

THE MOSLEM WORLD

VOL. VII

APRIL, 1917

No. 2

EDITORIALS

REINFORCEMENTS

THE present war has shown that man power is more important than money power in a long-drawn conflict. It is calculated that before the close of the year 1916 there had already been eighteen and a half million casualties of which deaths make up one fourth! Such is the dreadful record of the destruction of young manhood. Tens of thousands who were the flower of the University life of Protestant Europe are numbered among the slain or the maimed. The struggle for supremacy on the battlefields of Europe has cost a larger toll of men than the whole history of the missionary enterprise. It was to these enormous losses of life that the Prophet Isaiah referred when he said: "I will make a man more rare than fine gold. Even a man than the pure gold of Ophir!"

The greatest need of Missions among Moslems now—and a need that will be enormously emphasized after the war—is reinforcements. It is the part of wisdom, therefore, to face the new conditions that will obtain after the war in the Turkish Empire, in Persia, in Arabia, in Egypt and North Africa. The issues of the war are so closely related to the issues of the Kingdom that we may well consider them in terms of recruits and of the mobilization of these vital forces of the Church after peace is declared.

In Egypt to-day as never before there is manifest among Moslems an interest in Christianity and its teachings. Copies of the Scriptures and religious tracts are being bought and read by Moslems to an extent unparalleled in the past history of Islam. A spirit of religious inquiry

SAMUEL GRAHAM WILSON OF PERSIA

ONE of the ablest and most courageous of the all too small band of missionaries devoted to the work for Moslems, finished his life course in Tabriz, Persia, on Sunday, July 2, 1916. Samuel Graham Wilson was born in Indiana, Pa., in 1858. He took his college course in Princeton University, taking his A.B. degree in 1876, and his A.M. degree in 1879, and obtained his theological training in the Western Theological Seminary, Allegheny, Pa. After his postgraduate course at Princeton he went out to Persia in 1880. For over thirty years he gave himself and his unusual gifts with tireless and energetic service to the work of Christian Missions in Tabriz.

His primary work in Persia was the development of the school for boys in Tabriz. He began of necessity with Armenians and it was many years before conditions were sufficiently liberalized to enable him to secure Moslem pupils, but in due course this came, and at the time of his death, of the 300 boys in the school, one-half were Mohammedans. He did not compromise in the slightest degree his principles or his educational policy to secure or retain Moslem pupils. Required daily chapel and regular Bible study were in the curriculum from the outset, and were never dispensed with to conciliate the Moslem constituency. But Mohammedan fathers respected his religious loyalty and wanted to have their sons under his clean moral influence. On the occasion of the dedication of the new hospital in Urumia a few years ago he made the address, and to the large Mohammedan audience that was present spoke in the clearest and most positive way of the Christian motive and the Christian purpose embodied in the institution. Some prominent Mohammedans whom it was feared his plain speech might have offended, commented afterwards with satisfaction and admiration upon his sincerity and courage, and rejoiced

that one was working in the midst of them who could so completely command their confidence and respect. This Christian loyalty penetrated all his educational work. For many years he and Mrs. Wilson conducted the school single-handed, but rejoiced when help came both in missionary associates and by means of short term teachers from America. The school became the largest mission school in Western Persia, and the most respected and influential institution in Tabriz.

From the beginning to the end Dr. Wilson's interest and activity were directly missionary and evangelistic. The school itself was to him a distinctly evangelizing agency. He regarded it as a means of propaganda as well as an agency for the development of character and power in young men. He strove to lead his students to Christ. Both the school and his home were used to the full for this purpose. The idea of conducting a school of religious neutrality was an impossible idea to him. The truth of Christ was the greatest truth he knew, and he would have dismissed summarily the idea that he should teach the truth of mathematics and geography and history and science, and not the highest and most important truth of all.

It was not only in the school that Dr. Wilson was an evangelist. He preached constantly in the church in Tabriz, and he called with regularity in the homes, both Armenian and Moslem, where he was ever welcome, and where he knew how to speak directly and persuasively of Christ. He was a leader in the itinerating work of the field, and his associate, the Rev. Robert M. Labaree, writes: "There is in existence a small map, drawn by Dr. Wilson's own hand, of all the villages, large and small, lying around Tabriz within a radius of twenty-five miles. He had visited all of them with the message he loved during the busy cares of a school year. This he did, not in car and carriage, but on horseback; and he accomplished it only by making use of week-ends and holidays, when he might rightly have felt that he deserved a rest. More than this, few men have toured Northwestern Persia more widely than he."

Dr. Wilson had a singularly alert and inquisitive mind, hospitably open to new facts and from the beginning of his work in Persia he made his way into the life and thought of the people. He was an excellent linguist and he studied both the literature and the social and intellectual movements of the nation in which he lived. He wrote an accurate history of the mission work in Western Persia, a short novel descriptive of Armenian life, an entertaining and trustworthy account of social customs, and when his last furlough, prolonged by an accident, gave him leisure, instead of wasting time he bought up with his customary thrift every available hour, and produced two valuable books, one on "Behaism and its Claims," and the other on "Modern Movements Among Moslems." These were not hasty compendiums, but careful and first hand studies of facts, combined with a full and critical knowledge of the available literature. Dr. Wilson's judgment was positive and entirely independent. He believed what he believed, and had a reason for his belief, and yet he was singularly modest and docile, with his eyes always open for any new light which might make facts or the truth in facts more clear and sure.

In practical affairs he was marked by quite unusual sagacity. His business judgment and his ability to handle funds and property undertakings were extraordinary. Even the Armenians, to whom the Jews are but as children in such worldly affairs, looked upon Dr. Wilson with respect and awe. He could not be over-reached or imposed upon, and while his own methods were candour itself, he was an acknowledged master. There was in him indeed a very rigid ethical spirit. In honesty and integrity he was of the old fashioned type of stiff and exacting honour. If anything was questionable then to him it was unquestionably wrong. Deception and subtlety were strangers to him. His success in all practical affairs was due simply to his frugal industry, his sound judgment, his scrupulous exactness, and his complete dependableness.

His last work in Persia was in the distribution of relief to the Armenians and Syrians. He had returned to the

United States on furlough in 1912 and had been seriously injured in a railroad wreck, but he was anxious to go back to Persia, and the doctors had given permission to go, but the outbreak of the war delayed him. When the horror of the conflict brought suffering to the Christian population of Eastern Turkey and Western Persia, however, he left his family in America and pressed back alone. At first he made his headquarters in Tiflis in the Caucasus, where he purchased and distributed supplies in behalf of the Red Cross Society, and acted as the agent of the Armenian and Syrian Relief Funds. The American Consul viewed his energy and efficiency with surprise and pride. In one of his dispatches he reported that in his judgment a more superior man for the task could not have been found. In his hands money went twice as far as it would in any other, and it could be confidently said that not one dollar which he could control would be unwisely used. The strain of the work was too great, however, and when he reached Tabriz in June after an arduous service in the Caucasus and then in the Salmas plain in Persia, the germs of typhoid fever were already at work. He was given an extraordinary welcome in Tabriz by the Armenian community as well as by old Moslem friends. The great ministry of relief in which he had been engaged opened to him doors of sympathy and friendship which he would have at once entered with his Gospel, but in spite of the fact that he had taken the anti-typhoid inoculation just before leaving America, the disease laid hold upon him, and weakened by the ceaseless toil and strain of the relief work he finished his course on Sunday, July 2. The expressions of grief and loss from the Gregorian Church and the Armenian community were unprecedented. Ecclesiastics and officials and common people vied with each other to show their gratitude and affection. The long life of fidelity was crowned with its rich reward.

To Dr. Wilson the historic and evangelical conviction of the Church was rationally valid and satisfying. He met Islam with no wavering and insecure Gospel. He was kindly, patient, and conciliatory, but he was clear

and positive and sure. He knew Whom he had believed, and he was prepared to justify his knowledge and his faith. He knew Islam and Behaism too, better than the adherents of these religions with whom he talked and for whom he toiled. He was a faithful workman, well furnished for his work. Alas, that he could not leave his tools and his skill to those who must come after him.

ROBERT E. SPEER.

New York City.