

INTRODUCTION

THIS book with its sad, reiterated story of wrong and oppression is an indictment and an appeal. It is an indictment of the system which produces results so pitiful. It is an appeal to Christian womanhood to right these wrongs and enlighten this darkness by sacrifice and service. At the recent Mohammedan Educational Conference in Bombay the president of the gathering, the Agha Khan, himself a leading Moslem, spoke very trenchantly of the chief barriers to progress in the Moslem world. The first and greatest of these barriers in his opinion was "the seclusion of women which results in keeping half the community in ignorance and degradation and this hinders the progress of the whole." Surely the ignorance and degradation of one-half of a community which has a world population of 233 millions is a question that concerns all who love humanity.

The origin of the veil of Islam was, as is well known, one of the marriage affairs of Mohammed himself, with its appropriate revelation from Allah. In the twenty-fourth Surah of the Koran women are forbidden to appear unveiled before any member of the other sex, with the exception of near relatives.