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*Challenge*  
*and*  
*Counter*  
*Challenge*

A stylized illustration of a hand holding a flag. The hand is green and is positioned in the center, gripping a dark brown flagpole. The flag is white and features a large red cross. The flagpole is angled diagonally across the page. The text 'Challenge and Counter Challenge' is written in a green, cursive font, with 'Challenge' at the top, 'and' in the middle, and 'Counter Challenge' at the bottom.

## CHALLENGE AND COUNTER-CHALLENGE

A Missionary Magazine for Young People desirous of learning more about the challenge of Islam, and of helping to counter it by the proclamation of the Gospel.

Issued by the

**FELLOWSHIP OF FAITH FOR THE MOSLEMS**

The following Societies co-operating:—

**ALGIERS MISSION BAND**

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**BRITISH SYRIAN MISSION**

119, Victoria Street, London, S.W.1.

**CENTRAL ASIAN MISSION**

47, Victoria Street, London, S.W.1.

**EGYPT GENERAL MISSION**

106, Highbury New Park, London, N.5.

**FRIENDS OF THE MOSLEMS IN CHINA**

53, Poets Road, Highbury, London, N.5.

**NORTH AFRICA MISSION**

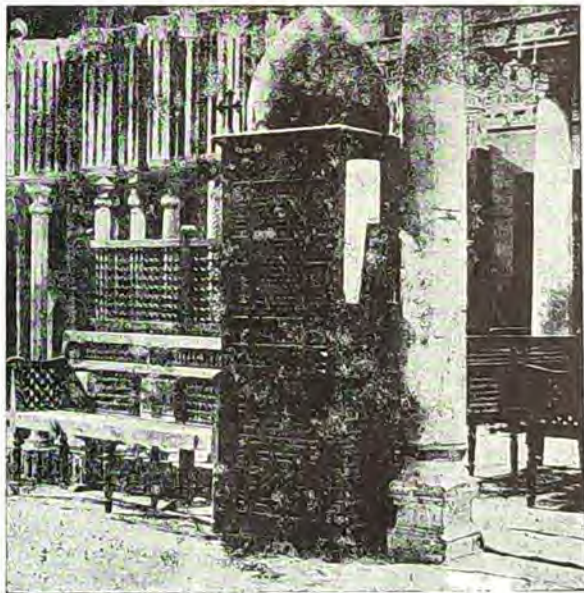
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## Cross or Crescent ?

It is Good Friday in Libya, the world's youngest nation. The Jews are celebrating their Passover, the Europeans, mainly Roman Catholics, are commemorating the death of Christ, but for the majority of the population, the Moslems, the day is just an ordinary Friday, their Holy Day. To them the Cross is indeed a "stumbling block" and a "rock of offence." How sad it is when we think that Simon, who carried the Lord's cross, came from the very same land. All along the coast of North Africa, are ruins and remains of Christian churches, where the successors of Simon worshipped. Large magnificent churches they must have been. I have a photograph of the baptistry of one of them at a place called Leptis Magna. It is in the shape of a cross. Yet today there is no native Christian



*Coptic Church, Old Cairo*

church in Libya. The Islamic invaders sought to stamp out every trace of Christianity, replacing the Cross with the Crescent.

I got a big surprise when walking along the sea front one day recently to see a white vehicle approaching. Yes, it was an ambulance, but instead of the familiar Red Cross on its side it had a red crescent! Even that international symbol of healing had been changed! Today Moslems are being trained in the Government hospital in the ways of modern medicine but the vast majority of the followers of the Crescent still persist in their crude and cruel practices. As soon as a little child has a fever its face and chest are cut with a razor to let out blood (and incidentally—evil spirits). If it has a pain, a red hot knife is applied to its poor little body. Sometimes paraffin (such as is used for cooking) is poured into aching ears, rubbed on painful chests or applied to the head. One day an Arab woman came to us in such pain from her ear that she could not sit still. She had poured in paraffin, she said, to deaden the pain. After gentle syringing, a huge bug was extracted! Another popular “remedy” is to go to a special writer and get a quotation from the Koran written on a slip of paper. This is placed in a small leather purse and hung round the neck or pinned to the clothing, like a charm.

Very often it is not until all these “treatments” have been tried and have failed that the sufferer is taken to a doctor or brought to the Medical Mission.

But more important than the healing of the body is the salvation of the soul. The Christian missionary is sent to preach the Gospel of the Cross, which is foolishness to them that perish but the power of God to them that are saved. This Eastertide we have had the joy of telling the simple story of the Crucifixion to two classes of Moslem girls, most of whom had never heard it before. One of the little ones who was present remarked that it was not a good story today, whilst the bigger ones refused to look at the flannelgraph pictures (though we did not portray Christ on the Cross) and whispered one to another that it was all lies, Jesus Christ did not die, someone died in his place. It was only when I took all the

pictures off the board and told them a simple story about a mother who burned her hands in the fire saving her baby son that I regained their attention. The parable seemed to touch their hearts, for did not the mother's scarred hands remind us of Christ's wounds which he suffered for us? Perhaps we can all remember the time when we too were shocked by the story of the Crucifixion and yet now, like Bunyan's Christian, who lost his burden at the foot of the Cross, we can say:

"Blest Cross! Blest Sepulchre! Blest rather be  
The Man that there was put to shame for me."

Thus may the Cross triumph over the Crescent in the lives of Moslem men and women and boys and girls!

Margaret A. Pearce, (N.A.M.).

## **A Visit to a Village Home**

We are going on a visit today from the hospital compound to an Egyptian village to see a young girl who is sick. We are going in a train but it will only take us about a quarter of an hour.

As we walk up the platform to get into the train we have to be careful not to walk too near the edge of the platform or else we will find ourselves being hit by the remains of the sugar cane which the people inside the carriages are chewing. They suck out the sugar and then spit out the stalk part of the cane, not minding whoever happens to be passing by. After climbing over baskets and crates of chickens and fruit and various other bundles we manage to get inside the train and find a seat. As we look up we see various figures stretched out asleep on the luggage racks: after a few minutes along comes someone who wants to clean our shoes—then another one selling drinks—another comes with a basket full of sweets followed by a man with a basket of nuts: at last we think we can have some peace and enjoy the countryside, but no! a man begins chanting portions of the Koran (the Moslems' sacred book) hoping to earn the money for his train fare. A young boy comes by with his blind father begging money.

At last we reach our destination and get out: a short walk brings us to the village and soon we are winding in and out the narrow dusty streets: then we reach the house which we want to visit. In this house is a young girl of about 14 years old. Two years ago she fell off the roof of the house and injured her back and since that time she has not been able to walk or move her legs at all. The brother takes us upstairs: they are mud stairs and not very easy to walk on. As we enter the room there is just a big old-fashioned brass bed and a cupboard. As we sit down on a mat on the floor several rabbits come in and run all round us: there is rabbit food all over the floor which is covered with mud.

On the bed lies Kowkab (the girl we have come to see) very pale and thin. Kowkab is a Copt, that is to say she belongs to the ancient Christian Church of Egypt and so is a nominal Christian. She is able to recite the Lord's prayer to us and she knows quite a lot of the Bible stories as for a time she had been in the Old Cairo Mission Hospital. By means of the flannelgraph we tell her more of the Saviour's love for her, but she finds it very hard to believe that when the Lord Jesus died on the Cross and rose again He bore all her sins and there is nothing for her to do but to trust in Him and accept His wonderful provision for her need. She has been taught that she must say long prayers and fast and do good works and by these things she will perhaps be able to enter heaven. As we talk we remind her of the hymn which you all know so well:

“There was none other good enough

To pay the price of sin;

**He** only could unlock the gates

Of Heaven and let us in.”

After a while other members of the family come in and we are able to tell them, too, the good news of salvation through belief in the Lord Jesus.

Will you remember to pray for Kowkab and her family that they may learn to trust in Him as their Saviour, and that she may be able to patiently bear all her sufferings. During these days of trouble and uncertainty in the land of Egypt many of the Christians are in great fear of persecution, so they especially need our prayers.

Miss Evelyn Jordan, Egypt General Mission.

## I am Alive

Weary, hungry and footsore, after a long day spent in visiting the hill villages of Kabylia, dropping from hill top to the depths of a beautiful ravine, only to climb again to another hill top, I find myself in the last village to be visited that day. One awaits with Oriental patience the welcome invitation 'Abide with us,' always extended, even to the man who is not a Moslem, and who, dealing with the eternal question of 'Mohammed or Christ,' takes advantage of the hour to propound a parable.

"Do you know, dear friends, that when I arrive in a village towards the end of the day, I am in the habit of standing in the middle of the cemetery, with its thousands of tomb-



*A Moslem Cemetery*



stones (very rudimentary, it is true!) and of calling out: 'Who, among you, oh honoured dead, will offer me a shelter and food for this night?'

Again, with increased insistence, 'Oh, happy ones, delivered from the sorrows of life, which of you will take pity on me, a poor, wretched pilgrim in this cursed world? Who will take me in, and give me to eat?'

At this point, generally, there are exclamations: But surely you don't do this! No one goes to the dead for shelter and subsistence. They can do nothing for you!

"But why not," I reply. "Truly it is preferable to address the dead rather than the living."

"But you are mad, absolutely mad!"

"Steady, my friends! I am speaking in parables, but perhaps you are right. And yet, if I am not mistaken, it is true that when it is a question of your eternal salvation, you do call on the one who is not alive, ignoring the One who said: 'I am he that liveth, and . . . am alive for evermore.'"

But is it true that the dead, whose tombs we care for, loved ones we have dutifully laid to rest with their faces turned towards Mecca, those whom we know will one day be called to judgement, are unable to succour a poor pilgrim who asks of them food and shelter?

Then, after all, you are right!

But is it not true then that we are neglecting the One who, alone, can save sinners, and are continually calling on another who is unable to deliver or to save?

Would it not be wise to meditate this parable, and to remember the reply of Abraham to the rich man when seeking relief from his torment: "Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed."

Yes, you are right, and I am wrong—pardon me! the dead cannot succour the weary nor save the lost.

May God give us understanding!

S. Arthur, Azazga, Algiers.

# H

## Hasheesh



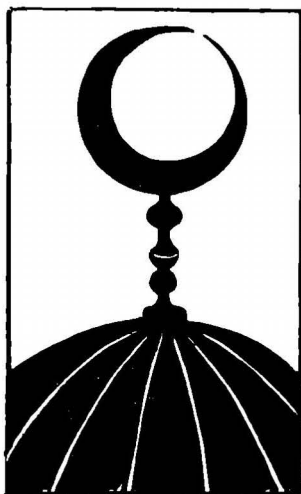
That sounds like a sneeze, but it isn't! It is the Arabic word for grass. In the picture you see an Egyptian woman bringing a bundle of grass to use as food for her animals, probably some rabbits or a goat which she keeps in her house.

One sort of grass is called hemp, and from the pressed seeds of this grass they obtain juice which is used in the preparation of a kind of tobacco. The Egyptian people love to smoke it through a long hasheesh-pipe, but it is not good for them as it makes them sleepy and ill.

However, they like it and try to get as much as they can of it, and as there is not enough of it in their country they try to smuggle it in from other countries. The frontier policemen have a lot of trouble searching the cases and even the clothes of travellers entering Egypt to find where it is hidden. Sometimes these travellers make their camels swallow little oilskin packages containing the hasheesh. Then when they are safely past the frontier and in their own village they kill the poor camels to get the drug from their stomachs.

# I

## Islam



And in this picture you see its sign of the crescent which looks something like a new moon. When it is carried as a flag it is usually coloured green on a white background.

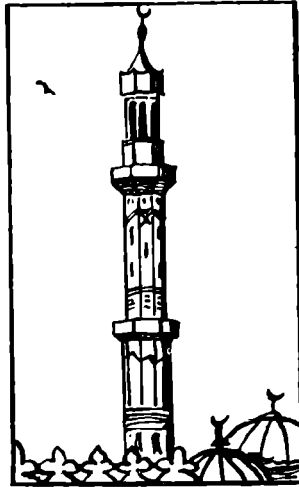
Islam is the name of a religion which is followed by 300 million people. It was founded by the prophet Mohammed who lived in Arabia about 600 years after the Lord Jesus Christ was on earth.

After Mohammed's death, his converts were anxious to get other people to follow this religion too, but they went about it in a strange way. For they decided to wage a Holy War against all infidels, that is those who did not believe in Allah (the Muslim name for God.). They marched out of Arabia into many other countries, bringing the people by force under the rule of Islam. The infidels they conquered had to choose whether they would accept this new religion of Islam or die. This is the reason why some people nowadays think that the crescent-shaped sign of Islam was originally a scimitar or curved sword.

The word Islam means to submit, and a believer in this religion is called a Muslim, which means one who has submitted himself to Allah. But it is not the willing obedience of a son to his loving Father as in the Christian faith, but rather more like a slave performing duties for a hard master.

# M

## Minaret



You have surely seen pictures of something like this, and perhaps you already know the word that begins with "M"? It is **minaret**. It has a close connection with another word also beginning with "M" which is Mosque.

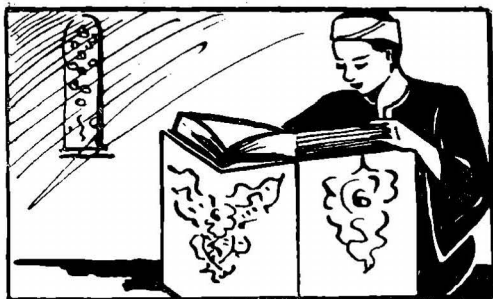
Mosques are special buildings which the Muslims set apart for their religious services, and each mosque has a minaret. As you can see in this picture, the minaret is a tall, thin tower, sometimes built of stone, sometimes of wood.

Inside there is a spiral staircase leading nearly to the top, where it eventually opens out through a little door on to a balcony. Five times a day the man who looks after the mosque climbs the minaret's staircase and goes out on to the balcony, and cupping his hands around his mouth, calls the Muslims to prayer.

Before a Muslim prays he must wash himself in a special way, and then he repeats passages from the Qur'an. He has no idea of confessing sin or need, nor of asking God for anything for himself or others, neither does he pray in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, so he knows nothing of answered prayer, but hopes that by his "prayers" he will heap up merit for himself on the Judgment Day.

# Q

## Qur'an



“Q” is the first letter of the Arabic word for the sacred book of the Muslims, the Qur'an. The comma helps you to pronounce it correctly, for it shows you that there must be a little pause after the first syllable. Say “qur” first, then a tiny stop, and then say “an.”

This book is to the Muslims what our Bible is to us, only our Bible was written by the Holy Spirit of God, whereas the Muslims believe that the Qur'an was dictated by the angel, Gabriel, to Mohammed piece by piece. Before that, it had been in heaven since eternity.

It is not as long as the Bible, but about two-thirds the size of the New Testament. There are 114 chapters, or “suras” if you can manage to remember another Arabic word.

The Muslims reverence the Qur'an greatly, and always take great care of it. They would never put anything on top of it, nor let it rest on the ground. There are men specially trained to read it, and they do so in a melodious voice. They are often hired to come and read it in people's houses. Some of these men are blind, and so they learn the whole book by heart and recite it from memory. A Qur'an reader is called a Fiqi.

The language of the Qur'an is very beautiful, and flows along with some of the sentences rhyming, though it is not really poetry as we know it.

## A Daughter of Damascus

It is early morning, and the sellers of Damascus have been crying their wares in the narrow streets since the light of dawn began to silhouette the minarets of a hundred mosques against a clear and cloudless sky. It is hours since the voice of the muezzin rang out the call to prayer over the sleeping city—a call to be obeyed by two hundred thousand followers of the Prophet who acknowledge that "there is no god but God, and Mohammed is his prophet." And now the Street called Straight



is crowded with life streaming to and fro. A little' black-robed, veiled figure, emerging from the Jewish Quarter, picks its way among the laden donkeys, camels, and jostling human beings, the clatter of her wooden clogs lost in the general hubbub as she hurries towards a narrow alley, and disappears in the gloom, to knock presently on a heavy wooden door which opens to reveal a large tiled courtyard. It is shaded by orange trees, and dotted with groups of playing children dressed in black like the newcomer. A bell rings, and the veiled figure slips off her outer covering to reveal a girl with thin face, bright eyes, and curly dark hair. She joins her class, and files into the class-room in joyful anticipation of the first lesson of the day, for who can make the Word of God live as can her beloved Syrian teacher, herself a student and lover of the Holy Book?

Zahra looks round at her class-mates, some listening with ill-disguised impatience and scorn, others with signs of uneasiness and indecision in their expression. How well Zahra herself remembers passing through those stages. But now something has happened to her—she cannot describe what it is—she only knows that she loves the words of the Book and Him of Whom it speaks. She drinks of its sweetness as one who is thirsty and knows not how long he may drink. For Zahra is twelve years old, and in her last class in this school, which has been her home since she was a kindergarten tot. Already some of her class-mates are engaged to be married, and are prattling of jewels and silk dresses and all the excitements attendant on the bride-to-be. But Zahra's thoughts are elsewhere. Oh, if only her father will consent to let her go on to the school in the Christian Quarter, where she may learn English, and continue to find the treasures hidden in the Book!

The long, busy day is over. Zahra lowers her veil and hurries home through the crowded Straight Street, across the Jewish Quarter, and into the Moslem Quarter beyond, passing on her way her father's tiny shop, where the old man sits, his red tarbush bound with the white cloth of the orthodox Moslem, the mouthpiece of his hubble-bubble to his lips as he contentedly draws the tobacco smoke through the cooling water in its glass bowl.

Zahra gains the room which is the home of the family. Her delicate mother awaits her, and soon the father comes in for supper—bread, olives, cheese—placed on a rush tray on the floor in front of father and son, who sit cross-legged on the piece of worn carpet. Their hunger satisfied, mother and daughter may sup. Their kerosene lamp sheds a feeble glimmer on Zahra's books as she studies her lessons to the monotonous drone of her father's voice reading the Koran. Then mother lifts a curtain hiding a recess in the wall from which she takes the mattresses and quilts, unrolls and spreads them side by side on the floor, and soon the family is plunged in darkness and silence—all except little Zahra, who kneels quietly in her bed and prays.

A year has passed. Zahra's prayers are answered. You cannot tell her now from the Christian girls in St. Paul's School



in their bright blue uniform. And how she loves her work! She bobs up and down in her class, a question always on her tongue, and woe betide the teacher who cannot answer to her satisfaction. After three years of happiness, Zahra again



finds herself facing a parting of the ways—a certificate in her hand which will take her on further to a boarding school in Beirut (an almost unattainable dream of bliss)—or the bondage of a Moslem marriage.

Again her dream is realised, and she finds herself in a new and much bigger community as a boarder in Beirut. New worlds of knowledge open up before her, all fascinating to her enquiring mind. But what of the spiritual world? Has she entered the door to life eternal? Yes, she has taken Him who is that life to be her Saviour, and now comes the question—can she count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus her Lord? While she is counting the cost of this, news comes that her mother has died—the only one in her family who seemed secretly to reach out timid hands towards the Saviour. Dare she confess at home now? Holidays are unhappy times. She compromises by confessing her faith to her two younger sisters, and binding them to secrecy lest her father should take her from school. Three years passed thus—in confession at school and partial silence at home.

Now another difficulty arises. All the classes of the school are behind her, and she needs only a year or two in the teachers' training class to be able to earn her own living and gain her freedom. But there is a rule that a girl who is still openly a Moslem may not be trained as a teacher by the gifts of Christian people. Unless she is a baptised believer, she must finance her own way. Zahra is not yet willing for the open break, so she returns to Damsacus with little hope, but a great determination, to complete her training. After trying every means, she at last raises the necessary money for her fees, and returns to school as a training student, living and dressing as a Christian there but closely veiling on her return home—for fear.

The time of training flies happily enough, until, with a teacher's diploma to her credit, Zahra faces the world. Now she may earn her own living, and her thoughts go to her two sisters, who, with her help, may also have Christian teaching. A position is offered her in Palestine in a Government School, and she begins her teaching career, as a Moslem. The Koran

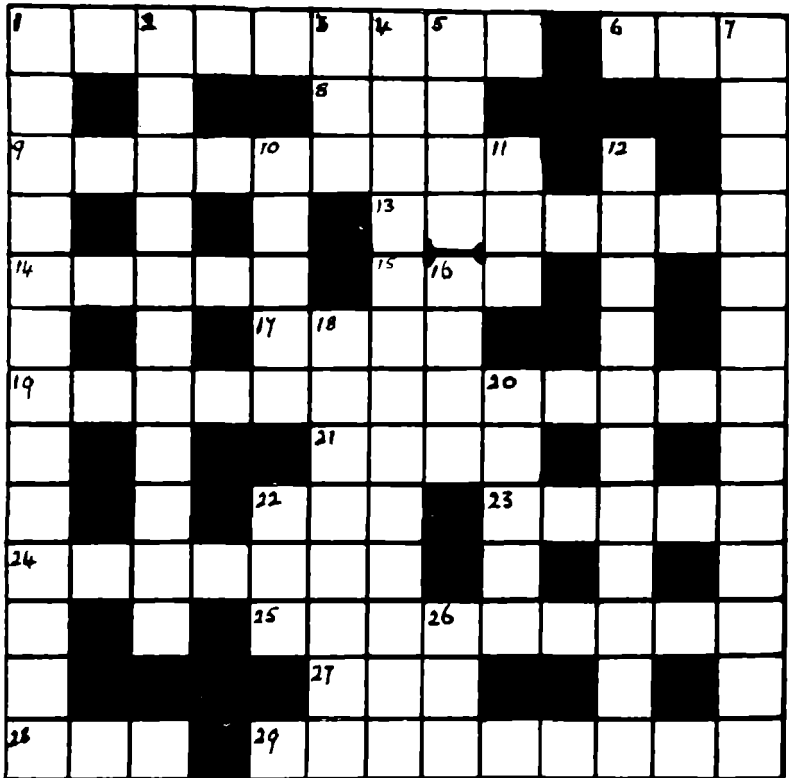
must be taught, and day by day it becomes more difficult, as she finds that she does not believe what she teaches, till gradually the realisation comes that she is truly Christ's and dare not deny Him as she is doing. A message comes to her at this time as she attends a Church service: "Why halt ye between two opinions?" The words, like a challenge, ring in her ears till she can bear it no longer. When the Inspector comes, she informs him that she is a Christian, and intends to be baptised at the first opportunity. This meets with the curt announcement that she must lose her job, and may consider herself dismissed from the end of the term. Then a load is lifted from Zehra's heart—no work, no money, possibly no home when she is baptised—what matters it when she has the sunshine of her Lord's presence, and all the riches of His promises?

At home, an ignorant and bigoted step-mother holds sway, and is working hard to counteract the bad influence of a Christian School on the younger sisters. They must act as the family drudges while her own daughter sits like a lady. Zahra's announcement to her father of her impending baptism is unwelcome, and even more so when she confesses that it cost her her position. But strangely enough, he does not cast her off, and she assures him that her new Master is able to supply all her needs. A quiet baptismal service, memorable to her, marks her entrance into the Church of Jesus Christ and, before long, there is a place for her in a Mission School in the Lebanon mountains where she will be free from persecuting relatives. Zahra's first thought, as her first month's salary is placed in hand, is of her two sisters. Here is the means that will help to save them from unhappiness and the dangerous bigotry of the step-mother.

Thus is Zahra led step by step, until she becomes a student in a Bible Training Institute where she learns deeper lessons from the Book, and undergoes discipline which will strengthen character and lead to fuller service in future. Farewell Zahra! May he who has redeemed you and called you to His service, use your witness increasingly to bring more of Syria's daughters to the new life in Him.

G. M. Harries, British Syrian Mission.

# Cross-Word Puzzle



## Clues

### Across

1. **First** missionary to Muslims (5, 4).
6. **First** name of **first** missionary to Aden (3).
8. **First** number (3).
9. A young soldier in the Army, when India was British (6, 3).
13. Don't say this, except of sin (1, 4, 2).
14. An Egyptian hen (this) small egg (4, 1).
15. Relation (3).
17. Stand on **them** to reach up high (4).
19. Surname of **first** missionary to Aden (5, 8).
21. **First** person to die (4).
22. National civil Service (3).
23. **First** big city of Upper Egypt coming down the Nile (5).
24. King Saul, a Benjamite—(this prophet) Tishbite (6, 1).
25. He hasn't seen you—shout!! (5, 4).
27. Lend me some money, I'll pay you later (3).
28. Initials of a Missionary Society (inside the Cover of Challenge) (3).
29. His friends called the **first** great missionary to Arabia **this** (3, 6).

### Down

1. The men of Jabesh Gilead burnt this of the **first** King of Israel (I Sam. 31) (5, 8).
2. **First** modern missionary to Muslims; and the land he **first** went to (6, 5).
3. Add "d" and its heavy; or add "f" and eat it (3).
4. Even if you are as goodlooking as David's son, be **this** to your parents (6, 7).
5. **First** wife of Jacob (4).
7. Cut off the last letter and it is the home of a bird; Retain the last letter and an enemy has copied the bird (4, 3, 6).
10. "— of the desert," Jer. 17 (5).
11. One of the twelve tribes of Israel (3).
12. The name of the Prophet of Arabia — — — (6, 4, 1).
16. Of Wight or of Man (4).
18. The **first** fruits — — — was Stephanus' house (2, 6).
20. My family, O (4, 1).
22. **First** three letters of one of the Minor Prophets (3).
26. **First** name for the biblical town of Bethel (3).