the Prophet went on a journey he used to draw lots about his wives as to which of them should accompany him ; and used to take with him that wife which the lot indicated. On the occasion of a battle, he drew lots and it so happened that it fell to my lot to accompany him. Consequently I accompanied him on the journey, after the revelation] about the observance of Purdah.’

This proves that, under certain restrictions of the rules of Purdah, a woman can lawfully go out of her house, and my Muslim sisters can perform all the religious, educational, political and social duties of the world, without giving up Purdah. To maintain that without the observance of Purdah they cannot perform these duties, is a statement that is disproved by History. During the happier and blessed days of Islam, which was also the period of the rise of Moslem power, women performed all these duties in Purdah. Purdah does not prevent them from taking journey, receiving or imparting knowledge and education ; and, at times of need, even from fighting the enemies of Islam.

Take the case of Travels and Journey. As mentioned above, in cases of necessity, a Purdah lady can certainly leave her hearth and

home to perform a journey. There is strong historical evidence to the fact of such journeys being undertaken by Muslim Purdah ladies in the early days of Islam ; but none of them ever dreamt of giving up Purdah for the sake of the journey. It is not lawful for Muslim ladies to undertake long journeys without being accompanied by a male member of her family, before whom she need not observe Purdah. A long journey has been technically defined by Muslim jurists to be a journey of 24 hours or more. Certain Traditions speak of a long journey as a journey of three days and three nights' duration. It is reported in the Traditions, through Abou Huraira, that the Prophet said :—

'It is not proper for a woman, who believes in God and in the Day of Judgment, to undertake a full day's journey, except in the company of a man, before whom she is not in Purdah.'

The wives of the Prophet always used to travel with him in this manner ; and the same rule held good for other ladies.

Among the rules enjoined by Canon law that of performing the pilgrimage of Hajj is one for which women have to undertake long journeys ; for which they have to join a big crowd of men ; the restriction connected with the "*Ihram*," prevents them using either veils or gloves. In spite of this, women have not been exempted from performing the Hajj ; and the wives of the Prophet

themselves had to perform this ceremony, in the manner indicated above. Hazrat Aa'isha says :—

'We were once with the Prophet, during the pilgrimage to Mecca. When other caravans overtook us, we used to veil our faces, and when they left us behind we used to uncover our faces.'

During his reign, Khattam ibn-i-Abdul-Mutta-lib once prohibited women from making the round of Ka'aba, in company with men. When Ata came to know of it, he inquired how could such a prohibition be justified when the holy wives of the Prophet had made such rounds of the Ka'ba along with men. The question was then put to him if it was before or after the order for the observance of Purdah had been revealed. He answered that it was after the promulgation of the law of Purdah. They further asked him, "how then could women have walked with men, contrary to the order of Purdah?" He answered that women used to perform the ceremony in such a way as not to mix with men. Hazrat Aa'isha used to make her rounds quite separate from the company of men, and she used to walk on one side of the path.

Intellectual Pursuits.—Along with the question of Purdah, the problem of education of women has now-a-days assumed large proportions. Even an inkling of our past history will convince us that Muslim women of the earlier days followed their

intellectual pursuits, and obtained knowledge and imparted it to others, without any difficulty, in spite of the restrictions of Purdah. It redounds to their greater glory that in spite of the restrictions of Purdah, some of the women used to reach the high watermark of Arabian intellectual eminence. Hazrat Aa'isha says :—

‘ May God have compassion on the women of the Ansar that their modesty and bashfulness did not prevent them from gaining religious knowledge. ’

In the history of Islam we come across many Purdah women who have had the highest education possible ; and also benefited others through it. It is written of Ruqayya, the daughter of Zaif, who was the son of Muhammad, that she attained the highest knowledge in the Traditions by learning it from the most famous Traditionists of the day ; and having obtained the permission of the great divines of Egypt and Syria expounded them to others. She settled in Medina and began to give instructions in this branch of knowledge. The famous historian Ibn-e-Khallakan was a disciple of Zeenat-bint-e-Shoára, in the knowledge of Traditions ; and she herself was a disciple of the learned Zamakhshari. There are hundreds of women, besides these whose names we find in the pages of history ; but the best example for us is that of *the Great Hazrat Aa'isha* (may God be pleased with

her), who, with all the restrictions of Purdah, imparted knowledge to her disciples.

Boys, girls, and men, with whom Hazrat Aa'isha did not observe Purdah, used to join the assembly within her "*hujra*," while others sat in front of it inside the Prophet's mosque. A screen was always hung at the door ; and she used to sit behind it, in the room, and answer the questions put to her by her disciples. Sometimes long discussions took place between the teacher and her pupils, on some intricate point of law and religion ; and, at times, she, of her own accord, used to discourse on some great and important principle : the people meanwhile listening to her in respectful silence. Besides these occasional pupils who joined the circle of her disciples for shorter periods, she used to take under her personal care the education and training of the girls and boys of the important families and also of the orphans of the city. Those who observed Purdah with her, and could not enter her house, always bewailed that they had not the best chance of gaining knowledge. Qabeesa used to say that Urva surpassed him in knowledge because he had the privilege of a direct access to Hazrat Aa'isha. Imam Nakhaie, whom all parties had unanimously agreed to recognise as the Imam of his period in Irak, sat at the feet of Hazrat Aa'isha, in his childhood ; and his contemporaries envied him this great distinction.

It was her custom to perform the Hajj every year. The wide circle of Islam used to assemble once a year at this central point. The tent of Hazrat Aa'isha used to be generally pitched between the mountain of *Hura* and *Umailr*. Those who had a thirst for knowledge used to come from far and near to join the circle of her disciples. They used to put questions to her and demand her assistance in their solution. At times people hesitated to put questions to her regarding certain matters. On occasions like these she used to encourage them to put questions to her. A person once wanted to put a certain question to her, but felt very shy. At this she told him he could put any question to her which he would have put to his own mother ; for was she not like a mother to him ? And, really speaking, she was a veritable mother to her disciples, and taught them as such. She took upon herself the expense of bringing up such children ; and adopted them as her own. The treatment she offered to her disciples used to create feelings of envy in the minds of her own relations. (Life of Aa'isha. Syed Sulaiman Nudwi).

Facing of Troubles and Hardships.—In spite of their Purdah, women can make all efforts for the attainment of the rights of their own sex. They can join in a deputation to the king of the time to his ministers, to fight for their own rights, and

the rights of their sisters. They can even become the leaders of these deputations. Once upon a time a Lady-companion of the Prophet came to him and said :

“ I have come to you as the head of a deputation. Fighting for religion* is the duty of men, and they get the reward for it ; we render services to these men, what reward shall we get for our work ? ”

The Prophet answered :—

“Go and tell the women that for them, obedience to the husband shall be counted as equivalent in merit to Jihad ”

Although fighting for religion is not compulsory for women as it is for men still, in times of necessity, they have not been totally prohibited from taking part in such battles. At Badr and Ohad, and in several other battles, many women took part ; and a woman even received a number of wounds at the battle of Ohad. In the battle of Khaibar, six Lady-companions were present. They acted as nursing sisters and looked after the wounded and rendered themselves helpful generally. It is true that the Prophet at first expressed his displeasure at their presence in the battle without his permission ; but later, he graciously approved of their action, and even gave them their share of the spoils of war.

* Literally “ Jihad. ”

At the battle of Hunain, a Lady-companion, Umm-e-Saleem, came to fight with a dagger. Another Lady-companion, Rafida, skilled in the art of surgery, was appointed to look after Hazrat Sa'ad. Even after the days of the Prophet, women went on taking part in religious warfare ; and performed the duties detailed below during the régimes of the first four Khalifs :—

- (1) Carrying water to the wounded.
- (2) Looking after the food for the army.
- (3) Digging graves.
- (4) Bringing the wounded from the battle-field.
- (5) Nursing the wounded.
- (6) Encouraging the soldiers, when necessary.
- (7) Collecting arrows from the battle-field.

But, of course, women can perform these services only with the permission or acquiescence of their husbands or by the order of the Commander of the Forces, and not otherwise.

As civilised and social beings, women can take part in the joys and sorrows of their neighbours. The Prophet once saw the Saintly Fatima out of her house and inquired as to why she had gone out. She answered that a man had died, and she had gone to offer her condolences to the bereaved family. They can also join religious and national assemblies, if separate accommodation is made for them, and there is no danger of any mischief in their joining such assemblies ; provided also, that they put on

no smart or gaudy dress, use no strong scents, and wear no jingling ornaments. It was under these restrictions that the Lady-companions of the Prophet went to the mosques, visited appointed places of saying I'd prayer, and heard sermons. It was the express wish of the Prophet that women should not be prevented from joining such assemblies. It is written in authentic Traditions that the Prophet once expressed himself on the point as below :—

‘ Muslim women may attend meetings held for humanitarian and virtuous objects, and may join the I'd congregations to say their prayers. And if they do not possess a piece of cloth to cover themselves with, they may borrow one from a sister, and then join the meetings, decently dressed and covered.’

Umm-e-Husham was a Lady-companion who had learnt by heart the chapter of Qaf, simply by repeatedly hearing the Prophet recite it in the mosque. It is therefore obviously wrong to say that by placing woman in Purdah, Islam has made her totally helpless, and that woman became unfit for any work in this world by leading such a life.

Religious Exception to the Rule of Purdah.

As it is my wish to place before the reader all I know about Purdah, that as far as possible, nothing be left out from what has to be said in this connection, I deem it necessary here to mention the fact

that there are also certain exceptions to the rule of observing Purdah, which is allowed by our holy religion, which having taken into consideration the needs and requirements of our daily life, has laid down definite directions that in certain unavoidable and urgent cases, a woman may lawfully expose certain parts of her body, to the view of a stranger. I do not wish to make any authoritative pronouncement of my own on this point. I shall merely content myself with quoting the summary of the observations made by the renowned Imam Razi in this matter in his famous "*Tafseer-e-Kabeer*" :—

‘ In case of any real and lawful necessity, it is quite permissible for a man to see a woman, provided there be no danger of disturbance or any sort of evil thereupon. He can do so under the following conditions :—

- (1) Firstly, if a man wishes to marry a woman, it is lawful for him to have a look at the woman's face ; and also he can see the palms of her hands. It is reported through Hazrat Aboo Huraira that a companion wanted to marry an Ansar woman, whereupon the Prophet bade him, "see her once, since they generally had some defect in their eyes." The Prophet is also reported to have once observed as follows :—

- (1) Whoever among you makes a proposal of marriage, it is not sinful for him to see the face of the girl, provided it is done with the intention of getting engaged to her." Mugheera-ibn-e-Shuba has reported that when he got engaged to a woman the Prophet inquired whether he had seen her. On receiving the answer in the negative the Prophet said : " See her, so that mutual affection be created in your hearts."
- (2) If a person wishes to buy a slave-girl he can see those portions of her body only, which she can legally uncover before strangers.
- (3) It is permitted to look at the face of a woman carefully, only when a man is bargaining for her or entering into any business transaction with her, so that he may recognise her in case of necessity.
- (4) It is lawful to look at a woman when she is giving evidence, but only at her face ; because identification is possible by means of the face alone.
- (5) A medical man, of pure heart, is permitted to look at a woman, if it is necessary for him to do so.
- (6) In courts of law, if it is required to see any portion of the body of a woman, it is allowed by law to do so.

- (7) If a woman's life is in danger either by fire or water, it is allowed to look at her in trying to save her.

(Tafseer-e-Imam Razi: Vol. VI: Egyptian Edition, pp. 375-376.)

RESULTS OF NON-OBSERVANCE OF PURDAH.

The laws and restrictions laid down by Islam, for Muslim women, in connection with Purdah, and the modern desire to break with the Purdah System in the minds of some men, compel us to investigate, with the utmost care and attention, the causes and effects of this movement; so that the supporters, as well as the opposers of the system, may know which party is in the right, so far as the results are concerned. Really speaking the opposition to Purdah does not spring from any desire to secure the much talked of educational and moral advantages of the community. The real cause lies in the desire to imitate European manners and customs. Man naturally loves to imitate in every way those whom he finds in a higher and more exalted position than himself.

At the present day the people of Europe are several stages in advance of us in culture and civilisation, elegance and refinement, knowledge and intelligence, learning and wisdom, wealth and prosperity, dignity and grandeur. And, because the custom of Purdah does not obtain among them,

the idea has gained ground that non-observance of Purdah among women is an essential part of civilisation and culture ; and so it is inferred that Purdah is a barbaric custom. Whereas, a wide and a comprehensive view of the subject is enough to falsify this view-point. Well-informed and wide-awake people know that neither can all the customs and habits of the savage and the semi-civilised race be called barbarous and uncivilised ; nor can all the manners and practices of the advanced and the civilised nations be declared every whit decent and cultured. Even among the civilised races there still linger some customs that remind us of their former days of ignorance and savagery ; while many customs among them are undeniably, the results of the evils of modern civilisation.

Among the advanced nations of to-day woman has never been known to have been kept in Purdah, even in those primitive days when there was no sign of civilisation or culture among these people. Similarly, the savage races of our own times do not observe any Purdah, and any one can see this even in India of to-day. Mussalmans are not the only people in this world among whom Purdah is considered necessary. On reading the history of the nations, one finds that people began to discard Purdah when with the rise and fall of civilisation more or less changes began to be made in the custom of observing Purdah. But in their saver and

normal stages of civilisation, Purdah has always been recognised as the chief adornment of their fair sex. When they had lost the simplicity of their lives, and luxury had spoiled the chief ingredient and essence of their civilisation, unrestricted intercourse between men and women came into vogue, causing final and complete ruin of their morality, which was the foundation of their greatness. Rome, Persia, Ancient Egypt, Babylonia, Ancient Arabia, India, and Turkey bear witness to the truth of this statement.

History proves the existence of the institution of Purdah in Ancient Egypt and Babylonia in the days of their advancement and civilisation. In the early days of Arabia, so long as the influence of civilisation and culture had not been felt, women did not observe Purdah. But (even before the days of Islam) when signs of civilisation and advancement began to appear, the custom of observing Purdah also began to spread among the women.

In the ancient times there was no Purdah System in Persia. Gradually, when the country reached its normal stage of civilisation the system was introduced and women began to cover their faces with veils. The Shah Namah, which gives a correct picture of the culture and progress of the Sassanids, bears witness to this fact; and this was the time of high culture and refinement in Persia.

Purdah did not exist during the barbarous and savage period of the history of Rome. It was brought into force during its days of glory and refinement. It was only during the decline and fall of Rome that Purdah was given up and it has been admitted, as a fact, that an important cause of its decline and fall was the abolishing of this custom.

Similarly, in India, during the age of Ramayana, women probably lived in Purdah; and the use of palanquins was introduced at that time. This was the period of the full bloom of the ancient civilisation of India.

The history of the Turkish race tells the same story. The institution of Purdah was introduced among the Turks with the advent of civilisation and progress, and remained in full force among them until very recent times. The custom began to lose its hold upon the people, when they had lost much of their freedom.

The above facts thoroughly establish the truth of the view-point that Purdah among women is a sure sign of culture and civilisation in any people; and its opposite infallibly points to the reminiscence of its days of ignorance and barbarism.

We should never think that the custom of Purdah is in any way objectionable merely because women of other modern civilised nations observe no Purdah. The idea, that we shall forthwith be

recognised as an advanced people if we give up Purdah, should be cast out from our mind altogether. Simply to appear like other people does not, and cannot, justify the discarding of a wholesome national custom or institution. To take such a grave step requires deep thought and careful deliberation. There is no harm in discarding a system "outworn," or a custom which has lost its wholesomeness. But all such customs which are based on religion itself, which embody many a good point, and cannot entail the slightest harm or injury in adopting or continuing to adopt them, should never be given up thoughtlessly. The main object of religion is to make men highly moral; and the possession of high morals can under no circumstances be harmful to any people. Besides religious considerations, it would be destructive to the idea of nationality for any people to discard its old established institutions merely in imitation of the manners and customs of other people or in the hope of obtaining any supposed or illusory advantage. It can never be called prudent in a man to jump at a conclusion about any matter on a mere superficial study of the subject. Of course, if a custom is baneful, or its disadvantages exceed its advantages, it should be given up. But, the lessons of history and collective consideration should be our guide in arriving at such conclusion. The chief function of history is to investigate the causes of the rise and

fall of former nations ; and to draw conclusions from them, for our own benefit and guidance, so that we too may rise to greatness and glory by following the footprints of the ancients, and avoid their fate by keeping away from their frailties.

The consequences and results of different types of actions, recorded in history, should be considered in the light of precedents as regards law of natural reward and punishment of such actions, and for this reason alone does the Qur'an advise :—

‘ Have they not journeyed on in the earth and seen how was the end of those who were before them ? They were more in numbers and greater in strength and in fortifications in the land.’

Evidence of History.—When we are told of the harms of keeping women in Purdah, we should also specially keep before our eyes the dangers of its non-observance. The evil effects of the non-observance of Purdah, which the history of the Roman Empire proclaims so loudly, are reproduced below :—

‘ The matrons of Rome, like their men-folk, were very fond of work. They used to work in their own houses, while their husbands and fathers and brothers fought the battles of the State. After performing their household duties they used to spend their time in spinning and weaving. They used to observe very strict Purdah, so much so that even a midwife had to put on a thick veil when going out of her house, and cover herself from

head to foot with a thick cloth, and then throw a mantle on it. The result of this elaborate clothing was that not only could her face be hidden, but it was very difficult even to form a correct idea of the outlines of her body. During the period when the Roman matrons observed Purdah, the nation made great strides in all sciences and arts. In sculpture, architecture, military enterprises, Empire building and government, in education and industries, other nations of the world were nothing as compared to Rome. On reaching this high state the Romans grew very fond of luxury and games and amusements ; and along with this, they freed their women from the restrictions of Purdah, that they too might take part in their amusements, and accompany them to the amphitheatre and such other places of entertainments. The result of this liberty was that those very women who once observed very strict Purdah now began to openly visit theatres and to take part in dancing and singing. At last the influence of women became so paramount in the State that the appointment of famous senators and statesmen who were elected for the administration and governance of the Empire, depended on the votes of women ; and they were often dismissed at the mere whim of some favourite. No sooner was this stage reached than the downfall of Rome began. Rome finally reached such a depth of degradation that readers of

history are amazed and astonished to see how the magnificent edifice, and the firm structure of the Roman Empire, was shattered to pieces by the delicate hands of these women, and how the glory of Rome was trampled into dust by them. Did Roman ladies bring about this sad and sorrowful state by their dishonesty or immorality? No, it cannot be charged to them. The real fact was that they were made to observe no Purdah ; and as a natural consequence, men took to liking them, which led to factious quarrels and internecine blood-shed. This is a political fact which admits of no doubt or argument. In the later days of the Republic of Rome the high dignitaries of the state had become very fond of fair courtesans.'

This mad love of luxury and embellishments took strong hold of Roman ladies during the latter days of the Empire. So long as the Republic lasted, the duties of a Roman matron were limited to the four walls of her house, where for the most part she used to spin and weave for the household. But the love of luxury and ease went on growing in Rome, so that the famous Roman Philosopher Cato felt this sad state of affairs and girded up his loins to save his people from the danger which was sure to bring ruin on them all some day. Cato did for Rome in those days what the upholders of Purdah System are doing for us to-day. Truly history repeats itself. Cato's advice went unheeded at the

time ; and in a few years Roman luxury went beyond all bounds.

He said to his fellow-citizens :—

‘ Citizens of Rome !! Have you begun to think that it would be easier for you to win their favour, if you give women the power to remove the restrictions imposed upon them, restrictions which do not grant them full liberty at present and compel them to be obedient to their husbands ? Do we not, in spite of these restrictions, find it difficult to force them to perform the duties and responsibilities imposed upon them ? Do you not realise that after a time women will claim equality with men and compel us to show obedience and respect to them ? What reasonable excuse can they put forward to acquit themselves of the crime of creating disturbances and holding disloyal demonstrations ? ’

‘ Listen ! One of these very women told me that it was the desire of all women of her way of thinking to load themselves with golden ornaments from head to foot, wear beautiful crimson clothes and go about in the streets and roads of the city, on festivals and other days, and ride in beautiful chariots, just to celebrate their victory over the repealed law (which was intended to guard women against degradation). “ It is our demand,” said she, “ that like you, men, we, women, should also be given the right to elect

the consuls and possess the right to vote. It is also our desire that the sumptuary laws should not apply to our adornment and embellishments.'

'Romans !! You have always known me as an opposer of extravagance among men and women. I may also have criticised extravagance among the ordinary people and the jurisconsults and legislators. You must have heard me say that our Republic is suffering under two maladies of diametrically opposite natures ; namely, miserliness and luxury. Remember ! that these two maladies have ruined many a highly developed and progressive nation ; and I fear that a similar fate is awaiting you as well.'

Critics are bound to criticise this advice, because there seems a tinge of sex-prejudice in it, as is evident in his use of the words, "tomorrow they will claim equality with us," which destroys the real significance of his advice ; whereas when I invite the members of my sex to keep to their *Purdah* I wish to declare it candidly that our sex should always remain apart from men, because free intercourse between men and women naturally tends to create such frivolities which will keep men away from the pursuits of real aims and objects of civilisation and draw them into the vortex of luxury and degradation, and thus the main object of nature, as announced by the Qur'an 'And one of His signs is that He created mates

for you from yourselves, that you may find quiet of mind in them, and He put between you love and compassion," will be frustrated, whereby, the distinction between man and beast is maintained.

MODERN REALITIES.

After reading this solemn lesson of Ancient history we should also keep before our eyes, the condition of the world of to-day ; inasmuch as a thorough knowledge of what is going on to-day is likely to lead us to many useful conclusions. As we do not propose to make the savages of the islands of the Pacific, or the inhabitants of the semi-civilised Tibet and Abyssinia our models leave them out of this discussion ; and we direct our enquiry towards the study of the conditions prevailing in countries and among races that are superior to us in wealth and culture, knowledge and justice and many other noble virtues and good qualities. Our heart naturally yearns for the good qualities they possess ; and it is due to this desire alone that we wish to follow their example in problems affecting the good of our woman-kind. But really speaking the evil consequences arising from the complete emancipation of women, their free intercourse with men, their efforts to take an active part in the public life of the country and their non-observance of Purdah in the West are such a blot on the escutcheon of Western civilisation

that they are an eye-opener to us and the lesson deserves our careful study. Men of wider outlook in those countries who have carefully studied the conditions prevailing in the various strata of their society, lament the existing state of affairs and are devising means to reform it.

But before the consequences of the non-observance of Purdah, so shortly and concisely mentioned in this chapter, are studied, the fact should be borne in mind that what has been said here cannot be applicable to all the members of a race or all the inhabitants of a country. Everywhere there are always to be found many people who are an ornament and an honour to the race and community, on account of their good qualities of chastity, purity, and nobility; and these alone uphold the good name and dignity of real civilisation. But a nation is composed of many different and divergent classes of society and consists of men of all shades of thoughts and opinions, and in speaking about a nation, the writer addresses his remarks in a general manner, and takes into consideration only predominating traits. Moreover, as the extracts from the various books given here do not deal with the exceptions, we are unable to give special prominence to the better class of people. But in this book only such extracts have been reproduced as are most mildly worded and are fit to be read by our women.

Social Condition.—The author of the Home Cyclopedia, published in 1917, after a lengthy discussion of the existing social conditions in the West, writes:—

‘We are now rapidly drifting into the vicious manners and practices of the Grecians in the days of Pericles, without adopting their virtue, frankness, and honesty. Paris, London, and New York are worse in their sexual morality to-day than were the people of Ancient Athens.’ (Home Cyclopedia, by Dr. E. B. Foote, M.D., Page 992.)

Is sexual morality, even among nations nominally the most Christian, a prevalent virtue? If so, where is the moral oasis? It is not in our great cities; they are as destitute of it as were the cities of Rome and Athens in the “Augustan Age,” when legal penalties without measure failed to restrain the illicit sexual practices of the people. (Home Cyclopedia, by Dr. E. B. Foote, M.D. Page 1,024.)

Mr. Hargrave L. Adam has reproduced the ideas expressed by M. Jules Simon, in the International Conference, held at Berlin, on the question of “Woman Labour,” in his book “Woman and Crime” in the following words:—

Some years ago at the International Conference for the regulation of labour, which was held at Berlin, M. Jules Simon made the following remarks: ‘. The object we are aiming at is

moral as well as material ; it is not only in the physical interests of the human race that we are endeavouring to rescue children, youths, and women from excessive toil ; we are also labouring to restore woman to the home, the child to its mother, for it is from her only that those lessons of affection and respect which make the good citizen can be learned. We wish to call a halt in the path of demoralisation down which the loosening of the family tie is leading the human mind.'

After giving the above extract, the author writes :—

'Those words are even truer now than they were then. The situation has continued to grow worse. Women have continued, and do still continue, to drift farther and farther from the important and responsible duties of maternity, to embark in the demoralising activities of the prominent and sordid affairs of the world. As a result she is becoming, directly or indirectly, more and more concerned in crime. We find the most extensive and daring frauds which are perpetrated by women, are so perpetrated in countries where women are paramount.' (Woman and Crime by Hargrave L. Adam, Esq. Pages 300 and 301.)

Social Revolution.—The revolution that has taken place in the social condition of Europe and the changes that have come over society in general

are also the results of this sort of freedom and unchecked intercourse, between men and women. The lives that men and women lead now-a-days are destroying the pleasures of home life and killing the instincts of humanity. A learned writer, Lady Francis Balfour, writing in the "Mother's Magazine," under the heading "The Degradation of Our Social Life" has most pathetically described this very condition, in the following words :—

'We have a great deal of evidence just now that there is little social life within the family. Parents of every class, when the evening closes in, seek haunts of refreshment or amusement, and do not return till a late hour. In the leisured class, the young used to go to balls and theatres, and in the working classes, they sought the streets and parks for their games and amusements, and the picture houses were the great attraction. In the olden times, streets and country roads were not safe after dark, there was no lighting of public ways, the night air was thought injurious, and the family circle closed in within doors.

In the early reign of Queen Victoria, she used to sit with her ladies and the gentlemen in attendance on her court, at a round table, where work, reading aloud, and conversation went on. If we read the stories of Miss Edgeworth and Miss Austen, we see this gathering round the fire, and the lamp-lit table, as part of the day's social routine. Lessons

were studied by the children before their bed time, drawing and needlework were practised by the young women, and a gathering to a common centre of the social interests, grave and gay, was the common habit.

The home was the centre, the duty of taking a part in its various burdens was keenly felt by all ages and sexes, and if the discipline of the home was at different periods over strait-laced and too domineering, it avoided certain faults which are the obvious result of no discipline, or any recognised duty towards the home life.

We can never, at any stage of our life, individual or social, go back upon the past. Streets and country lanes do not contain the obvious dangers which used to haunt them. The night air is no longer considered unhealthy. Men and women, boys and girls meet more frequently. The education of the youth of both sexes together in our elementary schools, has made a considerable alteration on our outlook on the life which is outside the immediate shelter and authority of the family.

We must always remember that the family is the most important unit in the nation. It is the cradle of the coming generation, it contains the representatives of the citizen and freemen of the people. If we break up the family, and remove the responsibilities of marriage, parentage, and householding, we remove some of the finest props of our

whole social system. The family has the sanction of the Christian religion, and marriage is used as a type of the spiritual relations between the spiritual and God. What He has placed in our midst, it is not for man to lightly disregard, nor dissipate the moral obligation on him.

When we consider the public morals of our cities and countrysides, do we not see on every hand evidences that there can be little family life? Married women carrying infants are inside picture palaces, or children are crying out for them outside the public houses. Girls at an age when they cannot know "their right hand from their left," are playing in the streets with boys, and their play has not the innocent ways of the children, that they are in years. Young women, little above the age of children, are keeping company with men who are in no position to marry, and are, too often, a danger to their health and their morals. We repeat the old maxims, "Children who ought to be at home—who should be in bed—girls whose mothers should know better than to let them run wild."

We repeat these old fashioned words, but as we face the home of to-day, how often we know the hearth has no welcome light, the tea-table, no mother and hostess, that no father's love and greeting awaits the child who is running about with a too early love of liberty and license! If we cannot alter this, if parents do not feel that to make and

keep the home atmosphere is their first duty then might we not think a little more how we can safely place our girls and boys during their evenings of leisure ?

Our grandparents had no such social companionship as are offered by the Churches to-day. The Guilds, and classes, the happy bands of Scouts and Boys' Brigades, and the Girls' Guild with its splendid classes for mind and body, should now be the thought of every parent. School by day is enforced by the State, might not wholesome comradeship and safely sheltered recreation be encouraged by the parents, for the evenings ? Go out to amuse yourselves if you will, but go where you will be a member of an Association, Club, or Guild, where the object is to serve God and one's neighbour in a life which has a high standard and holds that each individual, of whatever sex, has the honour and dignity of the family of the race and of the nation to uphold and cherish.

We need to-day, " the whole armour of God," to strive against the falling away and godless self-seeking of all classes in society. Drunkenness and lust, wanton conversation, and thoughtless sensuality are the obvious dangers of this world. They are always with us, but present circumstances have brought their dangers vividly before us. The only cure and the only hope of our Salvation, as a people is to return to the purest ideals of the home,

and to cherish in our hearts a love of its sacred altars and holy memories.'

(The "Mothers' Magazine," February, 1917, Page 147).

How painful it is to find woman looking with contempt on her life as a woman and as a wife, and that the moment she steps beyond these spheres, she is overtaken by miseries and troubles and the peace of her own house is gone. These miseries and troubles are due to the breaking of the laws of nature.

Sir Dyce Duckworth, B.T., writing in his book "Views on Some Social Subjects," in the chapter on "Women of the XX Century" expresses his views as to the duties of women, in a very interesting manner. He writes :—

'Some enthusiasts would open all doors, and set women free to do anything that may be done with human brains and limbs. This I at once condemn, and hasten to add that women should engage in no calling which is unfit for womanly effort.

'We require that, after whatever ordeal or standard is passed, our women shall remain women, perfect women still.

'Why do we require this? I reply, because woman's work in the world can only be done by women, no one else can do it. But I am told that there is no danger, that woman's work, properly so called, only engages a small part of the available

energies of a healthy woman, and that she has capacity for much greater effort than is commonly made, and can do much more.'

'I can only say to that, happy the woman that has such a reserve of force and capacity, happy the sisters and daughters, very happy the wives and mothers who can ordain, as true women should, and alone can, all their household and nursery affairs, be guides and companions to their children, helpmates to their husbands and yet compete with men in the pursuit of professions or business, the joys of literature and the fine arts, and the toils of philanthropy.'

('Views on Some Social Subjects.' Pages 175 and 176).

In my opinion, the worst enemy of the best progress of women to-day is the abominable publicity which attends it, and which threatened to displace women from their legitimate spheres of work and duty. This remark brings me at once to declare that women should mostly find their duties in private and not in public life. I recognise a perfect equality between the sexes. Each is supreme; one is gentler, neither is inferior. But there are differences, eternally fixed, as are any of God's laws, which shall never be composed or levelled down. Man has his work to do in the world, and woman has hers. Man cannot do woman's work, and woman cannot, and must not, do man's work.

A recent writer says :—‘ In business, on the platform, in the hunting field, in the covert and on the moor, ladies compete for the honours of the day, etc. I ask who looks after the household, who tends the children, who does womanly work at home ; and who is taking the place of the faithful companionable wife, mother, and sister, and doing it all as it ought to be done, and as only a true woman, with a woman’s heart can do it ? And again, I ask who are these women who can do all these things, and yet find time and energy left for business, the platform, and the hunting field ?

‘ I will deal with this at once, and express my opinion that, as a rule, I prefer not to hear women speak in public. My own opinion is in favour of women doing woman’s work, and doing it quietly and in private, and I think public life in any form undesirable, as a rule, for them.

‘ I hold and teach, in spite of some modern opinions to the contrary, that after two-and-twenty years of age matrimony is woman’s first natural duty. Not that it is to be the “ be all ” and “ end all ” of her existence, and looked forward to as the consummation of her life, but to be taken rationally and naturally as it comes, all things not being put aside and disregarded till it arrives. Next to matrimony or till it comes, I place that specially womanly

occupation of sick-nursing. I do not agree with those who claim that women should enter any of the recognised professions. I do not regard any one of them as affording fitting occupation for women, however, strong or able they may be, though I make but a single exception to this principle in the case of women who become medically qualified for Zenana mission work in India. My knowledge of American life has taught me how very undesirable and, I will add, unpleasant it is to meet with professional women. I do not doubt the possibility of some women's engaging in professional life, but I hold that they are out of their proper womanly sphere in competing with men, and I deny that there is the slightest demand or necessity for their services in any of the professions.*

‘ If women compete with men they will certainly fail in the long run, and they will add some of men's ailments to the already long list of their own. They are not intended by nature to do the work, bodily or mental, that men do, and those who best know and love women know this full well, and

* I slightly differ from this view. In my opinion there is no harm in women adopting such professions as can be followed inside the house, or without coming in contact with men especially such as lace-making, tailoring, calligraphy, book-binding, teaching, etc. The duties of a nurse should be learnt for the sake of training our own children.

it is right to let such aspirants know this in time. A few exceptional cases do nothing, but test or prove the great general rule to the contrary.

‘Get learning, get wisdom, know modern and ancient languages, history, and mathematics if you will and can, but we men tell you, you must get practical knowledge of housewifery too. You cannot afford to be students and bookworms only. As women, you will ever have the womanly arts to do, for no men can or will do these. If you will not attend to these, you had better leave your books alone till you have accomplished them. Who is to stay at home. I ask? Which is the domestic partner in life? Man must “*go forth,*” to his work, woman must stay at home. I will only ask you to imagine the return home of a man whose partner is a student of books and philosophies, and who lives in a world of her own, little heeding her household or the comforts of the family. And if you study your books, you must also know how to use your hands and fingers. I do not ask you to knit or darn stockings, or make a variety of ornamental articles. But you should know how to make and mend, for that is a womanly art. And again, with all your higher studies get such wisdom as will prevent your going off in soaring flights to follow fashion or to rebuke it, or to dress yourself in some odd way to show that you are not as other women. Learn the art to conceal your

higher arts and attainments, and be content to "study to be quiet."

'If women aim to imitate men and to follow the pursuits of men, I have grave fears for the results upon the men.....

'I will say therefore that the term higher education comprehends a good deal more than mere book-learning. It necessitates in addition, a cultivation of all womanly graces and qualities, and a higher attainment in all.'

"Views on Some Social Subjects," by Sir Dyce Duckworth, B.T., M.D., LL.D., Pages 174—187.

The conditions brought into being by the active part that women have begun to take in social and political work, and the danger it has created, deserve our serious notice. Mr. Walter M. Gallichan has raised an interesting discussion on this point in his book, "Modern Woman and How to Manage Her." An extract from it is worth reproducing.

'The modern young woman is changing all that. She talks of a life of independence ; she often wishes to escape from the home, and to earn a living for herself ; and she scouts the idea that marriage is the sole end and aim of a woman's life.

Men have said in all ages : " Woman is stupid, therefore do not waste time in educating her." And women, accepting the opinions of men as the line of least resistance, have actually played the part of being stupid in order to please their fathers,

brothers, and husbands. Now-a-days women are up in arms against this system. It is high time for rebellion. But this revolt does not conduce to the peace of the home. I can point to a score of families wherein this feud is raging at the present time.

A young woman who resolves to live her own life has to pay the penalty of revolt. She will suffer in breaking away from home-ties and influences, especially if she is attached to her parents. Her father counsels, commands and threatens ; her mother weeps upon her neck. The advanced Daughter is deeply moved ; but she is resolved, and she goes her own way. A vast undiscovered country is before her, she is led on by a fascination partly made up of fear and partly of curiosity.

Encourage your wife to work in a garden. Let her dig and hoe, and use a lawn-mower. House-work is very good for women. I know ladies who have found themselves in much better health after dismissing, one or all of their servants, and undertaking the work of the home. The middle-class woman is apt to love idleness. As a result she grows bored, ill-tempered, and hard to live with. When a woman has nothing to employ her mind, she becomes vividly conscious of the awful fact that she is a woman.'

("Modern Woman and How to Manage Her"
by Walter M. Gallichan. Pages 75-90).

Many far-sighted thinkers of Europe and America are agreed on the point that the complete emancipation of woman, and her taking part in outdoor life, is very dangerous, as the root-cause of all evils. They take it to be the intention of nature that woman should abide in her house, and perform her special duties. This will lead to the progress and prosperity of humanity at large. An American writer says :—

‘ Woman is not a drag on society. She is a very important factor of it and is, in fact, society itself. Society imposes the same moral obligations and responsibilities on woman as on man. She is also entitled to all possible respect and love. But a woman who fails in the discharge of duties, specially imposed upon her, is relegated to the same position as that of men who neglect their duties. If women did not perform the functions assigned to them, society would come to an end. On the other hand, if they discharged their duties properly they become entitled to all honour and respect.’

This hard struggle in civilised life, to be found in every sphere of its activity, is the direct result of a free intercourse between men and women, and also of the daily increasing means of luxury in the West ; and it has so injuriously affected married life that marriage is generally avoided, and even where it is solemnised, it so often proves a failure,

that it has attracted general notice ; and only a short time ago a lady, Mrs. Mona Caird, published an article in the *Westminster Review*, " On the Failure of Marriage." The causes of this failure were discussed by 27,000 men and women, of all grades of society, in the *Daily Telegraph*. A selection of these articles was subsequently published in book form under the title " Is Marriage a Failure ?" An extract from the letter of a girl printed in this book is given below :—

‘ Most of the misery is, I believe, brought about by a false education. Girls and boys are not taught what marriage really is—a mutual contract, not for mere animalism, but for helping one another. A lot of utter nonsense is talked about love, by people who do not know what love is. When the real meaning of true love—*i.e.*, self-sacrifice—is properly taught and learnt, we shall hear no more of such painful stories as have appeared in your columns.’

(“ Is Marriage a Failure ?” By Harry Quilter, M.A., Barrister-at-Law. Page 206.)

A Clergyman writes :—

‘ As a clergyman whose lot it has been—almost a disaster—to marry very many in every rank, and latterly among the poorest of South London, I can say that very few of the married couples at all realise the step they are taking. Very many men and women marry without any due realisation

of the relation which is to exist between them in the married life. . . . Unhappiness springs from very many sources in marriage, but among a very large class from neglect to carry out faithfully the agreement made on the marriage day.'

("Is Marriage a Failure?" Pages 203-204).

Mrs. Annie Besant says:—"The second fact is the present relation between men and women in all 'civilised' countries. The true and righteous sex-relation between one man and one woman is preached as an ideal in some countries, but is generally practised in none." (*Islamic Review*, September, 1916. Page 413.)

Dr. Russel Webb says:—"Go with me into any large American or European city and see the evidence of that resistless torrent of vice and crime that rushes and seethes through the social fabric; . . . take up the newspapers and see the records of divorces, social scandals, and marital woes that fill us with shame and disgust, and then tell me that these so-called laws and customs are good things.'

(*Islamic Review*, September, 1916. Page 417.)

The author of "The Great Unmarried" observes as follows:—

'The upper-class pseudo-celibate of this period usually spent his youth and early manhood in dissipation, seduction, and intrigues with his neighbour's wives, and in middle-age he 'settled

down ' in matrimony with a young girl provided with an ample dowry.* Frequently he squandered his wife's money, neglected her, and returned to his adventures in town. Such examples of 'holy matrimony' are still common in the Western nations.'

("The Great Unmarried," by Walter M. Gallichan. Page 207.)

Besides these facts the abductions of innocent and inexperienced girls is also a direct consequence of non-observance of Purdah. This crime is on the increase both in the higher and lower grades of society. In America alone there were more than 500 such abductions within the short space of a year. Had these gentle ladies remained behind the Purdah, could they have been so constantly exposed to temptation and allurements? Can there be any other cause of the ruination of their lives but their non-observance of Purdah? The answer to these questions can only be in the negative. In a comparatively secluded life these girls of good families could not have been beset with any kind of temptation, and they would not have been caught in the meshes of those miserable circumstances

* It is a pity that many such examples are to be found in India also. Some husbands of immoral character squander away the wealth and property of their wives. The poor wife has always to suffer pain and sorrow. This shows the helplessness of women, the infidelity of men and, among the Mussalmans especially, an ignorance of religious knowledge.

which they had to face in their non-secluded condition.

All such painful instances are to be found largely in those thoughtful and standard books which are written with the sole object of Social Reform. Dr. Elizabeth Sloan Chessar's book "Woman, Marriage and Motherhood," written in a very careful and sympathetic tone and published in 1913, is worth reading. The book deals with the influences which affect the life of mothers, the rules of social customs and observances, the legal relationship between husband and wife, and the life of mothers ignorant of the laws of sanitation and engaged in commercial and industrial occupations or working in factories. She has shewn how these influences result in the births of weak and physically unfit children and the alarming rise in the percentage of infant mortality, supporting her contention from facts and figures. The economic life of woman, the extreme poverty which leads to immorality, and the retribution reaped in the shape of sickness and death for the sin committed, have been fully discussed in this volume. At the same time emphasis has been laid on the reforms suggested, from the Western point of view, to remove these evils.

Some Concomitants of Modern Civilisation.—In reality civilisation is the name of that evolution of morality among human beings, and of those other

qualities which mankind habitually exhibit in daily life, and in general social intercourse. It is a pity that it has become a fashion to use the word for conventionality, showiness, self-praise, luxury, certain fixed rules of manners and etiquette. Modern civilisation, in consequence of free social intercourse between men and women, is constantly affecting the position of women and sapping the very foundations of morality, with the result that celibacy is becoming more and more common in the West. Mr. Walter M. Gallichan in his book, "The Great Unmarried," expresses much concern at the compulsory non-marriage of women, and the false celibacy of men. He calls it a social and moral problem, and warns his country against its dangers. He goes so far as to assert that :—

‘The unchastity observed among savage tribes is very frequently the result of the corrupting influences of “civilisation.” ’

(Page 92.)

And that

‘The excesses and prostitution of savage people are very frequently the effects of civilised example.’

(Page 63.)

Almost everywhere among the barbarous, and often among the partially cultured peoples, continence is the rule.

(Page 23.)

‘The sex-morality of most savage societies contrasts remarkably with the loose amatory morals of civilised countries.’

(Page 23.)

‘A common excuse for living the bachelor life is the alleged growing extravagance of women, their social ambition, or love of money.’

(Page 155.)

Moreover, the advancement of modern civilisation has left uninfluenced the general life of the people for the good. When the reformers of the West compare their civilisation with that of the savages and the semi-civilised people they are forced to admit the evils of their civilisation, in so far as its results are concerned. The author of “Crime and its Causes” writes:—

‘Many savage tribes living under the most primitive forms of social life present a far more edifying spectacle of respect for person and property than the most cultivated classes in Europe and America.’

(“Crime and its Causes,” by W. D. Morrison. Preface, p. vi).

Women and Crime.—Among the evil consequences mentioned above, of the non-observance of Purdah among women, those consequences are the most serious which appear in the shape of crimes. The crimes are the necessary corollaries of the complete

emancipation of women. Mr. Morrison, a man of wide knowledge, and who had much to do with a prison, has discussed the causes of the growth of criminals in Europe, in his book "Crime and its Causes," published in 1902. He has also given facts and figures about each country. From these we find that in Western countries the percentage of women criminals averages between 9 and 18 per cent.; while as regards the crime of infanticide, abortion, poisoning and larceny the number of women criminals exceeds that of men. In murders of parents they come on a par. In ill-treatment of children the number of women punished is larger than that of men. In murder and attempt to murder, their proportion comes to 36 per cent. Women are greater and more confirmed criminals than men; and are also punished more than once. It should also be remembered that women very largely abet others to crime and as they themselves do not participate in the actual commission of the crime, they generally escape punishment.

The author has further discussed the comparative freedom and seclusion of women of the Southern and Northern countries of Europe and has come to the conclusion that:—

‘Women in the south of Europe are better morally than in the north; it may be that the social conditions of their existence shield them from crime; or it may be that the crimes men

are most prone to commit in the south are of such a nature that women are more or less incapable of perpetrating them. It is perfectly well known that in the south of Europe women lead more secluded lives than is the case in the north ; they are much less immersed in the whirl and movement of life ; it is not surprising, therefore, to find that they are less addicted to crime.'

"Crime and its Causes," (Pages 149-150).

Comparing the women of different countries he goes on to write :—

'But it is also owing to more secluded habits of life, and to the freedom from moral contamination of a criminal nature which these habits secure.'

"Crime and its Causes," (Page 151).

He holds the high life of women as the main cause of crime among them and writes :—

'The proportion of female crime in a community is also to a very considerable extent determined by the social condition of women. In all countries where social habits and customs constrain women to lead retiring and secluded lives, the number of female criminals descends to a minimum. The small amount of female crime in Greece is an instance of this law.'

According to prison statistics of the Greek Government for 1889, out of a total prison population of 5,023 only 50 were women. On the other hand, in all countries where women are accustomed

to share largely the active work of life with men, female crime has a distinct tendency to reach its maximum. An instance of this is the high percentage of female crime in Scotland. According to the Judicial Statistics for the year 1888 no less than 37 per cent. of the cases tried before the Scotch courts consisted of offences committed by women

It hardly admits of doubt that the high ratio of female crime in Scotland is to be attributed to the social status of women. In no other country of Europe do women perform so much heavy manual work ; working in the fields and factories along with men ; depending little upon men for their subsistence ; in all economic matters leading what is called a more emancipated life than women do elsewhere ; in short, resembling man in their social activities, they also resemble him in criminal proclivities. Scotch criminal statistics are thus a striking confirmation of the general law revealed by the study of criminal statistics as a whole ; namely, that the more women are driven to enter upon the economic struggle for life, the more criminal they will become. This is not very consoling, for the simple reason that the whole drift of opinion at the present time is in the direction of opening out industrial and public life to women to the utmost extent possible. In so far as public opinion is favouring the growth of female political leagues

and other female organisations of a distinctly militant character, it is undoubtedly tending on the whole to lower the moral nature of women. . . .

According to the present industrial constitution of society, a very large number of females must earn a living in the sweat of their brow, and until some higher social development supersedes the existing order of things, it is only right that as wide a career as possible should be opened out for the activities of women who must work to live. At the same time it would be an infinitely superior state of things if society did not require women's work beyond the confines of the home and the primary school. In these two spheres there is ample occupation of the very highest character for the energies of women; in them their work is immeasurably superior to men's; and it is, because the work required in the home and the school is at the present moment so improperly performed that our existing civilisation is such a hot-bed of physical degeneracy, pauperism, and crime. One thing at least is certain, that crime will never permanently decrease till the material conditions of existence are such that women will not be called upon to fight the battle of life as men are, but will be able to concentrate their influence on the nurture and education of the young, after having themselves been educated mainly with a view to that great end. European society at the present moment is moving away

from this ideal of woman's functions in the world ; (page 158) she is getting to be regarded in the light of a mere intellectual or industrial unit ; and the flower of womankind is being more and more drafted into commercial and other enterprises. Some affect to look upon this condition of things as being in the line of progress ; it may be, and to all appearance is, in the line of material necessity, but it is unquestionably opposed to the moral interests of the community. These interests demand that women should not be debased, as criminal statistics prove that they are by active participation in modern industrialism ; they demand that the all-important duties of motherhood should be in the hands of persons capable of fulfilling them worthily ; and not in the hands of persons whose previous occupations have often rendered them unfit for being a centre of grace and purity in the home.'

("Crime and Its Causes," by W. D. Morrison. Pages 157 and 158.)

The question of infant-mortality has been discussed in another book, which Dr. Alfred Leffingwell published in 1892, called " Illegitimacy," and statistics are given to prove that, though infants are not killed in a manner as would constitute the act a crime, means are adopted which lead to their deaths. Infanticide is generally committed by means of strangulation, poisoning, hanging, burning or scorching. But the infants killed in

this manner are treated much more mercifully than those innocent ones who are put to death by gradual starvation or deliberate neglect after being made ill.

Besides these there is a long list of crimes such as fraud, deception, forgery, poisoning of husbands, murder, etc., of which women are guilty. These painful facts will be found in many books.

Remedy for the Abovementioned Evils.—The far-sighted reformers of the Western world are deeply engrossed in the study of the phenomenon presented by the combined evils of Western civilisation. All these books and compilations are in themselves sufficient evidence to prove what an amount of time and attention is being devoted to warn people against these dangers and to bring them to realise the gravity of the situation. The final remedy which some of these reformers have been forced to suggest is that woman should be prevented from entering into the struggles of modern life, and she should be once more sent back into her home. They also suggest that men and women not related to each other, should remain apart; the life of the people should be completely changed, woman should be made to realise her duties as mother, and finally, that the miserable conditions due to the existing economic and social stress should be done away with.

The Government, too, proposes to enact laws with a view to restrict this free intercourse; and

many other proposals are also under consideration.

But the most perfect and potent remedy of all ills has been once for all provided by our Exalted Prophet and Guide (may the peace and blessings of God be upon him) and revealed to the world by him, and that remedy is the order and injunctions about the observance of Purdah among women, and the prevention of free intercourse between men and women, and the gist of them all is to be found in the divine order "Abide in your homes."

NON-OBSERVANCE OF PURDAH IN THE ISLAMIC WORLD.

The details of the moral debasement of women in Europe, described in the foregoing chapters, may create an impression in the minds of some readers that it is perhaps the influence of the geographical conditions of the countries concerned ; or the peculiar social conditions and necessities of life which obtain in the West, which are responsible for the moral depravity ; and so it would not be proper to hold non-observance of Purdah and emancipation of women as alone responsible for this degradation. But it would be totally wrong to entertain such an idea. The physical surroundings of Muslim countries are just the same to-day as of yore and the forces of the ancient civilisation of Islam have not yet been entirely spent ; and yet

we see the moral standard of women in our countries lowered day by day. Be it known that this moral deterioration began on the day when the breeze of freedom blew over the women of the East ; and even now these disturbing ideas are comparatively absent in places yet immune from the influences of the West.

Conditions in Egypt.—Of all the countries inhabited by Musalmans to-day Egypt has been influenced the most by modern ideas of progress and enlightenment ; and women there have begun to take to the liberty and freedom of the West. The more this sort of influence is felt there, the lower becomes the moral of life as judged by the ethical standard of Islam. Able and learned Muslim writers and scholars of Egypt lament over this state of affairs and regard it as something which will shake the very foundation of the pillars of the national edifice. An Egyptian scholar, Mohammad Tala't " Harb," has published a book under the title of " Tarbiyat-ul-Mir at-wal-Hijab " in which he has compared the condition obtaining in Europe with those of his own country ; and has discussed the question of Purdah also. In this he writes :—

' If you think over the state of women in Europe you will find much that has been caused by their environments. Women there have to come out of their houses and join hands with men in the earning of daily bread. To lead a free life has

now become their habit ; and they have tasted its fruits. It is now impossible for them to retire into Purdah, and give up their liberty. It is, however, possible that they themselves get disgusted with this sort of life ; but even this seems impossible at present. If we try to imitate European manners our condition will be like that crow who tried to imitate the gait of the swan and forgot his own. The growing indifference towards Purdah has already resulted in an unheard of license and even in a lowering of moral tone among women ; and we shall be greatly mistaken if we do not take serious steps to combat this baneful influence. The boast that the women of Europe are engaged in commerce and industry, and that they can work in any profession, can be of no advantage to us. Because when men and women mix freely, immorality will also increase ; and men will finally give up the idea of entering into holy matrimony ! ’

The present day indifference towards Purdah has resulted in its curtailment in Egyptian Society and our women openly show off their charms in the bazars. No man, with any decent taste, would call such an action proper. And thus, religion is openly defied, and the injunctions of that Holy Word are set at naught, which give the order “for lowering the eyes” on such occasions. It is a pity that we are becoming less and less religious every day. Whatever virtues we had,

have departed from us. Men have lost good manners ; their good and moral tastes are no more. Otherwise how else can we account for their silence at seeing such indecencies in front of mosques, on the roads, and even inside the houses ? These people have connived at the commandment of "lowering their eyes," when a woman comes in sight. Of the many harms this is the greatest and the most injurious ; and it will continue, so long as the curtain of carelessness hangs on the eyes and the minds of our people.

Therefore, Oh my people ! if you wish to save yourselves you should protect and guard what is now left to you. Women are becoming very negligent in the matter of Purdah and this will result in nothing else, but the increase of sin and evils.

It was incumbent upon us to do what the Qur'an and the practice of the Prophet had enjoined. We cannot say that whatever is happening is due to want of education and training ; because experience proves that even educated people do not control their passions. When we look at such families in which Purdah exists only in name ; and fondness for music and piano is on the increase, many a varied scene is conjured up before our eyes. Moral depravity has spread so far that in the words of Al-Muqattam 'Chastity has come to be regarded as a negligible quality.'

We see strangers visiting their houses, and not only do they overlook it, but on the contrary, consider it a social necessity. They have forgotten the observation of the Prophet that 'three sorts of people shall not enter heaven,—the man who shamelessly enjoys this illgotten wealth of his wife, the woman who imitates men in dress and habits, and the confirmed drunkard.'

In short our ignorance has corrupted our morality ; and brought all sorts of evils upon our girls and daughters ; and so long as these ideas hold the ground, our condition shall not change for the better. There will be a daily increase in the non-observance of Purdah, because the "world is progressing," and this sort of disgrace has come to be identified with civilization and advancement. If we do not seriously consider our condition we shall very soon lose whatever remnants of modesty are still left to us. May God bestow His divine favour on us that we may once more turn towards our Faith and follow the practice of the Holy Prophet, which will alone lead us to the right path.

The truth is, that we ourselves are to blame in this matter ; because—when we came in contact with the foreigners we did not bargain for renouncing the principles of our Faith and our national habits. It is nothing but our own laxity that we have dragged our women from out of Purdah and permitted them to openly visit places of amusement and

entertainment ; and the whole thing is to be attributed to the general moral degradation of the male sex among us. We propose to cure this malady by the teachings of Islam. Those who advocate the abolition of Purdah and complete emancipation of women are doing the greatest harm to their community.

The author of another book "*Al-Mir'at*," Abbas Hilmi Mohammad, writes :—

‘ Women to-day come out of their houses with uncovered heads and faces, and expose their necks, figures, and calves to the public gaze. They embellish themselves with costly clothes and superficial decorations, with a view to attract the hearts of men towards immorality ; simply to fleece them of their money.

‘ Oh Allah ! If license continues to gain ground among women, as it is doing now, and they are governed by passion and continue to mix with strangers and neglect their natural duties, we declare that this license shall seal the scroll of their chastity with misery. For this very reason we earnestly pray to God that the leaders of our people may adhere to their conservatism. Purdah is a mantle for the protection of women, the groundwork of their manners and etiquette ; and a fortress to safeguard their chastity. Purdah is the weapon with which women protect their honour ; and save themselves from coming

disasters. It is with this that they guard their nobility and virtue against the touch of evil. Purdah is a sufficient and effective safeguard for all manner of evil.'

Proceeding further, he addresses the women and gives them the following advice :—

'Ladies ! Guard the nobility of your character and protect your honour. Abide in your own houses. And Ladies ! If there is no necessity to go out of your house, do not go out. Avoid all show ; because there is an element in your nature which conspires against chastity and innocence. Remember ! that human nature is bestial and purity is for Prophets alone. Ladies ! Do not receive men in your houses in the absence of your husbands ; because it is sinful in you to beget children of whom your husbands may not be aware. If your lower nature whispers to you to do what you like, since nobody sees you, remember that God is omniscient ; that nothing is hidden from Allah, the Praised and Exalted. He sees and knows everything. Try and save yourselves from the miseries of this world ; and make your person and faith resplendent with the light of heavenly guidance.'

Women of Turkey.—After Egypt, Turkey, and especially its European portion, is the second Islamic country to be influenced most by the new ideas and modern civilization. The freedom among

women began to gain force in Turkey after the introduction of the Constitution.

Even I, during my short stay in Constantinople, had the occasion to notice among women the signs of the growth of this liberty. But soon after, the papers brought me news that this freedom was being checked and restricted, and towards the end of 1913, or the beginning of 1914, the following Decree was issued by the Sublime Porte :—

‘ Every country has its own customs and moral standard, the observance of which is binding upon its inhabitants. The Ottoman Government proposes to adopt such measures as would protect public morals from being lowered and debased in the eyes of the people. There is no doubt that men and women are perfectly free within the limits of the law, but any person taking liberty with a woman, or insulting her by word of mouth, will render himself liable to punishment. Similarly, women who go beyond the limits laid down by the religion, in the matter of their fashion and general behaviour, will not be considered immune from punishment. Women sometimes go out for amusement and recreation ; and visit places where strangers get an opportunity of looking at them. To Muslim families, who respect the moral code, as laid down by Islam, this is a source of pain and humiliation. It is incumbent on the women of the Capital to set a

noble example to the women of the rest of the Empire. The Ottoman Government, therefore, prohibits and forbids all acts of this nature. Every individual, man and woman, should understand fully that any person who injures the honour of any woman, directly or indirectly, by signs or otherwise, will render himself liable to the severest punishment. It is further incumbent on the head of every family that he should compel the members of his household to observe Purdah according to the custom of his country, and the injunctions of his religion.'

Whether the Turks wish to retain or discard the Purdah System—no definite opinion can be hazarded merely on this data, because such changes should be observed in normal times of peace and security. Still the above *farman* does establish the fact that the adornment and embellishment of women and their non-observance of Purdah is not looked upon with favour in Turkey; and so they appealed to the State to help them in restricting the complete emancipation of Turkish women.

HOME LIFE : IN THE EAST AND THE WEST.

Having read so far of the evil consequence of the non-observance of Purdah, who can deny that it is good for the women to abide in their houses, and perform their natural duties. This will protect their honour, as well as improve their

morals, which require to be most carefully safeguarded. It is this requirement which caused the system of Purdah to be instituted ; because Purdah not only protects the chastity and purity of women, but is also a guarantee of their high morality. Those women, who do not observe Purdah and who are not blind to facts, admit it. Everyone in the East must have noticed this ; and any person, who compares with justice and truthfulness and without prejudice or undue bias, the moral standard of the Purdah ladies and those who are without, will realize the difference which exists between the moral ideals of the two types. And this difference will be accentuated in their private or home life. The natural object of the married life is that the husband and wife should be a source of real happiness and pleasure to each other. But this state of affairs is exceptional in the West, and normal in the East. The " semi-civilized " women of the East are more sympathetic and comforting towards their children and husbands, and look after their household affairs in a much better manner than their " civilized " and educated sisters of the West.

Although the influence of Islamic civilization and culture has considerably declined in Egypt, and its force is well-nigh spent in that ancient land—which makes the far-sighted and thoughtful among the Musalmans of that country very anxious, and

exceedingly apprehensive about their own future, as can be seen from the extracts reproduced in this book—still as Egypt has been inhabited by Musalmans for a long time past, and as Islamic Traditions are extant there even to-day, and as there still exists a class which outwardly follows the teachings of Islam to some extent, we find even now some glimpses of Islamic glory in Egypt. Those who have studied the rise and fall of nations deeply, regard these glimpses with approbation. A western lady, Elizabeth Cooper had, as she writes in the preface to her book, from the days of her childhood, always been very keen on the study of conditions prevailing among women in the East. She read numerous books about them, but failing to obtain true and authentic information about their domestic life and conditions, decided to visit Egypt. After gaining personal knowledge and experience of the inner life of Egyptian women she published a book, called “The Women of Egypt,” in 1914, wherein she says :—

‘I am often asked the question ‘How does the Egyptian lady amuse herself?’ With the nervous, restless people of the Western world the question of amusement is a very serious one, and we work hard trying to find new ways to pass the hours. With the Eastern woman, amusement, as we understand it, does not exist, nor is it necessary for her. She is first of all a housekeeper and

attends personally to many details of her home that, with us, are left to servants. She often sees all the provisions that are brought into the house, inspects the produce of the market that the cook brings each morning, carries keys to the store rooms, and gives out personally the daily allowances for the food of her household. She knows how to cook and thinks it no disgrace to cook the dinner for the day or to show the servants how to prepare a new dish. With the middle class the children's clothing is made by the mother, and even with the rich the mother superintends the making of the wardrobes of all under her roof. It is a fact, that to-day in Cairo, the ready-made clothing has made its appearance, and the house tailor is not always one of the regular domestic staff, but still the wife attends personally to many things, which perhaps is a blessing in disguise for this woman shut away from the world.'

"Women of Egypt" by Elizabeth Cooper, pages 224 and 225.

At another place, in the same book, she says :—

I asked an educated Egyptian woman, "What are the main advantages of Islam over any other faith—Christianity, for instance?" I give her answer as she wrote it down for me :—

"Islam is preferred by the Egyptians to all other faiths for many reasons :

- 1stly.*—It says there is no God but one, and that shows the greatness and power of God more than saying that He is Three in One or One in Three.
- 2ndly.*—It works out according to thinking and logic. Muhommad did not spread it by any miracle or unnatural cause, but by discussion and thinking. His people and the other pagan Arabs told him that they would never believe except by a miracle, and yet he was ordered by the angel to answer that he was a man like others. This is quite the contrary of other faiths, which were first believed and based on miracles and supernatural deeds beyond the usual power of man.
- 3rdly.*—It orders every Moslem to give to the poor. This eliminates the question of Socialism and nihilism in Muhammedan lands, because the rich give of their plenty to those in poverty.
- 4thly.*—It orders every Muhommedan who can afford it to go on pilgrimage to Mecca, in order that all Moslems from all parts of the world should communicate and be brethren.
- 5thly.*—It gives more liberty to its followers than any other faith, *viz.* :—

(a) It orders that a woman should be quite free to manage and spend her own money as she likes, and her husband is forbidden to interfere with her business unless she gives him leave to do so.

(b) It gives freedom to the married to divorce each other, if they find it impossible to live together in peace ; and divorce is given without courts or disgrace.

6thly.—It contains nothing like ‘confession,’ and that means that all people are alike and that no one can efface the human sins except God.

7thly.—It severely forbids monasticism because it is unnatural.

8thly.—It gives strict orders for cleanliness and hygiene and it counts them as a necessary part of its faith.”

My friend adds, “I do not say that all Mohomedans follow these precepts of our Prophet any more than all Christians follow the teaching of Christ, but they form the principle of the religion of El Islam as laid down in our sacred book.”

“Women of Egypt.” Pages 327, 328 and 329.

The same authoress published another book “The Harem and The Purdah,” in 1915, which embodies the results of her travels in the East. Although the book contains remarks about the

ignorance, superstitious beliefs and other customs and rites prevailing among the Eastern women, and although the authoress is obviously prejudiced in many of her remarks about them yet the following portion of the preface of her book is a clear admission of the superiority of the women of the East, of which every Eastern woman may rightly feel proud. She opens the preface with the words :—

‘ What thou (O my husband) biddest
Unargued I obey. So God ordains ;
God is *thy* law, thou mine ; to know no more
Is woman’s happiest knowledge, and her
praise.’

‘ This is the creed of the woman of the East to-day. It is the same as it has been for centuries ; it will continue the same for centuries to come. Indeed, it is a question whether the Oriental woman, with all her intellectual and social advance which is already beginning, will be able ever to free herself from those traditional and inherent influences which have been wrought into the very warp and woof of Eastern humanity.

‘ The Eastern woman is primarily a traditionalist. She is more closely bound by hereditary tendency than the woman of the West. One of her outstanding characteristics has lain for years in her dependency and passive reliance upon her husband for economic support and protection. Her very seclusion means to her, not that which the word

would connote to the Westerner, slavery or imprisonment; to her it is rather the mantle of protective care and interest thrown over her by her Lord and master. (Page 10.) It has helped to make her feminine, as it has naturally added to her inefficiency as far as any work is concerned that bears a similitude of masculine activity.

With the exception of the Burmese woman, and to an appreciable and growing extent the women of Japan, the Oriental woman has been influenced and moulded by her economic necessities. The Eastern attitude towards woman, which in general has been to keep her ignorant and to consider that her charms other than those relating to her physical attraction are minute, has brought about a feminine type peculiar to itself. The result is a woman who outside of the home has no power of gaining a livelihood, and who as a natural consequence has turned her whole thought, emotion, and imagination upon her domestic affairs.

(Page 11.) The realm of the Eastern woman is primarily the realm of the home. She has the true spirit of the bee; she considers the collective good of the household before her own. Her great vocation is to be a wife and mother. She attends personally to her household duties, and domestic service is to her not a disgrace. Her children are to her a veritable life-work. She looks after them personally and superintends their every act, and

watches closely their development. Even the high lady of the East does not consider it demeaning to cook with her own hands that which she knows will appeal to the taste of her family. Cooking, indeed, is regarded as a fine art in the East, and recipes are handed down like heir-looms from mother to daughter along with the family jewels.

‘The Eastern woman is honoured by the honour of her household. It is her business to make it possible for her husband and her sons to advance, and she shines in the reflected light of their achievements. She has not been taught, neither has she any suspicion of the Western ambition to make name and fame for herself. There is a certain delight and satisfaction in living behind the veil which one can hardly appreciate from the Western point of view. That this Eastern feminine regards her success as domestic rather than social is abundantly proved to any one who lives intimately in touch with the women of these countries.

‘The one great cry which goes up from the heart of every Oriental woman, regardless of place or station, in any home between Algiers and Tokyo, is, “give me sons.” It is this desire for men-children and the belief on the part of the woman that this is the primal and ultimate destiny of womanhood, that has made marriage the universal custom for all women throughout the East. Rarely indeed do you find an unmarried woman. In India

marriage is assured by betrothal in early childhood ; and even in those countries where education and Western influence are raising the age limit of marriages one finds no diminution in the general feeling that woman's world is the home, with her children about her.

In Egypt 10 million out of the 12 million inhabitants are followers of the Prophet Mohommad, and to understand at all the Eastern woman one must learn something of the religion that dominates the entire life of the Mohommedan. The actions of the Moslem woman, whether in India, Arabia, Egypt, Persia, or Algiers, are controlled and forced to comply with the laws made by the Arabian Prophet of the seventh century, and even to-day his word practically governs each act of the domestic life as well as the world outside the home.

An Egyptian woman, from the time when she is seven or eight years old, never shows her face unveiled to any man except her father, her brother, or her husband. No chance is given the followers of the Arabian Prophet to have the little flirtations that are so dear to the heart of many of her Western sisters.

This seclusion does not rest heavily upon the Mohommadan woman, as she considers it the desire of her husband to protect her and she would be the first to resent the breaking of her seclusion as showing that she had lost value in his eyes.

Women are not prisoners in any sense of the word, nor are they pining behind their latticed windows, as we are sometimes led to believe by writers of fiction. They visit freely amongst each other, and their visits are not confined to the passing of a few senseless platitudes that generally mark conversation of Western women making afternoon calls upon each other. They do not "call," they go for a visit of several hours or even days.

'The Eastern woman loves perfumes and prefers them much stronger than we of the Western world think agreeable.'

In Ceylon, Mrs. Abdul Hamid Le Mesurier says :—

'The custom of keeping wives indoors is to protect them from insult and not, as is popularly supposed, to make them servile I think the lot of the Muhammadan woman is far happier than her sister in England, because she can obtain a divorce, if ill-treated.' (H. Cyclo. Page. 939.)

The American Cyclopædia, discussing the life of women in Persia, although adversely criticizing some of the aspects of life, admits that :—

'Among the great mass of the people, a man has rarely more than one wife, and the condition of the women seems to be easy and comfortable. The ladies of the upper class lead an idle, luxurious, monotonous life. Contrary to the common opinion of Christendom, they enjoy abundant liberty, more,

perhaps, than the same class in Europe Women of the higher class frequently acquire a knowledge of reading and writing, and become familiar with the works of the chief Persian Poets. These, however, are the best aspects of female life in Persia.'

Gustav le Bon, author of the "*Civilization des Arabia*," writes :—

'Great misconceptions exist in the minds of Europeans generally about the harems of the East. They think of the harem as an abode of luxury and voluptuousness, where oppressed and imprisoned women lead lives of indolence ; and lament over their fates. It has been fully demonstrated how far this is from the truth. European women, who have had opportunities of visiting these harems, have been greatly surprized at seeing the love shown by the women inside these harems towards their husbands ; and the attention paid by them to the training of their children and the management of their households. They are happy and contented in their secluded state ; and would resent to exchange it with that of their European sisters. They sincerely sympathise with, and regret the lot of, their sisters in Europe who have to suffer physical hardships and the miseries of life. On the other hand, the women of the East have no other occupation, but the management of their households ; and in their own eyes and those of their husband's, this occupation is the only suitable

one for women. Eastern people look upon the people of Europe, who force their women to enter into trade and industries, and to take part in active life, with the same feelings with which we would look upon the person who yoked a race horse to a plough or a mill. To them the main function of a woman is to make the life of her husband happy and to educate her children. They can never believe that it is possible for women, engaged in other occupations, to discharge this function satisfactorily. Men are generally influenced by the nation whose civilization they have seen with their own eyes ; and for this very reason in this matter my own ideas are unquestionably in full agreement with the Eastern nations.'

The Observer of Lahore published in 1906 a series of articles on the questions of the education of women. During the course of this series the writer produced extracts from the writings of a Musalman and an American, on domestic life. It would be interesting to reproduce them here for comparison. The picture drawn from the viewpoint of the Musalman was as follows :—

'Let us now compare the life at present passed by Muhammadan women when they are not endowed with Western civilization with that of their Western sisters. In the words of a member of this advanced body, the domestic life of a Muslim woman is thus related :—" She is the mistress of her home, quite

free and happy in her limited surroundings. Her little children are the bright angels and joys of her existence. She takes a heavenly delight in attending them, often sings them songs, and finds time fly quickly in their society. Her daughters rise early, offer their prayers to God, and read a Chapter of the Qur'an, before they take up the round of their domestic duties. Indian women excel their European sisters at needlework. Their household duties done, they pay or receive calls from their friends. The evenings they spend in the society of their husbands, to whom after the day's toil the calm of home is delightful. To the Muslim woman, her husband is everything; her soul and life are wedded to his. She does her best to cheer him up after his day's hard work. If the surest symptom of a healthy mind is rest of heart and pleasure at home, that symptom is not wanting in an Indian home. A woman always strives hard to study household good, and good works in her husband to promote, and so passes the day's drama with all its blended tints. It might not be *a variegated or an ideal life, the dissipations of theatre or dancing parties may be wanting*; but the pleasure she takes in her husband and children is a sufficient reward for all she does and hoes for." "

As opposed to this the American writer thus depicts the conjugal and domestic life of a Western woman :—

‘Turning our attention to the West, we find the following account of the treatment of husbands by ladies in advanced Europe and America :—

“ Intent upon her own affairs, she will be oblivious of her husband’s interests and anxieties. When tired and weary from his daily toil, he returns home, he will look in vain for any comfort from his natural help-mate, and he will be fortunate if he is not plagued by petty grievances and household annoyances, which without tact or forbearance she will pour into his patient ear. Demands for more money will be made just at a time when the whole expenditure may have to be seriously curtailed ; and whilst her attention should be given to the consideration of some matter of vital importance, her whole mind is set upon the discussion of some paltry triviality. But never will be the lack of sympathy be more grievously felt than when the husband is sick ; then the naked selfishness of the unsympathetic wife will be laid bare. Forgetful of all his care and love for her, she will grudge him a single day’s solicitude. If he hides his complaint, she will never question him ; and if he tells her of his pain, she will receive the information with chilling indifference or absolute silence. She will never smooth his pillow, stroke his forehead, or hold his hand ; but she will contentedly pursue her own affairs and leave him to bear his lonely sickness as best he may. He is in fact much more lonely

than when he was a bachelor, since he looks in vain for comfort to one who regards him with indifference. She will, even against his entreaty, accept invitations to dinners or evening parties, and enter with gusto into these diversions." "

(Article on Female Education in the *Observer*, Lahore, 2nd June, 1906, pages 2 and 3).

Two further extracts from the writings of Western women about Muslim households are worth reading.

Miss Lucy M. G. Gornett, in her book "Women of Turkey," writes:—

' Like all Orientals, the hanum is an early riser, and after partaking of a cup of coffee and a cigarette, and making a slight toilet, she is ready to wait upon her husband. She places his slippers by the side of the mattress, and holds his pelisse ready, and as soon as he is comfortably seated in this negligee on the divan, pours out his coffee from the little brass ibrik in which it has been brought in by a slave, places the cup in the silver zarf, and hands it to him. The hanum then fills his tchibouk, and lights it by placing a tiny piece of glowing charcoal on the bowl. She remains in attendance, seated on a cushion at his feet, while the slaves roll up the bedding and stow it away in the wall-cupboard. The little ones then come in, uncombed and unwashed in their night gear—wide trousers and jacket of coloured cotton—to kiss the hand of their

father, and be caressed by both parents. There is no nursery breakfast awaiting them; and they presently begin to clamour for pence with which to purchase their morning meal.....

..... After this irregular meal, the elder children, boys and girls, are tidied up and sent, escorted by a male slave called the lala to the mektab, or parish school, where rich and poor sit side by side, the younger ones roam freely about the house, looked after by the dadi, a slave who performs, after a fashion, the duties of nursemaid. The effendi finally makes his outdoor toilet, and departs to his office, leaving the women-kind to follow their own devices for the rest of the day. For the hanum is perfect mistress of her time, as we have seen her to be of her property, and disposes of both as she pleases. She will probably first inspect, with the Negress cook, the provisions brought in each morning from the market by the ayvas, or purveyor who is often an Armenian—and passed into the haremlik through the revolving cupboard before mentioned. If any special culinary feat in the way of pickling, preserving, or tatlou making is to be undertaken, the hanum will remain in the kitchen to superintend or assist in the operation; on washing and ironing days, too, she and her daughters will take a more or less active part with her slaves in the day's work.'

Another European lady writing to the '*Advocate of India*,' says :—

'I bear witness to the fact that there is absolutely nothing in common between the actual life of women in a harem and the false notions that generally prevail about it amongst us. It is entirely the reverse of what we see depicted with such vividness and realism in popular novels or exhibited with such skill on the stage. Real harem life is miles away from anything of the kind. The harem is a place where we learn certain great truths which it would profit us to bear in mind and act upon. The happiest and most contented faces that it has ever been my lot to see have been found inside the four walls of these harems.'

One of the contributors to the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, who like the generality of European writers, is bitterly opposed to *Purdah*, after discussing the matter in a very biased manner, has at last been compelled to admit the superiority of the private life of Muslim women, who live in seclusion. He writes :—

'Their seclusion has very considerable compensations and legally they stand on a far better basis in relation to their husbands than do the women of monogamous Christian communities. From the moment when a woman, free or slave, enters into any kind of wifely relation with a man she has a legally enforceable right against him

both for her own and for her children's maintenance. She has absolute control over her personal property whether in money, slaves, or goods ; and, if divorce is far easier in Islam than in Christendom, still the marriage settlement must be of such amount as will provide suitable maintenance in that event.'

(Encyclopædia Britannica, Vol. 12 page 951.)

During the course of an article on " Eastern Women," in the October number of the " Lady's Realm " (1903), a lady writes :—

' If you enter the female apartments of a house in the East in which a marriage or some other festivity is going on, you will behold a most picturesque and enticing scene, which is still free from all immoral or sordid influences. In these regions of God's earth it is next to impossible to find an immoral or a wicked girl. A very high and exalted sense of morality and decency rules in the families of the East. The nations of Europe have lost those sentiments of modesty and shyness which still prevail in the East. Flirtations, courtships and love-making are subjects tabooed in their talks. Men and women sit apart in parties and assemblies, so much so that this rule obtains even in the house of God.'

THE REPUTATION OF THE ARGUMENTS OF THE OPPONENTS OF PURDAH.

None of my wise readers, who have gone through the foregoing chapters, in which the evils

of the non-observance of Purdah have been most elaborately discussed, can question the advantages of the Purdah System. But those who are opposed to Purdah hold it responsible for many evils. We now proceed to see how far their ideas are correct.

Purdah and Prosperity.—The opponents of Purdah hold that women who do not observe purdah lead a more prosperous life than those who observe Purdah. They become capable and competent of earning their livelihood, while those who live in seclusion have always to be dependent on others. But, in reality, facts point to a contrary conclusion.

Mr. John Parkinson, writing in the newspaper, *The Crescent*, of Liverpool, says:—

‘In the poorer quarters of our cities, thousands of women and young girls starve, and lead a life of abject poverty and misery. They work for a few pence from morning till evening, and then in the darkness of night, they try to add to their earnings by wages of sin so that they may be able to prolong their wretched existence from day to day.’

The author of “Umm-ud-Dunya” says:—

‘Out of every 100 women in the West (who do not observe Purdah), 15 work for wages and are engaged in some profession to earn their livelihood; while out of every 100 women who live in Purdah, half per cent. only work for their living. This is a very clear argument showing that in

cities where the custom of Purdah is not observed penury and destitution have spread to such an alarming extent that woman is forced to work for her own livelihood. This is not due to any fault on her part. The fault, on the contrary, lies with men, who have brought this misery and misfortune, nay degradation, on women.'

As against this, in countries where Purdah is observed, conditions are such that ordinarily a man spends his entire income in supporting his family. M. Vejani, the head of the School of Languages, of Cairo, writing about this, says :—

Muslim women do not consider the secluded life of the harem as a calamity. They are born and bred in it and they fail to think of any mode of life better and superior to their own. They despise the freedom of the European women, and they never even dream of stepping out of their homes. When they are married they only change the harem of their parents for that of their husband, and they are perfectly content with their way of life, and they need no more. The luxuries which their husbands provide for them, soon makes them quite happy, because there can be no doubt that a Muhammadan husband brings all the best things that he can get, for his wife and children, and leads quite a simple life himself.'

A major portion of the female sex in Europe is compelled to make its own living, and young girls

have to go to factories, and other trade establishments, to supply their necessities of life for themselves, out of the wages they receive. Occupations of this nature are always fraught with dangerous consequences for women. It was with these evil consequences in her mind that the famous writer of England, Annie Rodney, published an article on the subject in the *Eastern Mail* of the 10th May, 1901, which was reproduced by the "Shajarat-ud-Dur," in its Vol. I; No. 6. A résumé of the article is given below :—

‘ Our daughters lead healthier and better lives when they are engaged in the performance of household duties. I look with apprehension on their going to factories lest it should lead them in serious difficulties, tinge them with evil and mar their lives for ever. I wish our cities were like those of Musalmans, where even the slave-girls and slave-boys are brought up as children of the family, live in comfort and lead chaste, moral and pure lives. No evil ever tarnishes their honour.’

Dr. Ivan Bloch, in his book "The Sexual Life of Our Times," has devoted a separate chapter to this problem; and the harrowing pictures he has drawn from the facts and figures are given below :—

‘ While on the one hand women of the working classes get such low wages as are hardly sufficient to keep body and soul together, even when they have sweated themselves to death for a whole day, on

the other, they are beset with temptations on all sides which render it very difficult for them to keep their name unsullied and their honour immaculate.'

The Review of Reviews has published an article from the pen of a medical man who has given the results of his wide experience among the working classes of New York, in the following words :—

'Young girls, when they should be starting on a career as wife and mother, and home maker, are entering industry and commerce, to wear out the best years of their life in service to trade, when they should be giving the truest womanly service to the state. If they bear children at all it is under the greatest and most unnatural social and economic stress and, old woman at forty, no longer useful either by training or physiologically for motherhood, cast aside as unfit by trade, they pass down the remaining years 'through the old gradations of decay' as monuments to the short-sighted imbecility, the ungodly wastefulness, the unpardonable gratitude and selfishness of mankind.....The attainment of economic freedom of womanhood will do more to decrease infant mortality than will probably any other measure.'

(*Review of Reviews* No. 302, February 1915, page 153).

Purdah and Health. The opponents of Purdah also maintain that a life of Purdah undermines

the health of women ; and the impure air of a confined area has a weakening effect on them. But in fact this is not correct, because if it were so, this weakness among women, increasing with every generation, from the time Purdah was made compulsory, would, by now, have reached the stage of making not only the women but the race extinct. At any rate it would, at least, have made the women so weak as to make it extremely difficult for them to get out of their beds. On the contrary we notice that not only their health is in no way inferior to that of men, but it is Purdah alone that is responsible for the comparative immunity of women from the ravages of epidemics and contagious diseases, to which men generally succumb. An Indian Doctor, Babu Nobin Chandra Chakravarti, in his book " Practice of Medicine " writes :—

‘ Women are naturally more delicate and nervous, and thus are more easily attacked by nervous diseases. They usually perform their household duties, and as they do not often go out, they are comparatively immune from contagious diseases. Mostly their ailments are due to weakness, and they are usually less fatal. It is owing to these causes that the number of women is greater than that of men in the world.’

‘ We are also told that woman has become physically weak on account of the tyranny and oppression of man ; otherwise nature has not made

her so. But woman is also found weaker than man in countries where she does not observe Purdah. And this difference is found to the same degree among civilized nations as among the savages.'

Professor du Farini observes :—

' The difference in the physical and intellectual powers of men and women that you see among cultured inhabitants of a civilized city like Paris, is to be found to an equal degree even among the most savage races of America.'

The question, therefore, presents itself why should women be weaker than men among the savages who neither impose any checks or restrictions on their women, nor tyrannise over them ?

Besides humanity, the animal and the vegetable worlds too exhibit the same difference. Under the circumstances it would be curious indeed if we did not recognize the fact that woman has been created weak by nature. Her brain and her heart are weaker than those of men. A mere look at her should suffice to satisfy one on this point. The works of Anatomists conclusively prove the same thing. My intention in dealing with this point at such length has been to prove that Purdah is neither injurious to the health of women nor does it make them weaker. Even if it be admitted that the general standard of their health is declining, the blame cannot be laid at the door of Purdah. It is due to their not taking any physical exercise which

makes them thin and weak ; and experience establishes fully that women who perform their household duties are stronger and healthier than those who do nothing else but lie idle in their beds. " The Practice of Medicine " points out :—

‘ That strong and healthy children can only be born of strong and healthy mothers ; hence it is necessary for women to be engaged in some household work for at least five or six hours daily, so that their bones and muscles may become strong, cooking is also a sort of physical exercise for women.’

Dr. Kellong writes :—

‘ For a majority of mankind no other exercise is so beneficial for their health as physical exercise and for women the daily household work is the most appropriate for this purpose. All the limbs and muscles of the body thus come into play and because of the variety of work there is constant change and movement and no particular muscle or limb has the slightest chance of getting excessively tired. There are thousands of women who, in spite of their most skilled and expert attention, are pining away with drugs prescribed for them by their family doctors. Change of place and climate, prolonged visits to distant lands and countries, and even still more expensive and difficult treatments are suggested although nothing could be better for these delicate women than household work for a

few weeks or months. They should not go near the piano or touch a guitar for a few days, but they should busy themselves with cooking, washing, patching and darning clothes, polishing metal articles, keeping the house clean and in a thousand other household duties which kept their mothers and grand-mothers robust and healthy. I once treated a young lady exactly on these lines. An old doctor had given her up as a hopeless case of consumption and her relatives were witnessing most sorrowfully her gradual decline and decay. The young lady was completely cured through my treatment in a very few weeks and is still in the pink of health. She has never forgiven me for prescribing manual work for her and I feel sure that no medical man will ever receive any better reward from his patients if he adopts a similar method of treatment. No gymnasium has produced better results than the kitchen and the laundry. These are the gymnasiums of nature. They do not require any special equipments and they are always ready for use.'

Purdah and Education.—Many men of light and learning assert that their daughters cannot obtain all the benefits of higher education behind the *Purdah*; and thus *Purdah* stands in the way of education. The officers and men of the department of education have also been misled by this false notion, and *Purdah* has been declared to

be a recognized cause of hindrance of education. But this is clearly a mistake. Education is possible in spite of Purdah—and certain recent examples, furnished by brilliant Muslim girls, passing University Examinations, conclusively disprove this assumption. This opinion would have had some weight had arrangements been made for the education of girls compatible with the requirements of Purdah, and failed. But so long as such an experiment is not made, the system of Purdah cannot justly be put to blame. To expect Muslim girls to go to schools and colleges with open faces, or with veils on, and sit with boys and obtain instruction in the different branches of knowledge is tantamount to the death of all their finer sentiments, morality and religion.

Although there are separate institutions for giving instructions to women in different professions and sciences in Europe, yet, as a rule, they receive their education in schools primarily meant for boys. As free association is permitted to both men and women by society, education fails to fulfil its highest functions. The whole world knows what a high standard has been reached in the education of women in the West, but education *qua* education has failed ignominiously, and the more we ponder over the causes of this failure the more the conclusion forces itself upon us that besides defective education, this non-observance

of Purdah has been one of its greatest causes. With such a liberty, education cannot produce any good results.

An author has proved by facts and figures that :—

‘Many years ago it was observed that in Scotland the counties which show the highest proportion of illegitimacy are the counties which are in the highest condition as to education ; while on the other hand, the counties which produce the fewest illegitimate births are those where education is at the lowest ebb.’

(Illegitimacy and the Influence of Seasons upon Conduct, by Albert Leffingwell, M.D., 1892, page 37.)

Besides this woman is drifting farther and farther away from her natural duties and the main function for which she has been created.

The Review of Reviews in its January number of 1915, gives an extract from another magazine which says :—

‘We are encouraging with all our might those influences of education and so-called emancipation which tend more and more to make women unwilling both for marriage and child-bearing. Note the Statistics from the report of the Registrar-General of England and Wales,’ and this will be demonstrated :—

Towns where higher education of girls is general :—Population 2,35,770 and number of births, 3,762.

Towns where higher education for girls is rare :—Population, 2,33,290 and number of births 7,801.

It is very generally asserted by psychologists that education beyond certain limits necessarily produces in women an asexual condition. If this be true, then it will be reflected in the birth and marriage statistics in proportion to the extent of female education. These people—they are many—who are angry with the psychologists might ponder the figures just quoted. It might be asked that if the contention be correct that it is to education that we are to attribute the growing unwillingness to marriage and child-bearing that characterises our women, then as education is continually extending a difference will be seen not only between the working-class town and the well-to-do, but also between the figures for the higher class town at different periods. Here are the figures.

Year 1904	Year 1910.
Total Population 2,05,245.	2,20,795.
Total Births 4,218.	3,601.'

(*Review of Reviews*, January 1915, page 59).

The author of the book "Why American Marriages Fail?" attributes the failure of marriages to this sort of defective education and writes :—

‘Nowadays she receives almost a man’s mental and muscular equipment in school or college, and then at the age of twenty she stops dead short and faces a world of negatives! No exigent duties, no imperative work, no manner of expending normally her highly developed, hungry energies. That they turn back upon her and devour her is not to be wondered at. One is reminded of that irresistible characterization: “Alarm-clock women that buzz for a little and then run down.”

‘And so it comes to pass that this highly trained, well-equipped (and also ill-equipped) feminine *ego* faces wifedom—the one and only subject about which she is persistently kept in the dark. And from the outset she fails to realize, never having been taught it, that what she then faces is not a brilliant presentation at the Court of Love, not a dream of ecstasy and triumph, not even a lucky and comfortable life-billet—she is facing her work at last! her difficult, often intensely disagreeable and dangerous, life-task. And her salary of love will sometimes be only partly paid, sometimes begrudgingly, sometimes not at all,—very rarely overpaid—by either her husband or her children. One of the precise facts that young women should be taught, as they are taught physical geography, is that men, all men, have their high and low emotional tides, and a good wife is the immovable shore to her husband’s restless life.’

‘It would appear that the indiscriminate and undigested education of the female masses and classes is depriving us Americans of good servants and of good wives at once. They are all “above their station”!’

“Why American Marriages Fail.” By Anna A. Rogers, pages 17-18.

In reality these defects are not due to education, and it would be a mistake to attribute them to it. Education, not contaminated with evil influences, is always beneficial to mankind and polishes human virtues. However, if education is accompanied by bad training and bad society, and if the circumstances and surroundings which stimulate and foster immorality are not removed, the very education which is the elixir of life, will turn into the most fatal poison.

There have been such women in ancient times who had reached high eminence in knowledge and in the art of public speaking; but owing to their licentious life and practice of wrong principles, they did not possess greater honour than a woman about town. For example, in Greece, during the days of Socrates, when that country had attained the highest pinnacle of fame and glory, by virtue of its civilization and power, there lived a courtesan named Aspasia so renowned for her knowledge of political philosophy and so unrivalled in her powers of rhetorics and oratory that many famous

philosophers and scholars of the time used to attend her salon, among which the name of Socrates is also mentioned. Similarly there was another woman famous as a scholar of Chinese philosophy. She was a lover of knowledge and art, and was counted among the greatest authors of her time. Great philosophers and doctors of those ancient times, who moved in that loose society were in no way superior to the profligates of to-day. Similar was the condition of education and society in Rome. But evil is always evil and there always are some persons in every age who realize it as such. For instances on the one hand the condition of Greece was as has been mentioned above, while on the other mothers in Athens were expected to sit inside their houses and lead lives of seclusion. They were not permitted to go to games and theatres. They were bound not to expose themselves to the common gaze and to put a heavy mantle on themselves when walking in the streets ; and reach their destinations in the quickest possible manner without the slightest delay. They were not taught to read or write. And man had the fullest control and mastery over woman.

In Greek society unmarried young girls received education and were trained to lead lives of chastity, seclusion and self-sacrifice. They were not permitted to visit theatres and go to dancing parties and plays, and none except the prostitutes ever walked

in the streets, with unveiled faces ; and in gaudy and attractive dresses. It was also considered improper on their part to sit in meetings and assemblies and to discuss politics. But the special privilege which these noble ladies had, was that they could offer sacrifices at the temples and their children were by law free men and not slaves.

Women and Patriotism.—Among the blessings of modern civilization the one considered to be the most beneficial to a nation or a country is the sentiment of nationality or patriotism, and there is no doubt that like the men of the West the women too are imbued with these honourable sentiments. In the case of the women of the East, however, the opponents of the Purdah System believe that so long as the women are not granted complete emancipation this sacred sentiment cannot be created in them. The history of Islam presents hundreds of examples against this assumption. Purdah ladies have in every age done innumerable works of public good and their names are written large on the pages of history. In India too, on several occasions, during the period of the Muslim Rule, not only the princesses of the blood royal but common women and even slave-girls have exhibited sentiments of this nature.

During the reign of Jehangir, when war was once declared between the Adil Shahi and Nizam

Shahi Kingdoms, the wife of an Abyssinian Sardar of the Nizam Shahi Government, Hamid Begum, obtained permission after persistent efforts, to go to the battle and during the actual engagement, led the armies as a General.

‘A veil was thrown over her graceful figure. She was riding a horse and wearing a dagger and a jewelled sword at her waist. When the two armies came in contact and the advance guard of each was locked in the embrace of the combat, she gave battle to the Adil Shahi hosts with superb courage and great bravery. She encouraged and roused her soldiers and officers to fight with, and kill the enemy; and fixed her feet firmly like a stable mountain of manliness in that sea of war and whirlpool of battle. She inflicted a heavy defeat on that mighty foe, captured all their elephants and artillery and started on the return journey in safety, laden with the spoils of war.’ (An-Nudwa).

The women of Persia, too, have, by their actions, disproved this false assumption. Religion is still a living force in Persia, and the decrees of the Mujtahids and divines carry greater authority and command greater obedience than the royal firmans. Although education among women in Persia has only recently begun they still lead their lives in a limited circle of society, and so they are still immune from the evil influences of modern civilization. Nevertheless, they are full of patriotic

sentiments and have surpassed the men in the expression of those noble ideals.

In 1911 when Russia presented her demands to the Persian Government in the form of an ultimatum and the Mejliss was wavering between its acceptance and rejection, it was the women of Persia who supplied the answer. Mr. Shuster, the then Treasurer-General of Persia, thus describes the incident in his book, the "Strangling of Persia":—

‘With the dark days when doubts came to be whispered as to whether the Mejlis would stand firm, the Persian women, in their zeal for liberty and their ardent love for their country, threw down the last barriers which distinguished their sex and gave a striking evidence of their patriotic courage. It was rumoured more than once that in secret conclave the Deputies had decided to yield to Russia’s demands. The Bazaars and people of the capital were torn with anxiety. What would Nationalists do to hold their representatives to their duty?’

‘The Persian women supplied the answer. Out from their walled courtyards and harems marched 300 of that weak sex, with the flush of undying determination in their cheeks. They were clad in their plain black robes with the white nets of their veils dropped over their faces. Many held pistols under their skirts or in the folds of their sleeves. Straight to the Mejliss they went, and,

gathered there, demanded of the President that he admit them all. What the grave Deputies of the land of the Lion and the Sun may have thought at this strange visitation is not recorded. The President consented to receive a delegation of them. In his reception hall they confronted him, and lest he and his colleagues should doubt their meaning, these cloistered Persian mothers, wives, and daughters exhibited threateningly their revolvers, tore aside their veils, and confessed their decision to kill their own husbands and sons, and leave behind their own dead bodies if the Deputies wavered in their duty to uphold the liberty and dignity of the Persian people and nation.'

"The Strangling of Persia," by W. Morgan Shuster, pages 187-188.

In connection with this incident it is worth noticing that women had been leading a life of Purdah for centuries past in Persia. They had neither the benefit of education in colleges, nor had they come under the influence of the Western ideas of liberty, still like the women of the early days of Islam, they showed remarkable courage and bravery at this critical moment of the history of their country.

Position of Women and Purdah.—Then again the opponents of Purdah maintain that the system is a kind of imprisonment or slavery that symbolises a most insulting suspicion and mistrust of women,

which she in no way deserves. In reality it is not so. By keeping them in Purdah men have made themselves the slaves of women, and have taken upon themselves the responsibility of supplying them with all their comforts and conveniences. The mistrust that was likely to be engendered by a free association with men has been thoroughly eliminated by Purdah and the result of this is, that, barring non-appearance in public, women enjoy full rights and privileges and complete liberty.

Europeans who form such wrong notions about the women of Asia, do so by seeing the condition of Persia which among the Islamic countries is the most backward in progress and civilization. But European authors admit the eminent position which even the Purdah women of Persia occupy in their country. An English author, Mr. James Atkinson, in the preface to his book "Customs and Manners of the Women of Persia," and in several other foot-notes, writes :—

‘It must be confessed, however, that little is understood in England of the real situation of women in the East, beyond the impression of their being everywhere absolute slaves to their tyrant husbands, and cooped up in a harem, which to them can be nothing better, it is supposed, than a prison! Like some enthusiasts, who fancy England the only land of liberty and happiness, because other countries do not act and feel in the same way, we think the

women in Persia or India, oppressed and degraded, because they do not possess and exercise exactly the same rights and privileges as our own. But they are wrong.

‘It is quite clear that, whilst Europeans generally think them treated in the most barbarous and monstrous manner, with regard to their liberty and rank in society, the Persians themselves look upon their women as virtually invested with more power and liberty, and greater privileges, than the women of Europe. But every nation has self-complacency and vanity enough to plume itself on its own exclusive advantages, and, in the same spirit of self approbation, there is hardly an individual who would change, in all respects of mind, body, and pursuit, with his equally self-approving neighbour. Every one has something about him, some valuable propensity or quality, not to be compared with any other that could be offered in exchange. Thus it is happily, with the Persian women. They admit of no comparison with the women of other countries, who boast of their freedom, and their habits of mixing in society without constraint, and unveiled. Their defence in these matters is not only put forth by themselves, but even the men advocate their rights and discant pretty largely on their prescriptive privileges. Among the most zealous in their cause is Mirza Abu Talib Khan, who visited England many years ago, and after a

good deal of experience, imagined himself fully qualified to appreciate the merits of the question under consideration. He ranks under *eight* heads what his country women enjoy *more* than European wives, both by law and custom.

‘Under the *sixth* head the Mirza ranks, “The greater reliance placed by Asiatic husbands on their wives’ virtue, both from law and custom.” For as to the European ladies, although they can go out of doors and discourse with strangers yet sleeping out all night is absolutely denied them—contrary to the way of the Asiatic ladies, who, when they go to the house of a lady of their acquaintance, though their husbands be entire strangers, are not attended by any person of the husband’s or father’s, and they spend not only one or two nights in that house, but even a whole week; and in such a house, although the master is prohibited entering the apartments where they are, yet the young men of fifteen, belonging to the family or relations, under the name of children, have free access, and eat with and enter into the amusements of their guests.’

“Customs and Manners of the Women of Persia.” By James Atkinson, Esq., 1832. Preface xi, xii, xiii and xiv.

At another place, he writes :—

‘Divorces,’ says Sir John Malcolm, ‘are never on account of adultery, as that crime, if proved

subjects a woman who has been legally married to capital punishment ! The general causes are complaints of badness of temper, or extravagance, on the part of the husbands ; and of neglect, or cruel usage, on that of their wives.'

Similarly Muslim women in every country occupy a specially honourable position in society. If the reverse is the case anywhere, it is very rare, and is in the nature of an exception ; and is the direct result of rank ignorance and neglect of religious commandments. Men of position and noble families look down upon them with disdain and contempt ; and the man who does not treat his wife and other women folk of his family considerately does not command the respect of any Musalman. Even under ill-treatment virtuous ladies and families show exemplary patience and pass all their lives in chastity and modesty.

After Effects of Marriage.—The opponents of Purdah are also obsessed with the idea that Purdah marriages do not engender true love, because the parties do not get opportunities of understanding the temperaments, habits and inclinations of each other, before being married. As a result the married life of the couple is afterwards spent in untold misery, born of incompatibility of temperament. What we have now to see is how life is spent where the opposite system prevails ; and where every marriage is entered into, after a

long period of courtship and love. From our point of view the matter should be judged on the basis of separation and divorce. An eminent American writer, Mr. Lucien discussing this subject in the *Review of Reviews*, writes :—

‘ The proportion of divorce to marriage there is 30 to 100, but the average of this is very low in countries where Purdah is in vogue. There the proportion is 10 to 100.’

He has also published a chart of marriage and divorce statistics for the last few years in America. By a careful study of it we find that 24 years ago the proportion of divorce to marriage in the different cities of America varied between one divorce to every 8, 10, 12½, 13, and 21 marriages.

After giving this chart he writes that 80 per cent. of the applications for divorce are presented by women ; and a husband comes to know of his being divorced when his wife already enters matrimony with another person. In one place he writes :—

‘ Divorce proceedings have grown abnormally frequent now and the most dangerous aspect of this abnormality is that eighty per cent. of the applications are presented by women which proves that men as a rule are averse to breaking asunder of the marriage tie. They feel much ashamed to divorce their wives. Whenever a husband gets wearied of his wife he tries to find out another woman

and until this woman agrees to marry him, he does not take steps to obtain separation from his first wife.'

A more painful state of affairs is revealed by cases generally instituted between husband and wife. But this is about women who obtain divorce. The life of those who are in an intermediate position between marriage and divorce, known in legal parlance as judicial separation, is still worse.

'An important deputation, under the leadership of Lord Sydenham, recently waited upon the Home Secretary. The deputationists have presented a social problem, the importance and magnitude of which it is impossible to grasp at the present day. According to the Law of Marriage as it obtains in England and Wales to-day it has become very easy for married couples to obtain judicial separation. The costs too, of legal proceedings in these cases, are not prohibitive. On the other hand, a divorce suit is a very difficult and expensive legal remedy and a large number of people find it beyond their means to avail themselves of it. The result is that many married couples are compelled to satisfy themselves with a mere judicial separation in spite of the most unimpeachable evidence to prove a case for divorce. Lord Sydenham in his statement of the case says that there are more than a million persons in England and Wales who are living judicially separated from their partners in

life and this number is gradually increasing day by day. The consequences of this state of affairs are most disastrous from every point of view. If the child lives with the mother she is constantly hunting after obtaining the means of livelihood for herself, and her child or else, she is forced to enter into illegal relations with some man who would support her. If on the other hand, the father takes charge of the children he is practically compelled to enter into illegal relations with some woman to look after the children and his household. There is no other way, possible, because the financial position of the poorer classes does not allow them of engaging the services of a paid house-keeper or governess, nor is it possible for a paid house-keeper or governess to do the household work with entire satisfaction. As the deputation said, the law, by creating obstructions and difficulties in the way of divorce was helping to increase immorality with disastrous social and economic results to women and children. It should be most clearly and openly declared that the responsibility for these terrible legal hardships lies at the doors of the Church of England, which has always opposed any and every reform in the Law of Divorce.'

CONCLUSION.

As evils of immorality increase, their injurious results become more and more apparent. The

spread of modern civilization is daily multiplying the evils which Islam had ordered his followers to shun centuries ago. And for this very reason it is that leaders of the people are more than ever engaged in devising means for their prevention. Islam forbade drink at a time when the evils of intemperance were comparatively not so well-known. Now when these have become extensively and ruinously apparent, medical men, preachers, reformers and great politicians are all alike making efforts to prevent it. If even now people do not shun this "Mother of Evils" what else can be said of them but that :—

'God has set a seal upon their hearts, and upon their hearing, and there is a covering over their eyes, and there is a great chastisement for them.'

The evils which the Islamic injunctions about the seclusion of women were meant to eradicate are like the evils of drink, alarmingly on the increase, and the thinking men of the world are deliberating over the means to arrest their growth. Thus the best opinion of the civilized world is, so to say, supporting the cause of Purdah. A summary of these opinions, and the gist of the teachings of the Holy Qur'an on the point, have been given in the foregoing pages. But what an irony of fate, that in spite of all this the opponents of Purdah wish to put the hand of the clock several centuries backwards.

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Other nations are benefitting by the lesson taught by the Holy Qur'an to the Musalmans ; but the Musalmans themselves are woefully ignoring it ! The direction laid down in the Holy Qur'an for Musalmans to take lessons and obtain guidance from the experience and history of by-gone nations is being neglected and thrown to the winds ; and the Musalmans themselves have reached a stage which should serve as an object lesson and a warning to others. There are many who, through the influence of a superficial imitation of European customs and institutions, have grown callous of these evils ; yet even they are not devoid of occasional qualms of conscience and can be roused from their slumber if only some one undertook to do so. The purpose of this book is to awaken such men ; and I shall consider myself amply repaid if this humble effort of mine proves successful. But more than this ; I rely on the sincerity of my intention and, therefore, pray to God Almighty in all earnestness and humility, that He may guide us, His humble slaves, to act upon His Holy teachings and commandments and this is our last word and final prayer.