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*Alhaji (front piece)*

Swords

in the

# DESERT

**“and take . . . the sword of the Spirit, which  
is the word of God: praying  
always” (Eph. 6:17, 18).**

By

RAYMOND J. DAVIS

Missionary to Ethiopia; then to the Moslems of  
Nigeria, and the author of “Boys!”; now  
Field Director for West Africa

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*Dedicated*  
*to my loving wife*  
*Evelyn (Zumunta)*

## PREFACE

This book is presented with a hope and a prayer. The hope is, that each one who reads its pages will consider that, but for the grace of God, his plight might have been that of being born in a far-away and forgotten Moslem village, to live his life, and at last to fill a lonely grave in the sands of the desert, without ever once having heard of the love which sent the Saviour to die for sinners.

The prayer is that, in spite of its many shortcomings, this presentation of life among Moslem people may result in a greatly stimulated effort on the part of God's people to bring Christ to the millions of Mohammedans, who live, not only in the Sudan, but throughout the world.

In the year of our Lord 570 there was rejoicing in the house of Abdullah, for a son had been born whom he named Mohammed. This son was destined to rise out of the obscurity of that tiny Arabian town, Mecca, to be enthroned in the hearts of millions, his name to be linked with that of the Almighty, at the early age of twenty-five.

Mohammed began to dream dreams and receive so-called revelations from God which were recorded in a book called the Koran. After a rather slow and discouraging beginning, Mohammed began to reveal the candle of genius which was to kindle a mighty world-wide conflagration. His early converts were won by individual preaching. However, as they grew in number and influence, expeditions were sent to invite,



persuade, sometimes compel, their idolatrous neighbors to declare faith in the prophet and worship Allah as the only true God.

As Islam spread in ever-widening circles, like ripples on the sea of time, it became evident that Mohammed's Allah was no mere tribal god. Within one hundred years his followers had traversed land and sea until every part of the then known world had heard the story, and the name of the prophet was on the lips of people in every land. Sweeping northward and westward, these Moslem warriors, no longer content to gain converts by preaching, undertook the conquest of North Africa, where weak and decadent Christian churches succumbed as an easy prey. Everywhere, the sharp steely sword, flashing before them, made it easy to honor the new prophet and embrace his religion. And what was once a flourishing Christian expanse from the land of our Lord to the Atlantic, became a solid Mohammedan region.

These fanatical followers, with their sweeping scimitars, forced decisions from millions of people. Those who refused were slain by the conquering sword of Mohammedanism, until today this false religion has swept over most of the world and brought under its crescent more than 300,000,000 followers. It is making rapid advances, even in civilized countries, and should be recognized as a murderous menace by Christians everywhere.

The stories and characters herewith set forth are, for the most part, true incidents and about real per-

sons. Here and there, for the sake of continuity, changes have been made, without loss of typical scenes and circumstances which govern the life of this people. They are the common, ordinary experiences of many missionaries laboring among the Hausa people. These customs, circumstances, and experiences have been combined in narrative form to make easy and fascinating reading for the layman whose interest has not been heretofore aroused on behalf of the Moslem world.

The author makes no claim to authority on Moslem problems. Most of the essential facts have been learned from the lips of the people and through personal observation as he has lived among them in Northern Nigeria, and from later verification in the writings of eminent scholars of Moslem life and teaching, such as Dr. Samuel M. Zwemer. Therefore, thanks are due both to many choice friends in Hausaland, and to those whose works have helped many of us younger missionaries, now seeking to emulate their loving devotion, patient long-suffering, and earnest desire to see the Christ of the Cross transcend the Prophet of Islam in the hearts of the Mohammedan people.

If God, through these pages, will increasingly lay the burden of Islam's need upon the hearts of many to pray, to give, and to go, then they will not have been written in vain.

July, 1944

R.J.D.

Grand Rapids, Michigan

## INTRODUCTION

It has been with great pleasure and much profit that we have read the narrative recorded by Mr. Davis in this little volume. We highly commend it, trusting it may stir the hearts of its readers and help them to catch a vision of the missionaries' superhuman task—of their faith and dauntless courage in going into the strongholds of the enemy again, again, and again, as they represent to an arrogant, haughty, and proud people, the meek and lowly Man of Galilee.

The lives represented herein are typical of the millions of people now living in the Sudan. The stories are typical of crime, jealousy typical of rival wives, of wife-beating and child-beating; typical of the hypocrisy of Moslem teachers, and of the torrents of abuse and persecution which are heaped upon the one who dares to leave the Moslem faith and confess Jesus as Saviour; typical of a thousand other ills accompanying the Moslem religion, which for the women in particular fulfills the curse, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Gen. 3:15). Satan has used man ever since the garden event to enslave woman, and, except for individual cases, she is a chattel, a slave, a thing of reproach in every pagan or Moslem land, and only belief in Christ will lift her from that living grave in which all her unhappy days are spent.

We point you briefly to the historical setting from

which these events are taken. When early explorers visited the Central and Western Sudan—explorers such as Mungo Park, Clapperton, and Barth—they found and reported a people now known as the “Fulani,” but known to Mungo Park as the “Fullah” people. These “Fulani” are entirely different from the Negro: in physique they are tall and slender, with sharp features, often thin lips, and long hair. All efforts to identify the original homeland of this tribe have failed. They are largely a nomadic people who own large herds of cattle, sheep, and goats. It appears that this strange race came to Nigeria or the Central Sudan from the west, but they may have come first from the east—through North Africa, then down the West Coast to the south of the desert, then once more worked eastward. Some of them were Moslems, but large numbers of what are strictly called “Cattle Fulani” are still pagan.

About the year 1800 a certain Dan Fodio, after returning from a pilgrimage to Mecca (to which place seven thousand pilgrims go annually from Nigeria), decided that Mohammedanism needed revival. His forefathers had been allowed by the Gobir branch of the Hausa tribe to settle peacefully in their midst, the Gobirs fearing no treachery. In Dan Fodio’s day, his people had become numerous and strong, and he, with a superior knowledge of warfare, suddenly attacked without warning the Gobirs among whom they had so long lived as friends. And the Fulanis, under Dan Fodio’s leadership, were successful! The paramount Gobir pagan chief now saw that he had been betrayed by his erstwhile neighbors. He also saw that his kingdom was dangerously threatened, so he gathered together

a mighty army of horsemen, and footmen without number. The crafty Dan Fodio had foreseen all this, and had arranged his forces accordingly. In the terrible battle which ensued, Dan Fodio was again victorious. The remaining Gobir people who still surrounded their chief fled with him to the northeast, to what is now French territory.

In 1804, Dan Fodio decided to wage a holy war against all the Hausa states, then largely pagan. Calling his victorious generals together, he gave to each a flag and sent them forth to conquer much of what is now known as the Northern Provinces of Nigeria. His forces had been greatly increased by his captive slaves. Eleven of his twelve generals were successful, and by 1809 Dan Fodio ruled a great empire containing perhaps twenty millions of people. Over these people he and his successors ruled by blood and plunder for nearly one hundred years.

To raid and make slaves of non-Moslem people is the Moslem's right according to the Koran. Many of the Hausa, Nupe, and Yoruba peoples, as well as more than two hundred smaller tribes, were originally pagan, and these were a prey to the Moslem slave raiders. It is estimated that as high as fifty thousand slaves a year were taken, and there were always more slain than captured. Each of the various rulers under Dan Fodio was obliged to send in his annual quota of slaves. For hundreds of miles east and west, the central part of Northern Nigeria was devastated. All of the southern part of Sokoto province, as well as Niger,

Zaria, Bauchi, Plateau, Benue, Kabba, Ilorin, and Adamawa provinces were the special fields for slaves and slaughter.

Into this unhappy country, ruled for almost a century by the sword of Islam and the slave-raider, and accompanied by the most appalling and disgusting cruelties ever conceived by the wicked mind of man, came in the year 1900 the representatives of a Christian queen, who conquered those brutal rulers and proclaimed liberty to the captives. Again, into this land torn and rent by slavery, war, and bloodshed, by oppression, ignorance, and superstition; into this land of sorrow, want, and trouble, came the messengers of the Son of God, the Saviour of the world.

G. W. PLAYFAIR

*General Director*

*Sudan Interior Mission*

## I

### ALHAJI MEETS THE MISSIONARY

**R**ain, rain, rain! It poured down steadily all night. In the very early morning, when sleep seemed sweeter than usual, the missionary was awakened by a voice calling out of the wet darkness:

*"Salaam alaikum! Salaam alaikum"* (Peace be unto you)!

An elderly man, bedraggled, rainsoaked, and shivering, sat at the rear gate of the compound. A few minutes later, before a warm fire, he began to unfold his story.

At sundown the previous day, his niece had been working in the corn patch behind her father's house. It was the harvest season. Her task was to pound the corn kernels loose from the stalk. Last year at this time, she recalled, many of her friends had helped her. They had been making great preparations for her wedding feast. Now she was back home again, having run away from her husband a few weeks before.

"Fatsuma, come now. It is nearing the time of the evening prayer," called the girl's mother.

"Just as soon as I finish this last bundle of grain," she answered, and continued pounding.

A moment later, looking up suddenly, she saw her estranged husband standing before her. She started to cry for help but fear choked her. He towered above her, angry, fierce and strong, with eyes flashing.

"What do you want?" she cried weakly.

"You are coming home with me!"

"I am not going with you. By Allah, I am not going with you," replied Fatsuma, now backing away slowly.

"You did not return with my father and brothers when they came after you to bring you back to my house! Come! Come, now! Do you hear, or else . . .!" the man shouted, following her.

Fatsuma turned to run, tripped over a pile of loose cornstalks and fell to the ground. Quickly her husband pounced upon her. Covering her head with a cloth, he stifled her screams.

"If you will not come with me, neither will you marry anyone else. I'll fix you, you worthless woman" he exclaimed, cursing and swearing.

Drawing his hunting knife from its sheath, he hacked and slashed at her wrist, trying to sever the hand. Fatsuma grabbed for the knife, only to feel the sharp, stinging blade slice her fingers. Helpless, she lay at his feet. When she moved in an attempt to rise, he kicked her.

Darkness deepened and Fatsuma did not appear. Her mother went in search of her. Not finding the girl, she quickly called her husband. They found her, at last, in the corn patch, as they thought, dead. They carried her into the hut. Unconscious, but not dead, she was bleeding profusely from hand and foot. Overhead the thunder rolled and the lightning flashed, changing night to day for a fleeting second. The distress call brought help. The men, armed with swords and knives, formed a posse to hunt the attacker. The



old women conferred as to the best method to stop the bleeding. Some said to use cow dung, others, leaves of the *Kuka* tree. Using all known remedies, and wrapping the wounds with filthy rags, the blood was staunched.

The father sent the girl's uncle to the district chief to report what had happened. As he left the circle of huts, and disappeared into the darkness, the rain began to fall.

Several hours later he approached the entrance to the chief's compound. Having made his message known, he was ushered into the hut where the chief sat on a raised dais, wrapped in a blanket, and warming himself beside a flickering fire.

"What brings you out on such a bad night as this, friend?" queried the chief.

"*Ranka ya dade* (May your life be long). A young girl has been killed in our town just a few hours ago," said the man, bowing low to the ground before the chief.

"What? A girl killed? Was she killed as far as the next world?" asked the chief abruptly.

"No, but her hand and foot have been cut off. She ran away from her husband four markets ago and has refused to be reconciled to him. No doubt he is the guilty person, although no one saw him, and the girl is unconscious."

"We will send a message to the Emir in the morning. I suggest that you spend the night here and early tomorrow morning go up the hill to the Mission and ask the white man to help you if he can. Spend the



Kano Mosque

*The great Kano Mosque, magnificence in the centre of poverty.*

night in peace," said the chief, as he dismissed the man.

Being a man well received and well honored in the community he was invited to sleep in the house of one of the mullahs. Early the next morning, having risen to pray before the break of day, he walked up the winding, stony pathway to the Mission house. There it was that, in answer to his insistent call of greeting, the white man appeared and asked him into his house, as the rain was still falling.

"And so I have come to you, Mai-nasara. May God help you to help us."

An hour later, the messenger and missionaries approached a group of old men huddled about a fire. The father of the injured girl came forward to meet the missionaries and to beg forgiveness for causing such inconvenience. The wounded girl's aunt led the missionary nurse, Zumunta, to where the girl lay. When her eyes had become accustomed to the dark interior of the mud hut, she could barely make out the form of the girl lying semi-conscious, on a cornstalk bed.

"If you will agree, shall we carry her outside where there is more light?" she asked.

In the dim light of early morning, the missionary treated the girl for shock, cleansed the dried blood and native potions from the gaping wounds, and, binding them in clean bandages, called to the girl's father.

"We will have to take this girl back with us to the station where I can treat her every day and watch her closely, for she is very sick," said the missionary, Zumunta.

"Well, I don't know whether or not they will agree to that, but I'll see what they say."

After a lengthy palaver, the old men agreed, if the old women could be convinced. This proved a more difficult matter. They were fearful of what might happen to the girl. They believed that the white man did strange things. Sometimes, they had been told, the white man made medicine of babies, drained the blood from their bodies, captured their spirits in a bottle. At last, and in desperation, the old aunt agreed to accompany the girl and watch her when alone.

Fatsuma was carried on the back of the old woman. The car was nearly a half mile away, parked by the roadside. Never having ridden in a motor car before, the girl's body trembled with fear and weakness as she was lifted into the rear seat. The aunt crawled in on hands and knees. As the car moved away slowly, it was as though the girl had died, so great the grief and anxiety in the hearts and faces of her loved ones left behind. Hiding their heads in fear until they reached the Mission compound, the women never uttered a sound. Removed from the car on a stretcher, Fatsuma was carried to a hut provided for such in-patients. Now, with better facilities, and without interference, it was possible to treat the wounds properly. Often-times during those first few days, Fatsuma fainted and her life seemingly hung by a tiny thread. The missionary spent hours with her, trying by God's help to draw the girl back from the brink of death. If only she could be spared long enough to hear, with understanding, of the Christ. They prayed for divine wisdom, for skill, for God's miracle hand; prayed that the girl might be

saved, and, through her, the people of the village in which she lived.

At times when it seemed as though the life would slip away, Zumunta, bending low, whispered the name of Jesus in her ear. Oh, to believe on Jesus; that would make everything all right! She pled with God that the girl might be spared until she could really have a well-deserved opportunity to hear of the dying love of the Saviour.

Several days had passed, when the old father came to see her. Anxiety was written across his brown wrinkled face as he inquired of her condition. He knew that Fatsuma was a very sick girl.

“We are doing all that we can for her,” commented the missionary, “but her life is in the hands of God. He is the Great Physician. He alone is able to raise her up.”

The old man clapped his hands together in amazement and wonder and said, “True, if God wills.”

“Come with me, where the sun will not beat down on our heads, and we will talk,” invited the missionary, walking to the Mission house.

“Have you ever visited our place before?”

“Never. Of course I come to the market and as we walk along the road we can see the sun reflected on your roof. I have passed by many times but never

dared to come in. I was afraid I might be driven away from a great man's compound where I had no business. You know we Hausa people say '*karambani akwiya ta gaida kura*' (it is meddlesome for a goat to greet a hyena)."

"Where were you born?" asked the missionary.

"I was born in the same village where you found us last week. My father was the chief of our village. He was a great man and had made the pilgrimage to Mecca. He took me along with him."

"So then your name is Alhaji, too? I am so glad to have met you. Will you not come again and visit me? It is now time for us to gather with the other sick people, who have come for medicine. Won't you come too? We have something to tell them which is far more important than the medicine which they have come seeking."

"You will please excuse me this time, white man, I must return now to my village."

"Very well, I will see you again, Alhaji. I trust it will not be too long."

"If God will," replied the old man as he shuffled off.

For seven weeks Fatsuma stayed with the missionaries. Sitting on the mud bed with her, the missionary oftentimes spoke of the necessity of placing one's trust in Christ. With the return of her strength, this frightened creature drank in the strange words of Zumunta. The two presented a striking contrast. One born in God-favored America, in a Christian home, loved and cared for as an intelligent being, with the

knowledge of salvation and assurance of sins forgiven. The other, poor and weak, born in a hovel made of cornstalks and mud, without the meanest experience of human love, much less the love of God, now lying there, brought low by the hand of her husband, whose chattel she was, without even so much as once before having heard the Name of Jesus.

At last the girl became sufficiently strong to be discharged. Then late one afternoon she sat again in the rear seat of the car as they journeyed homeward. Nearing the village, the car horn brought the folk running. When the girl stepped forth from the car unaided, the wrinkled, bent old mother fell on her face in the sandy roadway before the missionaries. With tears streaming down her awe-struck face, she thanked them over and over again.

“You have brought my daughter back from the dead! May God reward you!”

The crowd escorted them to the clearing where palm-leaf mats were spread, and they were seated. Soon more than a hundred folk had gathered. They came looking at Fatsuma, unable to believe what their eyes told them. Then it was that the old father rose to his feet. Standing behind the missionaries, he addressed the people.

“Oh, people of our village, we are children of the night. We are like beasts. We know nothing. Here are the people of God. They never saw us before. They owe us nothing. Yet they came when we asked them, and have helped us greatly. May God give them their reward!”

All eyes centered upon the missionaries.

“Oh, friends,” began one of the missionaries, “do not think it strange that we have come to help you in this way. A long time ago, in a far country, we heard about you. God caused us to want to come over and help you. We realized that we were not so different from you, except for the color of our skins. We knew that before God, we were just the same. In our land we had learned that God in His great love for mankind had sent a Saviour into the world. That Saviour came, lived, and died as no other man ever did or ever will do. He was sinless, and when He died, He died voluntarily, in order that He might bear the sin of the whole world. We knew that was true. When we believed it, God gave us assurance in our hearts that our sins were forgiven. When we realized that many people in the world had never heard that God had sent the Saviour, our hearts were burdened that someone might tell them. Hence, we are here today because God loved you, and God has sent us to you. We love you because we know that God loves you, and He wants more than anything else to have you love Him. Therefore, we have not come among you to help you as a means of attaining merit before God, but because of our debt to Him in sending the Saviour into the world. The name of the Saviour is Jesus Christ. May God help you to follow Him, even as do we!”

The sun had already set when the missionaries returned to their station. That evening their hearts were full of praise to God for the opportunity of helping



some others for whom the Lord Jesus had bled and died.

Next morning the old uncle of Fatsuma sat again at the gate of the Mission compound. This time it was with great joy written across his face. He brought a huge calabash, filled with eggs, onions, and sweet potatoes. Setting it down before the missionary, he said,

“White man, behold a small gift from the father of Fatsuma. Truly you are God’s people and we thank you for helping us. It is our desire that you come again to our village and tell us the good news, as of yesterday.”

## II

### ALHAJI PRAYS

Alhaji sat in the round entrance hut, at the door of his compound, alternately mumbling prayers and muttering the praises of Allah. Seated on a hairy goat skin, and leaning against the mud wall, he presented a not unpleasant picture. His gray head, wrapped in a long white turban, set off the dark brown wrinkled face and the blue of his robe. He had been thus engaged for more than an hour, wooden slate in hand, with his books scattered about him on a palmleaf mat.

"*Salaam alaikum*" (peace be to you), called the missionary, as he approached the doorway.

"*Alaikum salaam* (and peace to you). Come in, Mai-nasara," invited Alhaji, rising to his feet. He asked the missionary to sit on a goat skin, and he found a place opposite him.

"I have come to see you today, Alhaji. I understand that in your district here you have men who can supply me with split palm poles. I need several hundred of them to use in building the new huts for the sick people who are coming to us every day in increasing numbers."

"Yes, Mai-nasara, it will be possible for me to help you." He immediately dispatched a messenger to call the men.

"Mai-nasara," said Alhaji, smiling, "you white people have great power. You have very strong medicine."

"Well, Alhaji, that all depends upon how you

look at it. We ourselves do not have any great power such as your medicine men claim for themselves. The power that you have seen working in sick bodies is the medicine that has been discovered and used in this manner. Some of it comes out of the ground. Some of it grows like a plant or a tree. Most of it is mixed with other medicines in a certain way by those who know how to do it properly. God has revealed it to men, and so you see, it is not of ourselves, but of God."

"Ah, yes, but you can do mighty things. You sit in your automobile. You push one thing and pull another, until in a few hours you are in the city (Kano). A very strong man must start before daylight and walk until the sun goes down to reach Kano on foot. Your home is far away, and you travel through much water to come here. It is said that a small boy walking from here to your country would become an old, gray-haired man before reaching it."

"Yes, Alhaji, I suppose it is true, in that respect, that we have many things better than do you," replied Mai-nasara.

"Does anyone in your country ever go hungry, and are there poor people there too?" asked Alhaji, pulling at his pocket and producing therefrom a kola nut which he began to chew.

"Alhaji, you must realize that we white people are not very different from you black people. We wear different clothes, we speak a different language, and we have different customs, but apart from such things, we are the same. In the *Linjila* (New Testament) God has said that He has made of one blood all people. In God's sight there is no difference."

“Aha, it is just as we Hausa people say, ‘It makes no difference to the seller of goods whose hand the money comes from, great or small, rich or poor, if only they have money to buy his goods, they are the same in his sight.’ But in your country, white man, do people die as in our country?”

“True, Alhaji, in our country people die even as they do here, whether they are born in a great house or a stable. Rich folk become ill as do the poor. All of the things that we possess in this world can never change our standing before God,” explained the missionary.

The old man sat thinking for a moment. Suddenly the rasping, resonant voice of the muezzin began to call the faithful to prayer. Always in the Arabic language, he cried: “God is most great! God is most great! God is most great! I testify that there is no god but God! I testify that there is no god but God! I testify that Mohammed is the Apostle of God! I testify that Mohammed is the Apostle of God! Come to prayer! Come to prayer! Come to prosperity! Come to prosperity! God is most great! God is most great! There is no god but God!” A resolute expression swept over the face of Alhaji. Rising to his feet, he apologized, saying, “Malam Mai-nasara, excuse me a moment, if you will.”

He quickly disappeared into the more private part of the compound and called to one of his wives, “Bring me some clean water.”

From where he sat, Mai-nasara, looking through the inner doorway, could see Alhaji seated on the

ground, making his ablutions. Carefully he washed his hands and then his feet, pouring the water from a small enameled teapot. Then he washed his face, his ears and his mouth, lest any defilement, of whatever sort, should make null and void his prayers. This done, he stood to his feet on a handwoven palm-leaf mat. Erect, facing eastward toward the holy city of Mecca, he began half audibly to mumble his prayers and lift his hands in supplication. Now he prostrated himself, touching his forehead to the ground. Rising to a sitting position he prayed on, repeating from memory long portions of the Koran in Arabic. Now he rose up again, hands outstretched in supplication. Mai-nasara, seeing the intense and sincere expression of the man's face, wondered. Alhaji returned presently, and they sat for a time silent, thinking and musing.

“Malam Mai-nasara, why do the followers of *Al-masih* (Christ) not pray and fast as do we who belong to the *Annabi* (prophet Mohammed)?” queried Alhaji.

“Alhaji, may I ask you a question before I answer yours? Why is it that you pray and fast?”

“We pray because it has always been our custom. Our forefathers fasted and prayed and they taught us to do the same. We teach our children to pray and fast according to the commandment of the prophet.”

“But do you just pray because it is your habit, or is it because you desire fellowship with God? When you pray, do you feel that God is hearing your prayer?”

"If God will, He will hear," said Alhaji, with a puzzled look.

"And if God does not will to hear you . . .?"

The old man only shrugged his shoulders and was silent. "Contrary to your belief, Alhaji, we Christians do pray to God. As a matter of fact, we consider prayer to be as essential as breathing."

"But I have never seen you pray, nor have I ever heard anyone tell of seeing a white man doing *salla* (Moslem prayers).

"No, God's Word tells us when we pray to enter into a secret place and be alone with God, although we may, and do, pray at any time or in any place."

"That surely is strange. We pray five times daily. In the morning before sunrise we pray, then just after noon, again about four o'clock, and again as the sun goes down. Then between the evening meal and retirement we pray for the fifth and last time," explained the old man earnestly.

"Most Christians pray early in the morning, too," said Mai-nasara. "We always pray before partaking of food, and also upon our retirement at night. Then, too, we sometimes pray as we travel along, even as on my journey to see you today I talked with God about our meeting together. But prayer, unless there is hope of being heard, is surely useless. God has set forth certain conditions to be met if we are to be heard of Him. We must be His own children through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ. We must purify our hearts from sin by confessing them to Him, and asking forgiveness. We must pray in the name of Jesus. It works, Alhaji. I

know, for God has heard and answered prayer for me. I would not care nor dare to leave my own country and come to yours to live if I did not know God hears and answers prayer."

"We face eastward toward holy Mecca when we pray," said Alhaji, stirring uneasily.

"But what if you are lost and do not know east from west or north from south?"

"In such a case one would have to pray four times, once in each direction, so as to be sure God had heard."

"I have been told, too, Alhaji, that if you make a single mistake in the repetition of the prayers, which are always said in Arabic, they are null and void. Surely, when so many of your people know no Arabic except their prayers, which they repeat from memory, mistakes are common."

"True, Malam, most of our people do not know what they are saying when they pray."

The messenger had returned with the hewers of palm poles. For a time they had sat near by listening interestedly. The contract was soon consummated, and Alhaji escorted Mai-nasara to the roadside where they took leave of one another.

"And so until another day, Alhaji," cried Mai-nasara over his shoulder, as he walked away.

"If God wills," replied the old man.

### III

#### ALHAJI FASTS

Come back again in three days, Audu," said Zুমunta, the missionary nurse, as she dismissed a young man, Alhaji's eldest son, from the dispensary. "This treatment will be sufficient until the next market. Do not fail to come, or else all our progress in the healing of your leg ulcer will be lost."

"Oh, but nurse, the fast will begin in two more days and you know that I cannot come. Do not be angry with me, but I will not return until the first day of the new moon after the fast," explained Audu, earnestly. "Our people would not tolerate such infidelity."

Next day, the day before the beginning of the annual month of the fast of Ramadan, the workmen, who had been building new huts for medical in-patients, came to Mai-nasara in a group. Kanaye, the chief builder, was their spokesman.

"Master, tomorrow we will not return to work. We will be absent for thirty days. We wish that you would pay us off so that we may have our money to spend during the fast."

"But what about our much needed buildings? Who will finish them for us? What will these sick folk do who are waiting to occupy them? You must return tomorrow and work," remonstrated the missionary.

"*Allah ya gafarta malam* (May God grant forgiveness to the teacher), but we will not return to work



until the fast is ended. Fasting is for God alone, and He will give its rewards. May God give you patience," said their leader firmly.

Several days later, when returning from a distant village, Mai-nasara, passing through Alhaji's town, stopped for a rest. It was late afternoon. The day had been long and hot. He found the old man sleeping in his hut, but he immediately roused up and said,

"And how have you spent the day, Mai-nasara?" as the missionary stood before him, smiling.

"We have had a fine day, Alhaji, and have come a long distance. How are you?"

"Oh, you know, this thing (the fast) has dried us up. God has caused it to fall upon us during the harvest of the kaffir corn. That makes it very difficult for we can work but a few hours early in the morning before our strength is gone. It was in days past that I could work all day long, even during the fast, and it never bothered me. But—I am getting old now. Nevertheless, even though it causes great trouble and hardship, the fast will bring great reward. The prophet (Mohammed) said that the rewards of fasting are beyond calculation."

"How many years have you kept the fast, Alhaji?" asked the missionary.

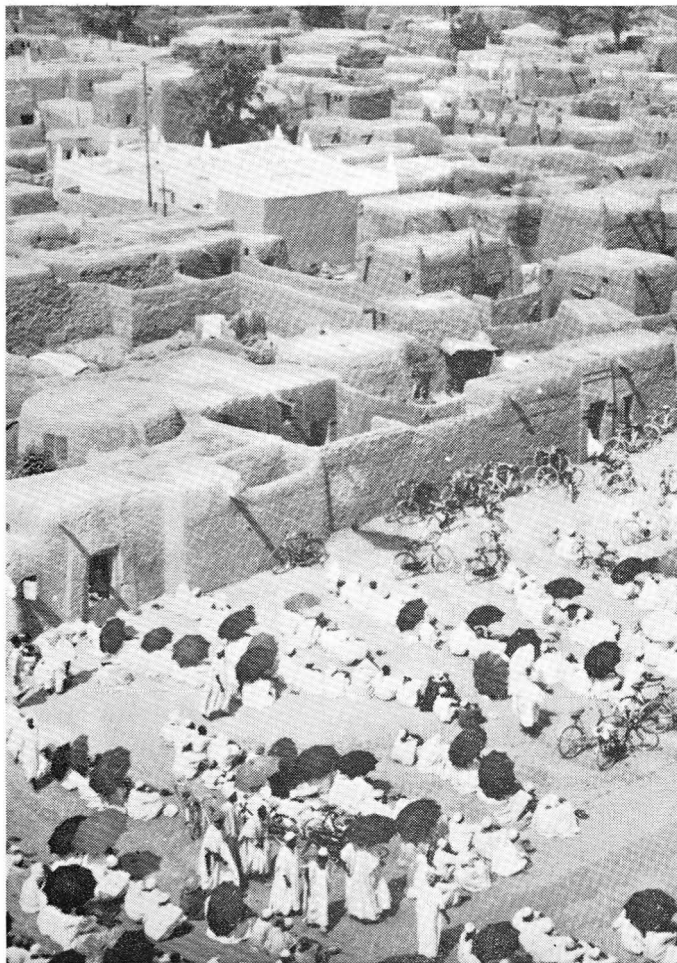
"Since before the coming of the white man into our country. That would make it more than forty-two years. *Alhamdulillah* (Praise be to God), never has it been necessary, even because of sickness, for me to break the fast." The old man, smiling confidently to

himself, and, bracing himself up proudly, continued, "When with my father on the pilgrimage, many times I was tempted to seek a drink of water. As we plodded through those burning deserts where there was no water, we could see in the distance what seemed to be a lake of water. Around its shore there were tall palm trees, houses and people. It was next to impossible to keep from turning off the path, which blistered our feet, to go to the cooling shade and water. But my father said that it was not real water. He said it was only made to appear as water to tempt the passers-by to follow it off into the trackless desert and to perish without ever finding it. He said it had been placed there for the purpose, doubtless, of testing our sincerity in the fast and pilgrimage. He told us not to even look at it any more."

Alhaji's face was drawn. His lips were dry and cracking. It was becoming difficult for him to talk freely, as his tongue was thickened and sticky. At other times it was rare that he would be seen without his mouth being filled with kola nuts, but now even that was given up for the prophet. His Koran lay beside him on the mat where he had been resting.

"Alhaji, the fast of Ramadan is quite different than the fasts of which we read in the Scriptures. In the days of *annabi Musa* (prophet Moses) God commanded the people to fast for a day or days, both night and day. But, listen—even now, everywhere I can hear the pounding of grain and the preparation of grain for food."

The wrinkled old face broke into a smile. "Yes,



*From atop the minaret, thousands of Moslems are seen kneeling and praying in the streets. Over 300,000,000 Moslems await deliverance.*

soon the sun will set, and then, having said our prayers, we will break fast. Tomorrow morning, several hours before sunrise, the women will arise to prepare a hearty meal to fortify us for the fast of tomorrow which will begin with the rising of the sun."

"So you fast during the daylight hours only? Why is that?"

"It is the commandment of the prophet," said Alhaji, without question or doubt in his face.

"But what is the reason for it, why did the prophet urge the fast upon his followers?"

"We have a tradition which may be an explanation of it, although I frankly confess I am not sure. During the early days of the spread of our religion, Mohammed and his few converts were driven out of the cities into the hills. Here they were forced to hide during the daytime, and would come out of hiding in the darkness of night to plunder and rob for their food. From that time the followers of Mohammed have always kept the fast in commemoration of the trials and trouble of the prophet."

As they sat together in the hut, they heard wild shouting and running near by. A huge crowd soon gathered. It seemed that several young men had broken the fast by sucking on a piece of sugar cane. Now they were being led, tied with their hands together, through the streets of the town. On every side the people shouted taunts and curses upon their heads, pronouncing them infidels and apostates. Everywhere, as they passed, a look of scorn was cast upon them. Men spat on the ground in disgust.

Taking leave of his friend, Mai-nasara mounted his horse and continued homeward. The sun set, children shouted, and everywhere men and women alike hurried through their prayers so that they might take a drink of water to slake their thirst.

So the fast continued through the month. Day-time and night were turned around. Spending the nights in banqueting, dancing, and revelry of every kind, the people slept during the day and the village streets looked almost deserted. Although it was the time of fasting, the people had saved their money and choicest tidbits of food for this time. More food and drink is consumed at this time of the year than at any other time. No one ever goes hungry during the month of fast, as at other times of the year. The more pious spend considerable time in reading of their sacred book, the Koran. Special prayers are offered and alms given to the needy. The hours of darkness are filled with acts of wickedness and sin, a spirit of hilarity prevails.

Then one evening, the day done, the air was electric with expectancy. The sun set for the thirtieth time in Ramadan. The eyes of every seeing person searched the western sky. Women rested from pounding grain. Children hurried the sheep and goats into the compound from pasture. Men and boys rose from sitting in the sand about the doorway. The village stopped still. Not a sound was to be heard as the moments now slipped swiftly by. Then, of a sudden, a shout of jubilation from a thousand throats as one, cried, "*Allah ya*

*sa mu ga annabi*" (May God cause us to see the prophet).

A thin sliver of a moon sank slowly out of sight. Another fast was ended. Even as they had now seen the new moon, signalling the passing of the fast for another year, so they prayed that they might someday see the face of the prophet Mohammed.

Passing through the north gate in the town wall, Mai-nasara, considering with a heavy heart the empty, vain, and utterly hopeless condition of his people, climbed the rocky, winding path to his home on the hill.

## IV

### ALHAJI'S PILGRIMAGE

On a day not long after a child had been born to the missionaries, Alhaji and two of his friends came to greet the parents and wish God's fortune upon them. As is their custom, they brought gifts. Alhaji brought a huge bowl of honey. Another brought a basket of eggs, and the third gave three chickens, alive and kicking. They had viewed the baby and given her a Hausa name, *Ta Roni*, praying Allah's blessings of long life and great riches upon her. Later, as they were talking together, the fact was brought out that all three of the old men had been to Mecca on a pilgrimage. They began to recount their experiences.

"I was a young man, no older than the white man here, when my father left on his pilgrimage. For years he had saved his money in anticipation of the long journey. All seven of his sons worked long and hard. Many times we had barely enough to eat, as all that could be spared was sold to save money for the *Haj* (pilgrimage to Mecca). I had begged my father to accompany him, and, until he agreed, I never let him rest. We started as soon as the harvest was in. For about a month we traveled on horseback until the animals became almost as skeletons and the grain on which to feed them was too expensive. Then my father sold them to some traders who were returning to Hausaland.

"When we started out, we were quite a group.

Then, as we traveled farther into the desert, the rigors of the journey began to tell on us and some were unable to keep up. For days and weeks and months we plodded on. Many times we were barely able to survive the terrible thirst or hunger as the wells were farther and farther apart. As we drew near to Khartoum we were able to get a place in a camel train loaded with hides. It was much faster traveling that way, but during the middle of the day, when the sun came out hot, the smell of the hides was so offensive that it made us sick. From Khartoum to the Great Water (Red Sea), we traveled with other camel caravans. There my father found that his money was running out, and so we worked for several months to earn our fare on the boat which would take us across to Jiddah in Arabia. Never have I come so close to death as on that boat. When we arose in the morning for prayer, the water, which surrounded us on every side, seemed to rise and fall. It beat against the boat and threw us down. As this continued throughout the day, most of us became desperately sick and some even tried to jump overboard."

The others laughed and sighed alternately as they recalled their similar experiences.

"Praise be to Allah," exclaimed Malam Alhaji Habu, a wizened, thin, old gentleman, his head swathed in the many folds of his white turban. "I shall never forget my own thoughts when I discovered we were out of sight of land. I said to myself, 'How foolish a man can be! How meddling! When Allah puts him on the firm dry ground, to cast himself into the sea!'



When I rose for prayer I knew not which way to face, nor did the others, until the sun was almost ready to rise."

At this point Malam Amadu, a younger man than the other two, somewhat larger and heavier, and more jovial, interrupted.

"As we disembarked at Jiddah to make the overland journey, we had a very short time to reach the holy city before the celebration was to begin. Therefore we traveled at night, in company with about a hundred others. The roadway, which was nothing more than many winding parallel paths, led down into a deep, thickly wooded valley. Here we were robbed by brigands and a number of pilgrims were killed in the fracas. Others of us were able to escape by running and hiding."

"We arrived too late for the celebration," lamented Alhaji, "and so my father secured employment to keep us until the time would come again. During that year we made all the preparation necessary, such as procuring the proper robes, and learning the procedure to follow. As the season drew near, hundreds and thousands of people came to Mecca. There were people of every color, many kinds of dress. They spoke many different languages. Early, the morning of the great day, my father awakened me, saying, 'Come, the day has arrived.'

"We dressed carefully and made our ablutions. Then, in company with many others, we visited the sacred mosque. This is a very large enclosure, and it was filled with people. As we entered and beheld the

Kaaba, my body began to tremble, I felt weak. I followed my father into the semi-darkness of the building. We knelt down to kiss the Black Stone. Others with us were so filled with excitement that they were unable to walk, fainted and grew hysterical. The crowds made it difficult, but we circled the Kaaba seven times. We said our prayers and drank of the water of the well Zam Zam. Again my father returned to the Black Stone and kissed it fervently.

“We visited many places and listened to sermons by great teachers. Returning from a certain place, we passed and threw stones at the three pillars of *Shaitan* (Satan). My father sent me home to bring the ram that he had prepared to sacrifice. Going to a sacred spot, where there were many others, the ram was slain. I remember these things rather hazily, but, more clearly than all the rest, I recall the great devotion of my father. Many times after our return to our country, as he would gather the other boys around and tell them of his experiences on the *Haj*, his eyes would light up and flash as he extolled the glory of the prophet and Islam. Three years we were gone. Of the many who started out with us only a few have ever returned. We know some died in the desert. Others doubtless have died in other places. Many never reached Mecca. Others, having fulfilled the *Haj*, found new places to live in other parts.

“My father lived only about ten years after our return. He died a younger man than I am today. The hardships we endured were too great for him; he was able to work but little after that. He would spend all

his time reading his Koran and other books, praying and reciting long chapters from memory. My father knew the whole Koran by heart."

The others had similar experiences. Malam Al-haji Habu had spent the most of ten years on the *Haj*; when he returned his wives had married other men, and his house and farm were in the hands of unscrupulous men. Malam Amadu had made the pilgrimage much later than the other two. He had been able to travel most of the way by truck and train. He had been gone only a year and a half. Upon his return he was made the chief teacher in the local Koranic school for children. In this work he was still busily engaged.

Having thus sat with the men for more than an hour as they recounted their experiences, Mai-nasara sat forward, and asked,

"You gentlemen certainly have had some wonderful experiences. You have lived long. You have seen much of life. You have all prayed faithfully five times daily, given alms, kept the fast, and made the pilgrimage. You are among the most honored men in the town. But, if you will permit me, may I ask you just one question?

"Having done all of this, with the express purpose in mind of pleasing God and attaining merit before Him against that Great Judgment Day, do you have the assurance now in your hearts that you will be accepted of Him? If you should die today do you believe that you would be received immediately into Heaven?"

Only silence followed that question. After a moment of embarrassment, during which the three men looked at each other and studied the floor, Mai-nasara again asked,

“Do you men believe that, even after all you have done by way of fulfillment of the commandments of the prophet, God might still reject you?”

“White man, who are we to question God? Whomsoever He wills to damn, He damns. Whomsoever He wills to save, He saves. Praise be to God!” said Alhaji solemnly. “We can never know until THE DAY comes. Then if the prophet looks upon us with favor, God will receive us.”

Outside, the brief African twilight had passed and it had grown quite dark. Rising to their feet, the old men took their leave of the missionary and passed out into the dark night, and the darker night of a vain hope of salvation through the merit attained in making the pilgrimage.

ALHAJI'S BROTHER DISCUSSES HEAVEN  
AND HELL

**L**ook, Zumunta! There goes the third funeral procession in the last three hours!"

"I wonder who it is now?" exclaimed Zumunta, as she came to stand beside her husband in the open front door of their mission home.

All day long for the past several days processions had passed down the road in front of their home, leading from the town to the burying ground. Each time it was the same group, led by the chief mullah, others following, all silently padding along the sandy path. The situation was growing rapidly worse. For three weeks folk had been dying at the rate of a half-dozen a day. A man, in seeming perfect health today, would be a corpse and buried by this time tomorrow, as the dread disease of cerebral-spinal meningitis carried him off. Many of the townspeople had fled to other parts of the district in order to escape the epidemic. The mullahs and leaders of the people met daily for prayer in the mosques, but to no avail. Every home had been visited by this dread disease. Young and old were stricken. The grave diggers moved from grave to grave. As soon as they finished with one they began wearily to dig another. What would the end be?

Seeing some of his acquaintances in the funeral procession, Mai-nasara joined the cortege as it passed his home. When they had proceeded a half mile or so

from the town, reaching the grave side, the corpse was removed from the head of the strong young man who had carried it, and placed by the open grave. The company, composed entirely of men, circled the grave at a respectful distance. Now the chief mullah, stepping forward with the open Koran in his hand, began to intone a prayer to Allah. As he prayed, all present covered their faces and cried, "Amin, amin." Alternately he prayed and exhorted from their holy book. As the body was lowered into the rough four-foot grave, wrapped in a white cotton cloth and covered with a palm leaf mat, not one sign of grief or sorrow could be observed on the faces of the witnesses, but only a firm, stoical resignation to the will of Allah. A Moslem grave is so dug that the corpse may be placed on its side on a narrow shelf at the base of the grave. The grave was soon filled, a water pot placed at the head, and then the pot broken beyond usefulness, signifying the end of this life.

As the party returned to the town, the scorching noonday sun beat down mercilessly. They stopped at the mission house to slake their thirst from the water tank. The semicoolness of the porch shade tempted some to rest a while, among them Alhaji and his brother, the chief mullah.

"What is the news of the disease in the town, Alhaji?" queried Mai-nasara anxiously.

"Only that which God decrees, white man. We are as the dust in the balance. This world is like the market. Today it is full of people, and tomorrow it is deserted."

"This world and the next are very close together," said the missionary. "One never knows when his days shall end. Therefore it behooves us to be prepared to go, even as you Hausas say, 'Do not leave the preparation of the water gourd until the day of traveling, for the water will be bitter.'"

The group was quiet for a time until the chief mullah spoke.

"The world is the mother of trouble, but the next world will be far better, at least for the faithful."

"And what do you suppose the next world will be like," inquired Mai-nasara, trying to draw out his friend.

"The next world is beyond description. The prophet, alone, knew the extent of its delights and pleasures. We are told that every Mohammedan will finally enter paradise although some will suffer in the fire for a time because of their lack of piety. The very meanest in paradise is promised eighty thousand servants and seventy-two wives, of the black-eyed virgins of paradise, in addition to the wives he had in this world, if he desires to have the latter. There the faithful will repose on silken couches on which they will never tire. A cup full of wine, whiter than milk, shall be carried around to each of them, delicious to the drinkers. This wine, contrary to the wine of this world, will not take away the intellect. The drinkers will not be affected with headaches. There will be food of the best kind in abundance, and every desire shall be fulfilled to those on the right hand."

“What do you mean by those on the right hand?” questioned Mai-nasara.

“Between paradise and hell there is a partition. The Lord will call unto all the faithful of the prophet to enter into paradise saying, ‘I have pardoned you.’ It is reserved for those who are among the evil-doers, who have charged our signs with falsehood, to enter into hell. Hell shall be their couch, and their cloaks shall be coverings of fire. The fire will be terribly hot, its fuel men and stones. Its only drink to slake their thirst is liquid pus, while serpents and scorpions sting their victims. The air will be filled with thick, black smoke, and, as often as their skins shall be thoroughly burned, they will be given in exchange other skins, that they may taste the torment. Truly hell is a fearful place!”

“Forgive my asking, but at the graveside, today, I noticed that you read from the Koran and exhorted at considerable length. Just what is the significance of that part of the ceremony?”

“As the body is placed in the grave two black angels come to interrogate the deceased. They cause the dead to sit upright in the grave and question him regarding his faith. If he is able to answer the questions satisfactorily, he will escape. If not, he will be severely tortured in the fire. Hence, we seek to help the one just gone from us, by repeating the tenets of our religion, so as to bring to his remembrance the proper answers to the awful questions. It is a thing we all face with terrible fear and anxiety. May Allah have mercy upon the Moslems.”



The depressing scene just pictured so vividly filled the hearts of all with awe and sincerity. Praying in his heart for God's message to these friends, Mai-nasara said,

"Oh, friends, there was a time when fear filled my heart, fear of the world which lies beyond. Because of this fear of the awful torment of hell and the punishment of those who have rejected the Way of God, I most earnestly sought and prayed God to lead me to know the truth. I read the Psalms of David and the Gospel of Jesus which describe the two places where all men are destined to spend eternity. I read many books. I listened to great men, I studied it out for myself. I drank of one fountain after another, but never did I find what my soul longed for until I drank of the living water which is spoken of in the Gospel of John. That living water is *Isa Almasihu* (Jesus Christ), as He Himself stated. When I drank of that water, my thirst was slaked and my fear of hell was taken away, for *Almasihu* promised in the Word of God that He would come and deliver from hell all those who put their trust in Him. I did just that. God is One, and the Way to Him is One. There cannot be many ways. If we were all dying of hunger here this afternoon, and my wife brought in a huge bowl of delicious food, set it in front of me, and I ate until I could eat no more, but, with most of it remaining, would I not share it with you, saying, 'Eat, be satisfied, do not die of hunger. Here is food, eat and live'?"

The old men laughed and said, "It is true, and we would eat."

“Just so it is with my soul. I was hungry unto death. But one day I found the most delicious food ever tasted. I ate and ate and was satisfied. Knowing that many others in the world were hungry, even as I had been, I have brought that food before you again today and ask you to eat and live. That food, gentlemen, is the Lord Jesus Christ. Believe in Him, and your soul will be satisfied. Your fears will subside. Your heart will be right toward God. May God help you to know the truth.”

The call to prayer was clearly heard coming from the town some three-eighths of a mile away. The old men rose without further comment. At the gate of the mission compound they took leave of the missionary, and, going a few steps farther, began ablutions and muttered their evening prayers. The sun set in the west. The crescent of the moon shone clear and bright in the darkening heavens. It spoke of the vain hope of the Moslem people, possessing no true light of its own.

## VI

### WHAT PRICE TESTIMONY?

One evening several of the old men of the village gathered in the house of the chief. It was in the cool season of December and January when the wind blows from the north and east. Blowing constantly, it stirs up the sand and dust until the air is filled with the particles which hide the sun like a fog.

*"Kai, darin nan za ya kashe mu"* (Oh, this cold will kill us), cried one of the men as he poked at the smoldering fire until the flickering flame began to light up the darkened hut. The faces about that fire were an interesting study. Mostly bearded, with deep long wrinkles lining their cheeks, their eyes small and piercing balls of fire, they represented the sage and wisdom of the town.

"By the truth of Allah, never have I seen it so cold since the year we had the fire and all our homes were burned to the ground," agreed the chief. "But it is a favorable omen. When we have a cold year we usually have a good harvest the following year."

"If God wills," answered his cronies in unison.

"But, why should you complain, chief, seeing you are wrapped up so snugly in your big warm blanket?" taunted one of the mullahs seated near by.

"That is right," replied the chief. "The white people surely possess this world. No cold could ever penetrate this fine blanket. How clever they are. But then,



*Fatsuma.*

they need to be. The white man up on the hill told me one day that for several months of the year they must walk on ice for it covers the ground in their country. He said that we would probably suffer from the cold if we would visit his country even as they suffer with the heat in ours. Why, I am told that even now, during this cold weather we are having, they sleep out of doors here."

And so, among other subjects, they fell to discussing the white man and his many strange customs. Most of them had only a passing acquaintance with him. But one of their number, Malam Kaura, had been attending the dispensary for medical treatment. He had been afflicted with a troublesome sore on his leg, and so for about six months had been going up the hill daily to have it treated. When he came for medicine, he had heard the Gospel story, which the missionary told each morning before opening the dispensary. And now, as they were discussing the white man and his ways, the man spoke:

"There are many things about the white man that are good. When first he came, we refused to buy his cloth, preferring our own homespun. But now only the most backward of our people wear our cloth, for we have found that his cloth wears better, washes better, and is more attractive. He brought kerosene lanterns, but we preferred our own peanut oil lamps that smoked and which the wind blew out, but now, anyone who can afford it has a lantern. The white man's salt flavors our food. The white man's iron shapes our tools. The white man's sewing machine sews our clothes. We ride

in the white man's trucks, and our young folk smoke the white man's cigarettes. They gamble with his playing cards. They drink his medicine and read his books. But there is one thing about that white man up on the hill that puzzles me. Who has ever seen him selling anything, or asking us for anything? He says that there is but one thing which has brought him to our country.

“Some of the white men we have known have come to mine the gold and tin. Some are traders and still others are government officials. For the most part they live in the large cities. But to what purpose is this man and his family living out in this small town among us? He has no relatives here. In talking with him the other day he said that the sole reason for his being here was to spread the news of salvation by *annabi Isa* (prophet Jesus), who, according to his book, was the Son of God. He said that in his country it never gets hot like it does here. In his country they have much nicer food, better homes, no snakes or scorpions, no fever, no leprosy, and they live among their parents and friends. Then why should he want to leave all of that and come here to our village?”

Alhaji, who knew the white man better, perhaps, than any of the others, spoke up and said:

“I, too, have wondered. One day the white man showed me a large book filled with pictures. In this book I saw the picture of his father and mother. I saw the father and mother of Zumunta, his wife. I saw their brothers and sisters, and many, many friends. I saw

the houses in which they formerly lived, the automobiles in which they drove around. I asked Mai-nasara how it happened that his father would let him go so far from home. He told me that his father, too, and most of his friends, had felt badly when he came away over here, but that they were willing to let them come because they believe that it is important to bring us the book they are always speaking about, and tell us of their Saviour. Now, we Hausas say 'Water does not become bitter, except for a reason that something else has been added to it.' But this white man has never yet been caught telling us a lie. I am not sure about the real reason for his coming here, but on the other hand, I still cannot but believe that he is telling us the truth."

"Me, too," exclaimed Kaura. "I have been going up on the hill, because of my leg, for the best part of six months. I have heard many folk curse him, call him an infidel, white dog, and what not, but has anyone ever heard him curse or mistreat one of our people? If we have the money, we pay a small amount for our medicine. If we do not have it, we get the same treatment. And so when Mai-nasara reads from his book and says that he knows Jesus Christ is *Almasihu*, the Promised One, and that He is the Son of God, he must be telling us the truth."

As Kaura finished speaking, some were silent, but most of those present, muttering to themselves and their neighbors, cursed and swore.

About two weeks later, Mai-nasara and his wife were away from their home on a visit to a distant vil-

lage. When they returned toward evening one day, a trusted servant came, saying:

“Master, may I speak with you privately?”

In a room with windows and doors securely closed the man began to unfold his story.

“Soon after you left, Malam Kaura was found dead in his hut one morning.”

“What, do you mean that old gentleman with the white hair and beard who has been coming to the dispensary for so long? I had supposed that he was nearly recovered,” spoke Mai-nasara disappointedly.

“Oh, well, Kaura did not die as a result of his sore leg or any other disease of man. I am afraid to tell you this, and you must promise never to use my name in connection with it, but there is something very strange about the death of Kaura.”

“What do you mean? I give you my promise, I will never tell your name.”

“As you know, here in our country, when a person dies he is buried within a few hours. A mullah will come and wash the body and wrap it in a new white cloth. The friends will come and sit about the house while the mullahs pray. Then as soon as the grave is dug he is buried.

“When the word of Kaura’s death came, the mullahs would not go near his hut. Many of his friends went to his compound, but when they got near his hut they were told to leave and not mourn the death of an



infidel. The body lay in his hut all day long. Just before sundown, some pagan Hausas were hired to bury the body in the old market place: No one was there who had known Kaura. Not one mullah would pray for him.

“It is strange! We do not know the reason Kaura was called an infidel. He has always been one of the honored men in our town. I well recall the time when I was small, and we boys made fun of him by imitating his lameness, for which my father beat me severely. For many years we have bowed the knee, in respect, as we address him in greeting. We have never seen him drink or smoke. He was among the most learned of our mullahs. But the reason I came tonight to tell you this is that the word is passing around the town that anyone who lets this word come to the ear of the white man will die the same death as Kaura. Master, Kaura was poisoned.”

It was late that night before his native friend left. Mai-nasara questioned him over and over. Fearful of being seen there at that hour, the man waited until he could be sure of not being detected as he cautiously stole his way back into the town through a broken-down breach in the wall.

There was little sleep for the missionaries that night. As they lay awake they were reminded of the terrible power of Satan. With the memory of Kaura and his untimely death so vividly in their minds, they were made to realize the power of the Word they had brought to these people. Here was one who having

secretly in his heart considered and pondered the message, now because he had dared to speak the truth had paid for it with his life. Then the truth of the Scripture was more clearly seen:

“And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death. . . . And ye shall be hated of all men, for my name’s sake. . . . The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. . . . Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. . . . He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it” (Matt. 10:21, 22, 24, 32, 39).

## VII

### ZUMUNTA VISITS THE WOMEN

**A**lhaji, being a strict Moslem, had but four wives. He married his first wife, Delu, more than thirty years ago. She had borne him thirteen children, five of whom were still living, and among them his eldest son. During her lifetime, she had seen other women married to her husband, living with him for a time, and then divorced. A Mohammedan man can send his wife away by merely saying "Go!" In all he had had eleven, although no more than four at one time. By these eleven wives Alhaji had twenty-three living children, but several times that number who had died in infancy. He had the unique experience of having sons born on successive days.

The first week after a birth is a rather busy time in the household. On the eighth day, hosts of friends gather, with the mullahs, for the naming feast. The parents of a child have nothing to do with the choice of name for their offspring. The mullahs, with their books and calendars, give a name according to the day on which the child is born. Alas, more than half of these little ones never reach their first birthday. Many die within a few days, due to the ignorance and cruel practices of the midwives, who are usually old crones. For the first three days the babe is force-fed a thin porridge of grain until the little stomach is as hard as an inflated football. The African mother's heart is

often wrung without hope of comfort, or helpful understanding by her husband, as her little one dies. More often than not, the other wives are jealously glad at her misfortune.

Alhaji's brother, the chief, was a wealthy man. He had four wives and four concubines. His living children numbered forty-three. One day, as Mai-nasara and Zumunta were visiting in the native town, they called on the chief. Zumunta entered into the more private part of the compound, while her husband sat with the chief and his courtiers in the large entrance house at the door of the compound. They were discussing the matter of wives and children, when the chief chamberlain, a eunuch, bowing before the chief, announced:

"May the life of the chief be long! May Allah give him riches and health! Your wife has just given birth to a child."

Arrested by the news, the chief rose to a position of attention. "Which one?" he asked, amid great laughter and exclamation by those of his courtiers and friends seated around him. Immediately every one began to pronounce blessings upon the chief. The most common one was: "May Allah give it to see the prophet!"

When the hilarity had subsided, Mai-nasara ventured a question which ordinarily would have been out of order, but since he and the chief were old friends, nothing was thought of the matter.

"God has given you many children, chief. How many has it been?"

The old chief began counting, naming them off one by one. With the help of others he was able to recall the names of thirty-eight of the forty-three now living.

"How many more have there been who have died?" asked the missionary.

"I wouldn't know," answered the chief, chuckling to himself, "That is a matter to which only women give attention in our country."

Inside the compound, Zumunta was visiting with his wives. After greeting them all, and speaking a further word to some, she stopped at the hut where Faro lived.

Faro was the seventh wife of the chief. She was not really his wife, for a Mohammedan man is required by law to have no more than four wives. But she was a concubine, of whom he could have as many as he was able to support. Nevertheless, she was his favorite, the most trusted of all of his women. He had placed the key to his treasure in her hand. She was the envy of all the others.

Here in a large open square were numerous mud huts where the various wives lived. Of them all, Faro was the most cordial. She was a young woman grown old prematurely. She had never had a child, the greatest sorrow of the African woman's heart.

The missionary and Faro sat together at the door of her hut. It was hot. Lizards played tag on the wall behind them, and the quiet of the sultry afternoon was broken only by the distant beat of someone pounding grain. For a long time Faro had not been well. Being

a Mohammedan woman, she was not permitted to leave her husband's compound from the day of her marriage. Her world, for years, had not extended beyond the four mud walls surrounding the few huts which made up her home. During all this time, she had not been seen by any other man than her husband. The missionary's wife, Zumunta, had come often with medicine, but Faro grew steadily weaker.

This particular afternoon, as Faro greeted Zumunta, she seemed more eager than usual to talk with someone. Solemnly she began to speak:

"Zumunta, I am going to die. I am afraid to die."

Although it was apparent that the woman did not have long to live, Zumunta replied, "Oh, do not say that, Faro. The day of death is known only to God. But, I am not surprised that you are afraid to die."

Sighing deeply, the woman continued, "The way of Mohammed is hard. Your way is much easier, according to what you have told me."

"Yes, I know, Faro, that your way is hard. In this world, life is hard, but it is still harder in the world beyond."

"But I have heard that you white women have a much easier way. All you have told me only proves that what we say is true, for it is commonly heard the white man is having his heaven here on earth."

"Faro, your life and mine are much different," explained the missionary earnestly. "Our customs, our language, our clothes, and our homes are all very much

different from yours. But all of these differences are a passing thing. When we were born we both had nothing and surely we shall take nothing of this world with us when we pass on. There is but one difference that really matters between your way and ours. That is: you are a follower of Mohammed and I am a follower of Christ.

“Oh, but your husband never beats you or curses you. You do not have to stay forever inside your compound and never go outside. You do not have to share your husband with seven other women. He loves you.”

“My good woman, all that you say is true. Nevertheless, the real difference between our lives is because of Jesus Christ. Only in places where Christ is known and honored are women respected and loved. The reason my husband never beats or curses me is because he, too, is a follower of the Christ. The followers of Christ have the same weaknesses common to your people. We become angry, and fall into temptations, but we have Jesus to help us overcome sin. The Word of God says that if anyone will believe on Jesus as the Son of God, and that He died on the Cross for the sins of the whole world, he will have salvation and eternal life.”

“Oh, Zumunta, how fortunate you are! I wish I had been born a white woman.”

“But Faro, listen. To Jesus, it makes no difference whether you were born black or white. Jesus loved all people so much that He was willing to give

His life. Jesus is not only the white man's Saviour. At one time, we, too, did not know about Him. We received the news of salvation from others who lived long, long ago. They heard the Word of God from Jesus Himself, when He was here upon earth. Jesus came from God. He was God come down in the form of a man. Faro, you know that I would not lie to you. I believe that Jesus is my Saviour and my heart tells me that it is true. With Jesus in my heart, I am not even afraid to die, for I know that He will receive me. If you believe in Jesus He will receive you, too, even though you are a Mohammedan. He will help you when the time comes to die. May God help you, Faro, to believe and trust in Jesus."

In a few weeks Faro was gone. They had not met again for another conversation. Was that their last meeting, or will they meet again at Jesus' feet?

One of the most common contributing factors in the high infant mortality rate is venereal disease. Thousands of children who do survive, live in total blindness, due to this thing. In order to combat the prejudice and fear of the Hausa mother, and to help her to save some of her babies, the missionaries established a baby clinic in the center of the town. The chief gave them a horse stable which they remodeled and converted into suitable quarters. Here many sick babies and children were cared for, given the first bath in their lives, and their little bodies rubbed with oil. Most of the mothers are confined to their own compounds, being Moslems, and so the babies were often brought by



older children. More often, however, they were called for, cared for, and delivered by Zumunta herself.

One such unfortunate mother was Helima, a young woman, the first and only wife of her husband. She had had two children, both of whom had died. One day, as Zumunta visited her, she asked weeping:

“Oh, Zumunta, can you not help me? Allah has given me two babies, but they both died the first month. My husband is very angry with me. He says that I have brought him bad luck. He is bargaining even now for another wife. He beats and curses me. I am so unhappy.”

Helima received treatment for more than a year following. When her third child was born, it was a fine big boy. By careful nursing and attention, the child lived, and was the pride and joy of her life. Then one day . . .

“*Gafara dai! Gafara dai!*” (an expression used in salutation).

“Come in, Helima! Come in! I am so glad you have come,” exclaimed Zumunta, as the two sat down in the mission house. “And how have you spent the day?”

“By the leave of Allah, I am well, Zumunta. But I am not happy with the matter which brings me to see you today,” said the girl.

“I am sorry. What is the trouble? Is your little baby sick, or is there some new trouble in your home?”

“No, Zumunta, there is but one thing that makes

me so unhappy. Last evening my husband told me that since the rain is drawing near, he is moving back to his village. He says that we will remain there and not return to this town any more. I begged permission to come to say goodbye, Zumunta. I will never forget how much you helped me when I was sick, and then, too, there is my baby. May God give you great reward!"

"Well, Helima, that is the way of this world. Our lives are made up of meetings and separations. And I, too, am unhappy now that you are going to leave. Perhaps we will never meet again. Since I cannot go with you, I wish that my best Friend could go with you. Before you return to our town, one of us may die, or Christ may return to receive us who belong to Him."

"What was that you said about Christ returning?" exclaimed the girl, bewildered.

"Even as I have told you many times, Helima, Jesus Christ is the Saviour, and after He died for our sins on the cross, God received Him up into heaven where He is now. Someday, perhaps even today, He will return to earth to take all His followers up into heaven, where we will remain forever. There will be no more separation then."

"Zumunta, no one ever told me that before. If you have told me, I did not listen, for I was told that the followers of Jesus were *kafarai* (infidels), and not to listen to what you said. But your words now have pierced my heart like a knife. If Jesus is alive right now, and if He is coming back again, perhaps today, oh, Zumunta, I am afraid!"

“Only those who reject Jesus have reason to be afraid when He comes again. Anyone may believe and become His follower, and everyone who does, of whatever color, or kind, or tribe, will be received into heaven.”

“No one has ever told me that Jesus is the Saviour. Our husbands tell us that the only way we can get to heaven is by being married to them, and that if they are received into heaven by the will of Allah, we, too, will be accepted as one of their many wives. I think it is seventy-two wives they will have.”

“Helima, if you believe in your heart on Jesus, you are saved. No one can ever do anything which will change that, for God has spoken, and He cannot lie.”

“But I cannot read. All I know is to grind grain, and to cook my husband’s food,” lamented the woman.

Praying God to show her what to do for Helima, Zumunta remembered some large pictures of the life of Christ. Producing these she said to her:

“Helima, if you remember to pray in the Name of Jesus, God will teach you to know Him. You must remember to pray often, and just hold on to the Name of Jesus in your heart. Jesus will hold you in His strong arms. When your husband beats you, or curses you, never mind it. Ask Jesus to help you. Even though you cannot read, just take these pictures showing the Lord Jesus, as He was born in the stable in Bethlehem, and

this one showing Him healing the blind. But most of all keep this one showing Jesus dying on the cross to save us from our sins. Believe it was for you as well as for me.”

They bowed their heads together in prayer, and, then, walking to the gate of the compound, said good-bye. Today Helima lives in a far-away village, with no contact with any other Christian. All she knows is the Name of Jesus, wonderful Name. May God look upon this lamb of His in mercy and bring her safely Home within the fold!



*The Moslem woman, veiled of face and of heart.*

## VIII

### OCCULT POWER

**B**oom-boom-boom! Boom-boom-boom! The dull beat of the bass drums came up out of the valley, loud and clear. It was the harvest season. Twice every year, at the time of plowing the soil and at the harvest, great celebrations are held in the many towns and villages across the broad expanse of Hausaland. These celebrations are the climax of working bees, when large groups of men join together to work and help each other. With the work of plowing or carrying the sheaves into the granaries completed, the people, young and old, turn to feasting and jubilation. The young men engage in boxing matches, jumping feats, always accompanied by the drummers and singers. Hour after hour goes by, until, with the close of day, the tempo of the singing and dancing increasing all the while, the moment of intense excitement arrives.

For long the missionary had heard of the strange things which took place at these dances. Native friends had confided that certain ones among them had the power to make their bodies impervious to metal, whether knives or axes. Mai-nasara refused to believe the story, discrediting it as some clever trick or sleight-of-hand. But curiosity took him down into the town again that evening to witness the performance.

As he approached the wall of the village he could

hear the singing and shouts of the huge crowd, which spoke of great excitement. Louder and louder it sounded, until as he turned into the main street of the town he saw a crowd of two or three hundred people circling the village square. Standing inconspicuously at the edge, he could feel the very air to be electric, as with some hidden unseen force that took these drummers and dancers into its own power. In the center of the sandy square a half dozen young men cavorted. Their sweating, glistening bodies, clad in only a scanty loin cloth, quivered and twitched nervously as they danced. The tempo of the drumming increased until it reached a crescendo as various ones of the dancers would cry and shout incoherently in a falsetto voice.

Then Mahaukachi, a stalwart young fellow, perhaps twenty years of age, who had often worked for Mai-nasara, dashed into the center of the ring. His body trembled and shook. His eyes wore a glassy stare. Drawing a sharp dagger-like knife from his belt, with a scream as if to curdle one's blood, he struck his body with the sharp point. The tip turned and buckled, not even piercing the skin. Striking himself again madly, the knife blade fell to the ground, broken in two pieces. The crowd of men and women went wild with delirious excitement, jumping up and down. Many brought gifts of money and kola nuts as Mahaukachi lay, prostrated with exhaustion, on the ground.

A bit later, an old man sat in the open square. Taking a sharp axe in one hand, and a bundle of grass

in the other, he laid the grass across his shin bone. Chopping the grass with short, swift blows, the axe fell across his leg each time without apparent damage to himself. At times these men are able to take a knife, and, biting it with their teeth, break off small half-inch pieces with a snap, as of some dry stick of wood.

One day, about a month after the experience of seeing the knife broken on Mahaukachi's body, Mai-nasara visited him in his home. He was a likable chap and pleasant to engage in conversation. Finally, the conversation turned to the almost unbelievable feat of the broken knife. Producing the broken parts, Mahaukachi sought to prove to the white man that there was no trick or hoax about it. To all appearances, it was a perfectly good knife. But it was difficult to believe, nevertheless. Repeatedly, Mai-nasara begged his young friend to tell him the real truth of the matter. At last, and alone, he began, reluctantly:

"Mai-nasara, you are my friend. If I tell you the secret of this strange power, you must promise never to tell another black man. We do not tell our own people, for that would break the spell. This strange power is passed down from one generation to the next by those who possess it. At a certain time of the year, and with the moon in a certain phase, we go out into the very wildest part of the bush in the dead of night. It is a fearful place, and except that we take our charms and fetishes with us, we would never return alive to our homes."

"What sort of charms are these, Mahaukachi, and



where do you get them?" asked Mai-nasara.

"Certain of the mullahs made them for us," continued Mahaukachi. "Reaching this place in complete silence, we sacrifice a white chicken, and, chanting certain words, smear our bodies and our knives with the blood. We drink a potion made by a secret prescription. Then we return home before daylight, and, as you saw yourself, our bodies are toughened to turn iron."

"But, Mahaukachi, when you go to this place, and go through these rites, are you conscious of the presence of spirits or unseen things?" interrogated Mai-nasara, anxiously.

"Yes, I may as well tell you, this power is not of God. It is the power of *Shaitan* (Satan). When through the drumming and singing of certain songs, our bodies are possessed of these spirits, it is only at such times that we can perform these acts. Sometimes we are unable to stand and must be held up by others. I have spoken the truth."

A few hours later Mai-nasara sat in his own home with a number of native Christian friends. He recounted his experience of having seen the knife broken on Mahaukachi's body, somewhat doubting. But those who had once been in the throes of the Satanic power thus exhibited testified that it was a fact. As they discussed these things together they were made to realize, more than ever before, the awful power of the evil one in the lives of the people all around about them. Ere

they departed to their respective homes that night they joined in prayer and thanksgiving to God for the power that had redeemed and saved them from the bondage and chains of sin and Satan.

## IX

### CHARMS

**T**hief, thief, thief! Thief, thief, thief!" The distress cry broke the midnight stillness, and soon the sound of running feet came nearer and nearer.

Mai-nasara rose quickly from his bed, crawled out from under the mosquito net, and, with a flashlight in hand, went toward the main path that led from the town past the mission house. He was nearly there when a figure, running like the wind, streaked by in the beam of his flashlight. A few yards behind the fugitive, followed a motley crowd of men and boys armed with knives and long curved swords, pursuing madly, and shouting curses and threats. After a mile or two the posse began to tire and the thief escaped. As the party returned to the town, the most frequent remarks heard were:

"Allah helped him to escape!"

Others said, "Allah did not agree to his capture. It was not for us to catch him. He was destined to escape."

Later that morning, Mai-nasara and Zumunta, his wife, were visiting in the homes of the towns-people. They entered a compound where lived a daughter of Alhaji. Zumunta proceeded on into the private part of the compound where no man, other than the husband, is ever permitted to enter, while Mai-nasara sat down with the men in the large entrance house. Seated around

the walls of this rather large room were men busily engaged in drawing weird designs and strange characters upon pieces of heavy paper.

“What do these queer characters represent?” asked the missionary.

The mullah labored on with his reed pen. Now he would dip it in red ink, then another in black ink. Then lifting up the finished article, one could observe scorpions, frogs, horses and other figures together with Arabic writing, verses, and portions of the Koran inscribed.

“Oh!” said the mullah, “this is very strong medicine. I have written the name of Allah all over these designs, and when I have completed the writing I will fold it up and sew it into a little piece of leather. The young men will buy it to wear about their necks. Thus they will be assured of an attractive personality, and hence, the favor of the young maidens.”

“What foolishness! And do you really believe that this charm will do all that you say it will?” said the missionary.

“If God wills it, so it will,” replied the teacher. “But that is not my concern. This is my business. I write this sort of charm for any desired cause. By choosing different portions of the Koran and other designs I can make a charm that, when placed over the door to your house, will protect it against fire. Just last evening thieves attempted to break into many different compounds but they were unable to do so.”

"You mean that those places that possessed one of your charms were not entered?"

The malam merely smiled triumphantly.

"What of Haruna's compound? Thieves broke into his place and stole most of his clothing. Did he not have charms, too?" Mai-nasara continued.

"And so he did."

"All of which proves that it could not have been the charm which prevented the thieves entering the other places."

"The white man does not understand the black man's way. Doubtless the thief which broke into Haruna's house possessed a stronger charm than Haruna did, and hence the power of Haruna's charm was overcome."

"Do you mean to say that you mullahs will even sell charms to thieves to aid them in their evil deeds, to rob and steal and murder?" asked the missionary, astonished.

"What is that to me? If the thief wants to buy my charms, and is willing to pay me enough, let him do what he will with it! Did the thief last night not escape even though many of those who chased him were strong men? How do you account for that if it were not Allah who helped him to escape?"

By this time the others were listening with great interest to the discussion.

"Mai-nasara, have you ever visited Bantasu?" continued the mullah.

"If you mean Buntasu where the pagan Hausas live, yes, I have been there many times. But why do you ask?"

"Sometime when you are there, notice, if you will, the charm tied to the plow of every farmer in that village. Although these people are pagans, and worship the plow, they come to us for charms to insure the favor of Allah upon their plowing and crops so that they will have enough to eat and with which to make their beer."

About this time, Alhaji himself appeared in the doorway. Entering into the conversation, he said:

"Oh, yes, that is all true, Mai-nasara." Removing his cap he showed there a tiny leather packet tied.

"That I always carry with me wherever I go. It protects me against the mouth of my enemies when they curse me."

Reaching deep into the folds of his gown, he produced a worn leather pouch in which he kept his money. Tied to the drawstring of his money pouch was a small charm. "This," he exclaimed, "is the *rariyar hannu* medicine which keeps my money from slipping through my hands too quickly."

The whole company laughed as each one began to produce various charms for almost innumerable purposes. Some had charms to keep peace among their many wives, others to insure good fortune, protection against mishap and danger, and some to ward off evil spirits. One charm, which all seemed to possess in one form or another, was the "medicine" to assure them of the favor of Mohammed when, at the Judgment Day,

they would stand before him to be chosen to inherit heaven or hell.

When the old chief of the district died and a successor was to be chosen, the likely candidates sought the help of the learned mullahs to pray for them that they might be elected to the chieftainship. Thus, mullahs by the dozen would congregate about their choice candidate, and, writing out prayers on their wooden slates with a black, inky substance, would wash the prayers off into a cup, and the one prayed for would drink the distasteful potion. Prayers by the hundred were written and drunk in this manner. These prayers, while they were to be purchased, were made on a credit basis until the announcement should be made as to who the chief would be. If not chosen, the prayers said for the other candidates were of no effect and worthless, and hence there was no obligation.

One day Mai-nasara visited the chief of the town where he lived. This man was the likeliest candidate for the chieftainship of the district. During the visit many prayers were drunk. As he rose to leave, the chief asked all his courtiers to leave the room while he had a word privately with the white man. Closeted together, the chief asked the white man to pray for him that he might gain the position sought.

“Galadima, I have prayed and I will continue to pray that God may choose the best man for the job. He knows best, and who am I to tell Him whom to make chief of us all. Nevertheless, while my own choice

would be favorable to you, I have nothing to say in the matter.”

Early one morning, not long after the Galadima had requested the interest of the missionary, a messenger brought a message to the mission house. It was from the Galadima, by the hand of his most trusted servant. It read:

“Be it known to you that I have just received word that I have been appointed chief of the whole district. I thank God, I thank the Governor, I thank the District Officer, and I thank you. May God give us long life together.”

When the Galadima had been duly installed in his new office and moved to the provincial headquarters, some eleven miles away, Mai-nasara and his wife, Zumunta, paid him a visit. They were met by the chamberlain at the gate of the block-long building which was the chief's compound. Led by the hand through many dark doorways and courtyards, they were finally ushered into a large square room with high vaulted ceiling. Two chairs had been placed before the raised dais, whereon the chief now sat. As the missionaries entered the room, he arose and came forward to greet them with a hearty handshake. For a time they visited together.

Finally their host called to a servant, and, in an adjacent room, a number of singers and drummers began to chant a rhythmic dialogue. It proved to be a song of the history of the man with whom they were visiting, the Emir. Listening intently, they heard



how he, when but a lad, had accompanied his father on warring expeditions before the coming of the white man. They learned of his great courage, bravery, and integrity. Then the singer, drawing closer and closer to the open doorway, began the story of the accession to the chieftainship of the whole province.

"Others of the candidates for the position," chanted the singers, "had had many mullahs to pray for them, and had drunk prayers until their stomachs were the size of huge water pots. Adamu, the friend of the white teacher, had excelled them all. He had had one thousand and one mullahs to pray for him. The one was greater than the thousand. The favor of God has rested upon him because of the one."

The drummers broke loose in a frenzy of beating. Dancers circled, twirled, and flung themselves into the air. They outdid themselves, endeavoring to express their great joy and happiness.

The old chief evidenced his great pleasure by showering the people with gifts of money.

When again they were alone, the missionaries thanked the chief for his kindness and honor. Then they explained that no thanks were due to them, as they had done little or nothing to affect his choice, since they were not in positions of authority in government. He replied that he realized that. He said that he knew the favor of God was with him because of them, and that he would do all in his power to aid them.

This greatly displeased the mullahs who them-

selves coveted the honors. They sought to stir up prejudice against the missionaries. They cautioned the people against drinking water from their tank as the missionaries had put medicine in the water to cause all who drank of it to become Christians. Many patients were warned not to take the missionaries' medicine as it would surely make them Christians. But try as they would, their own people, whom they had held so long in the bondage of fear, refused to believe these lies and continued, in ever-increasing measure, to look to the white man as the source of help and truth.

## X

### TRAGEDY

I am going to stay with you," cried a lad of about twelve.

"Is that so? I have never seen you before. I don't know who you are, or where you come from," replied Mai-nasara, as the two stood together, having met near the mission station.

"White man, I have walked forty miles today. I heard that perhaps the white people would take me in and so I ran away."

"From whom did you run away?"

"I ran away from a *sharifi* (traveling magician). I carried his goods from villige to village. But the work is too heavy for me; besides, he does not wish to have me work for him any longer, so he has not been giving me any food to eat."

"Who told you that we would help you?"

"I heard of you from some camel drivers who stopped here for medicine recently. They said that they saw several boys here and so I came hoping that perhaps I could stay with you, too. I will work for you. I will do anything, if only you will let me stay here with you," implored the little fellow.

"I am sorry, son," replied Mai-nasara, shaking his head. "We do not have room for any more boys to live here with us than those who work for us. We

already have enough boys to work. I suggest that you go down to the town, find some friend there with whom you can stay tonight. You had better hurry, as you see there is a storm approaching.”

But the boy stayed. As Mai-nasara and Zumunta were eating their evening meal that night they were talking about the boy. Though the missionary had suggested that he leave and go to the town to spend the night, the boy, on his knees and reaching out his arms, cried,

“Oh, white man, do not drive me away! You are the only father I have. I have no friend in the village with whom to stay, and who will give me food to eat tonight? Just let me stay here, somewhere, anywhere.”

That night Mamman slept in the kitchen. Early the next morning, as the missionary awakened, he saw Mamman chopping wood for the kitchen stove. When that job was finished, the lad quickly found another, pulling weeds, so anxious was he to please.

Several days later, in conversation with Alhaji, Mai-nasara mentioned the lad.

“Who is the boy? Where did he come from?” inquired Alhaji.

“He says his name is Mamman. He came to us a few days ago, tired and hungry. He wants to stay with us on the hill. But you know yourself how filled up we are, with sick patients living in every available space. Why, some even spent the night in the chapel recently. Then, too, we are so busy trekking out in the villages just now that we really don’t have the time to look after anything more.”

"If you don't want him, send him down to me, Mai-nasara. He can sleep with my pupils and going to our school will keep him out of mischief."

"Well, Alhaji," replied Mai-nasara, rising to go, "I haven't decided what to do with him yet. I would like very much to keep him, but with all our other work I don't see how we can do it. Thank you for your offer, I'll let you know later."

"What do you suppose Alhaji offered to do today, Zumunta?" mentioned Mai-nasara that evening.

"I have no idea. I hope it hasn't anything to do with Mamman," she returned.

"Exactly so. You must be a mind reader. He offered to take the boy off our hands."

"Oh, I wish we could keep him a little while, at least. When I look at the poor little fellow, so thin, and he really isn't well. He came to the dispensary today and I treated him for worms. He has several ulcers on his legs, and his feet are cracked so badly," said Zumunta sympathetically.

"Yes, and more than that. If he did go to Alhaji it would mean that he would still have to beg for his food like the rest of the Koranic pupils. It would mean that he would grow up to become a Mohammedan, probably, while if he could stay here with us he would hear the Gospel every day. There must be some way to help him."

"Why don't you shift things around in the wood shed for the time being, until we can find something better?"

And so Mamman stayed with the missionaries.



*A Koranic school, where children recite and memorize the Koran, and learn the precepts of Islam.*

Rather than let him go to Alhaji's school for training children in the way of Mohammed, or turn him loose just to wander about from village to village, they let him stay in the woodshed. It was not long until, living daily with other Christian boys and learning to read and write, Mamman accepted Christ as his Saviour.

Iro was a boy of fifteen who lived with his widowed mother. He worked at the mission, sweeping the barren compound clean as a precaution against snakes and scorpions. Every day the boy attended the gospel service held for dispensary patients.

One afternoon, as Mai-nasara walked across the compound, the lad called as he passed, and said:

"White man, the words which you speak every morning to the sick folk are sweet to my stomach. Will you give me a picture of the prophet Jesus?"

Iro was soon seated on the floor of the Mission house. A number of friends were lounging about on the front veranda near the open doorway. Reading over and over again the simple verses of Scripture showing the way of salvation, the boy responded and said he wanted to believe. The missionary reminded him that it might mean hardship and persecution. They prayed together, and Iro left to go down the rocky winding pathway to his home.

As he drew near the compound of his parent, Iro saw a group of people crowded around his mother talking excitedly. When Iro's mother saw him approaching, she began cursing him and fairly shouting, "You *kafiri* (apostate), you dog, you dog, you are not my son!

Curse the day I brought you forth! Leave! May I never see you again!”

Iro went to the market in the center of the town to buy food with the few pennies he had earned working for the missionary. However, the word had preceded him, even there, that he had forsaken the religion of his fathers and become a follower of the white man's religion. They refused to sell him food. Turning aside to find his playmates, with whom he had been accustomed to spend most of his time, they sprang up as he came near and ran away ridiculing him, saying that they did not care to associate with a *kafiri*.

What could a boy of fifteen do but run away? No word was heard from Iro for a long time. Zumunta visited his mother from time to time, but if she knew where her son was she did not make it known.

About a year later the missionaries stopped over night at a distant mission station with some friends. As the car came into the compound, a crowd of children and young folk came from the town to see it. To their great surprise, here was Iro among them. What was he doing here? After some time of playing with the children, the call to prayer came from the village and they all left—all except Iro. Seated there on the veranda, the missionary and the neglected boy talked of the people and things back in the home town where Iro had been born and reared. Then Mai-nasara asked the all-important question:

“Iro, what about the Jesus matter?”



Looking about him, to the right, to the left, and behind, and seeing no one close enough to hear, he said: "Well, I still believe with my heart, but I don't tell anyone else, for you know what happened last year."

Yes, those experiences could never be forgotten, for with the confessing of Christ as his Saviour, Iro had left mother, home, and friends, and run away to escape persecution.

How many other boys, afraid of the opposition of their elders, would confess the Lord as their Saviour if they but had some place of refuge, if there were someone to care enough to help them get started in their new life?

Back in the village, from which Iro had run away, the shadows of night were fast closing in. As the moonlight began to shine down into the open sandy square in the middle of the town, a number of young folk gathered. As they sat on the ground, three men, drums in their hands and slung about their necks, commenced to beat out their staccato and syncopated rhythm.

On one side were the flickering oil lamps of the vendors of kola nuts, roasted meat, and cigarettes. Mangy dogs lay licking their sore bodies as the myriads of flies now gave them rest with the close of day. Out from the midst of the crowd ambled an old man, bearded, toothless, and grinning. The drummers circled about him as he commenced to dance. Louder and louder they drummed. Higher and higher the old man shouted and sang, until abruptly the drummers stopped. The old man, now the master of ceremonies, called to

the young girls to dance. Two by two they came running forward and backward, keeping time with the rhythm as they threw their bodies into lewd and suggestive contortions.

As the missionary lay on his cot in a nearby hut, sleepless, though tired and weary, the dancing and drumming continued until early morning. The girls were singing now, and he listened to make out their song. One of the girls, leading the others, would ask a question, and the others would answer. Thus, with the old man as a go-between, the girls on one side would invite the boys and men across the square to buy their bodies for pleasure, until all was quiet at last.

Many such young girls, of eight to twelve, would spend their nights somewhere, their whereabouts unknown to their unconcerned parents. As they returned home in the early morning, the only question to be asked of them would be as to their fortunes of the night. How much money did they take? Rarely can it be said, with truth, that a boy or girl in a Hausa Moslem village will reach the age of twelve morally clean.

As Mai-nasara and Zumunta stood beside the bed of their tiny baby girl they thanked God once more that this little one would have the opportunity to know something better than the thousands of little black boys and girls all around her. They asked their Heavenly Father to look down in mercy and compassion upon Hausaland, where so many boys and girls were growing up in the tenderness of youth, amid the filth and

degradation so common to a Moslem community, without the slightest possibility of coming to know about Jesus, who calls unto them and says:

“Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.”

## XI

### ALHAJI DISCUSSES THE DEITY OF JESUS CHRIST

**P**erfect bedlam reigned in Alhaji's hut. Here as usual, at this hour, was Alhaji, seated on the familiar goat skin, with a half dozen small boys circled about him. Their wooden slates in hand, the lads repeated over and over again, aloud, the words of the prayers and portions of the Koran. Alternately writing and reading, they labored on. Alhaji, looking up, saw Mai-nasara standing in the doorway watching them. With a word he dismissed his pupils and invited his friend to enter.

Mai-nasara picked up a slate and began to read aloud the words written thereon. The old man smiled and said, "Will you too, become my pupil?"

"Where did you gain your learning, Alhaji?" asked the missionary.

"I started in just such a school as this, to learn the precepts and commandments of Allah given to us through the prophet. My father was a very learned teacher and well versed in the traditions. He sent me away for six years to a distant friend of his. This is our custom."

"But how are these boys fed and clothed? These pupils of yours, for instance; who supports them?"

"On Friday, our holy day, they go from house

to house begging, and the townspeople, expecting them, have usually set aside a gift of some kind for them. We are commanded of the prophet to give alms to those who are learning the way of Allah.”

Then the old man, changing the conversation, asked, “Mai-nasara, is it true that you have the book of the prophet *Yahaya* (John)? Last evening Malam Amadu told us that you had read to him from the book of *Yahaya* and we were discussing what you had told him.”

“And so I do, my friend,” answered the missionary. He produced his Bible and opened it to the Gospel of John. “But why do you ask?”

“You made the statement that *Yahaya* was the forerunner of *Almasihu*” (Christ)?

“Let me read it from the *Linjila* (New Testament), Alhaji. Then it is not I who am saying it but *Yahaya* himself.” Mai-nasara read the whole first chapter of John to the old man, who sat lost in thought.

“Is it really true that the Christians look upon *Almasihu* as the Son of God? That would make Him the same as God. Of course, that is inconceivable. How would it be possible for God to have a son? It is blasphemy to say that God might have had a wife, for God is One, above all others, and there is none equal to Him. You Christians believe then in three gods, not one?”

“What do you mean, three gods, Alhaji? interrupted Mai-nasara.

“God Himself, Jesus, and Mary.”

“I am glad that you have asked me, Alhaji. For that gives me the opportunity to correct what is a common mistake in your idea regarding the beliefs of the followers of Christ. It is equally blasphemous, to us, to consider Mary as equal with God. Neither do we recognize more than one God. But, of Jesus, we believe what the Scriptures have told us. The prophets foretold the time and place of His coming into the world many hundreds of years before He came. He was born of a virgin, and performed miracles and marvelous works that point to the possession of divine power. He Himself testified that He and the Father were one.

“Since you, yourselves, believe that Jesus is the only sinless person who ever lived, He certainly could not have told a lie. Thus, when *Yahaya* calls Him the Son of God, we must believe it, even though we cannot understand it. We believe that Jesus did not have His beginning when He was born of Mary, but that He was with the Father from the beginning. Only when He came down from the presence of God the Father to the earth, to offer Himself as the Saviour of the world, did He become a man among us. Thus, God prepared a body through the virgin Mary for the expression of His Word to mankind, in order that He might be able to lead us back to God, from whom we have strayed through sin.”

“You say it very well, Mai-nasara, but how can two things or three be one?” questioned the old man.

“When we speak of God and the things that pertain to Him, we must not expect to be able to under-

stand it all. But look here, Alhaji, what is that light up there in the sky?" asked the missionary, rising to his feet and going to the doorway.

"That is the sun."

"What is it that spreads itself all over the ground?"

"That is the sun."

"What is it which warms your body when you go out of doors into the sunlight?"

"That would be the sun."

"And so how many suns are there, Alhaji?"

"There is but one sun, white man, although there would appear to be three different kinds of sun."

"Just so, when we come to the problem of the Triune God, Alhaji. There, seemingly, appears to be more than one God, but the truth is that there is but One. We cannot expect to understand the whole truth about God when we cannot even understand the many wonders of the world which is the creation of His hand. The Word of God plainly tells us that God is Three-in-one: God, the Father; God, the Son; and God, the Holy Spirit. So it behooves us to believe it in faith."

"I am glad for your explanation of your belief, Mai-nasara. Do all your people believe this?"

"Not all of our people believe in Jesus as the Son of God, Alhaji. That is a mystery which God has not revealed. He has revealed Himself in truth to many of our nation, but the majority continue in their own way, which is right in their own eyes, and the end of which is death, according to the wisest man who ever lived."

"But why is it so important that Jesus must be the Son of God?"

“If Christ was not the only begotten Son of God, then the Scriptures are not the Word of God. Then Jesus Christ, Himself, was the basest of liars; and we are without hope in the world. The foundation of our hope of salvation is that it was God Himself who gave His life a ransom for our sins. If He was not divine, then He could not bring us to God. That is why we do not credit any other person with the power to help us on the Day of Judgment.”

“Very well, Mai-nasara. I do not wish to offend you but the books of the prophets in which you trust are no longer the true Word of God. The prophet told us that there were no less than one hundred and four books sent down. Of these only four remain. They are the Law of Moses, the Psalms of David, the *Linjila* (Gospel) of Jesus, and the Koran. The first three are highly respected by us, but they have been corrupted and changed. The revelation of God, through the prophet in the holy Koran, has superseded them, and hence, is the only one to be fully trusted. Accordingly, when the prophet tells us that the curse of God rests upon all those who make another equal to God, it is a fearful thing.”

“Do not be afraid of offending me, Alhaji. You have as much right to believe what you do as do I. But, of course, one of us must be wrong. You believe that I am wrong, and, likewise, I believe that you are wrong. The things which we are discussing are deep and infinitely beyond human understanding. The time



is late and I must go. May I suggest that we ask God to reveal to our minds His truth, for, as you Hausas say, 'Truth is the daughter of God.' Good-by, Alhaji."

"Until tomorrow, Mai-nasara, spend the night in peace."

## XII

### MALAM IBRAHIM ACCEPTS JESUS CHRIST

Although Alhaji refused to accept the testimony of the Gospel of John as authoritative, nevertheless it was the source of much interest and discussion among the mullahs and elders of the village. They were reading and rereading its pages, burning the midnight peanut oil in their tiny clay lamps.

Into such a group one evening wandered a traveler from the distant village of Daura. The man, himself a learned teacher, was received into the discussion. He was amazed and pleased to find this book in their possession and listened with avidity to the reader as he droned on. Finally he asked where the book was obtained.

Malam Amadu, perhaps the youngest of the group, and a fine Arabic scholar replied, "The teacher on the hill has loaned it to us."

Early the next morning Malam Ibrahim, of Daura, a tinker by trade, approached the mission house.

"*Allah ya gafarta malam*" (May God grant forgiveness to the teacher), he hailed the missionary.

"Good morning, friend, and how did you spend the night?" answered Mai-nasara from the open door of his study.

"By the leave of Allah, I am in good health. If

the teacher will excuse me, I have a word to speak," said Malam Ibrahim, bowing low at the door.

"Enter, and be seated on the mat. I am happy to see you. What is on your mind?"

"Last evening I was the guest of Malam Amadu. He tells me that he is a friend of yours. He, with many others, spent most of the night reading a small book, the *Bishara Ta Yahaya* (Gospel of John). For long I have desired to see and read this book. At last I have found it, praise be to Allah! As they read it aloud, its words were like honey in my mouth. Is it possible that you would have another copy that you would loan to me?"

Going to the bookcase, Mai-nasara selected a copy of the Gospel of John, written in the Hausa language, but in Arabic script. Handing it to Malam Ibrahim, the two spent an hour poring over it together, as the missionary pointed out its primary teachings. Then, excusing himself, the man left.

Three weeks later Malam Ibrahim came to the missionary with these words:

"White man, the words of this book are sweet in my stomach. They make me very happy."

Overjoyed, Mai-nasara sat down with him, and they discussed the words of the book of John. From beginning to end, question after question was settled, until, when asked if he would accept Christ as his Saviour, Malam Ibrahim said he would. Then he began to unfold his story.

He had been a most wicked man in his youth.

Although learned in the teachings of the Moslem religion, they had never been able to give him the strength to overcome the temptations and sin all about him. He knew that he was not right with God, but did not know how to remedy the situation. One time a caravan of camel drivers from the desert had stopped for several days in the home of his father. They had told of a book, which the white man had, which spoke of a different way, the book of the prophet *Yahaya* (John). From that time on he had sought the book everywhere, determined to find it. At last, God had led him here, and, through it, had brought peace to his troubled heart.

“Malam Ibrahim, tomorrow morning there will be the usual gospel service which precedes the giving out of medicine. If you truly wish to follow Christ, it is best to confess Him openly before your fellow men. It may mean ridicule, and even persecution, but God will give you strength. You will be better able to withstand the temptations of the old life if you now take an open stand for Christ. I will do all I can to help you and will stand by you, but your trust must be in God who will never leave nor forsake you. Will you do that?”

Next morning a larger crowd than usual gathered before the dispensary waiting for medicine. The short gospel service was ended, and the missionary asked the hearers if there was any one of them who would care to receive Christ as his Saviour. A moment's silence, and then Malam Ibrahim rose to his feet and said in a loud voice,

"I accepted Jesus Christ as my Saviour last evening," and sat down. Every eye was fastened on him with a look of scorn. Many laughed outright and some cursed, muttering to themselves.

During the next eight days Malam Ibrahim did little else besides learn to read the letters of the alphabet, as would a child. He wanted to be able to read the Scriptures which were printed in the Roman characters, only the Gospel of John being printed in the old Arabic. From early morning until late at night he poured over them with the help of the missionaries. Before two weeks had passed, Ibrahim was able to read his New Testament, slowly to be sure, but with understanding. His beaming face testified to the change that had taken place within his soul. Ibrahim had met Christ.

A few nights after Ibrahim had witnessed publicly to his faith in Christ a committee of three of the elders of the village called on him. The spokesman, Alhaji himself, introduced the reason for their visit.

"Malam Ibrahim," he began, "word has spread throughout the town that a few days ago you did a very strange thing. You are a learned mullah, a teacher of the precepts of Allah and the prophet. You are not a child, easy to be misled. Surely, you did not mean what you said, namely, that you had renounced the faith of your fathers, and have become a follower of the white man's religion. That is impossible! That is unbelievable! It is unthinkable that a Moslem could become a Christian. Was not Mohammed the last and final prophet sent by God? Did not the Koran, the holy

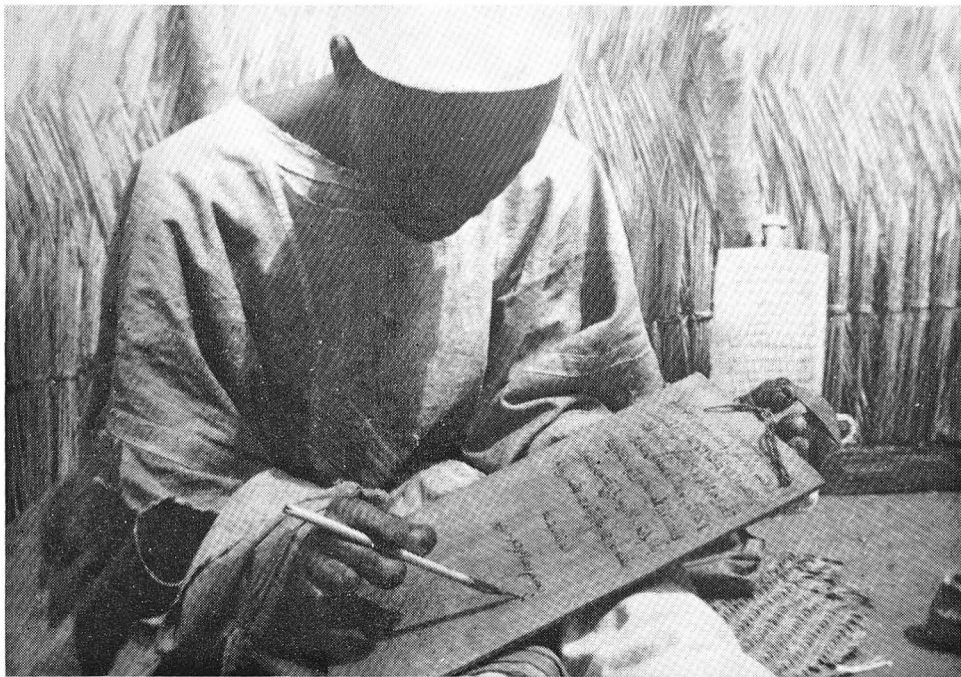
and uncreated Koran, supersede all former revelations? Is it not the only trustworthy word and way of Allah? Surely, you could not have been honest in the shameful thing which you did!"

Malam Ibrahim was silent for a moment. Then, as he began to speak, he looked his interrogator in the face intently, and said,

"I have no desire to antagonize those who are like a father to me. I do not despise those who have come here this evening. As you have said, I am a man, not a child. I, too, have a beard and my keepings of the fast have been many. But, fathers, what I did on last market day was honest and true. You will recall that, about a month ago, several of us were spending our evenings around a book called *Yahaya*. I had long sought that book. A voice within my heart had told me I should seek it. That night I found it, and so, early the next morning, I borrowed my own copy from the white man. I read it through many times, even forgetting to eat my food. The words of that book were as sweet as honey. Now I know Jesus was no mere prophet, among many other prophets, but truly the Living Word of God, for *Yahaya* says so, and I find it in my heart to believe it."

"Stop! Enough! By the prophet, and the name of Allah, may your tongue rot in your mouth! You infidel! You apostate!" cried the men angrily.

"Do not be angry. May God give you patience. You came to see me this evening without my invitation.



*Writing verses from the Koran on the Moslem writing board. Often the writing is washed off and the liquid sold as "medicine."*

Although I am glad to talk with you, it is not necessary that you stay.

“But wait, does not the Koran itself speak of Jesus? I have sought out His Name and found it twenty-five times mentioned in the Koran. Although the prophet honored Adam, Noah, Abraham, and Moses, he spoke of Christ as greater than them all. Only Christ was born of a virgin, even as the Koran will testify. He had no human father. Many of the wonderful things He did we have long known from our own books. But what we have not known, or refused to believe, was that Jesus died, was crucified. We have always believed, as the Koran teaches, that God was so pleased with what Christ had done on the earth, that He sent angels to receive Him up into heaven. That some one else was crucified in His place, even our own books are in disagreement. Some say that He died, some say that Judas was changed to look like Him, and was crucified instead, while still others say it was Barabbas or Simon of Cyrene. But no, gentlemen, I know now that it was Jesus Himself who was crucified, for that was the purpose of God in sending Him into the world. By his death on the cross, and through the shedding of His blood, we have remission of our sins.”

At this point, one of the old men leaped to his feet. “His words are dung, a stench in my nostrils! Why do we sit here with this *kafiri* (apostate), this dog of dogs! Let us be gone!”

The other two remained seated.

“If Jesus was God, as you say the book of *Yahaya*



says, why did He drink water, eat food, and why was He tired so that He slept? Surely, it is blasphemous to so consider God," reasoned Umaru, who remained with Alhaji.

"I myself asked the white man that question," said Ibrahim. "He told me that Christ voluntarily took upon Himself the weakness and frailty of humanity so that He might bring us to God. He told me a story. He said:

"Suppose that I had a message I wanted to send to that ant there crawling across the ground. If I speak in English he does not hear me. If I speak in Hausa he does not hear me. If I speak in Arabic he still continues on his way without listening to me. He cannot understand me or anything that I say or do. But, if I had the power to become an ant like he himself is, then I could speak to him in his own language, and tell him the message. Just so, God looking down upon us, who are far smaller in his sight, than that ant is in ours, sent us the prophets, but we listened not. He sent us trouble, but we continued on our way. Finally, He decided to send His Word among us in the person of a Man who could speak our language and show us the way to God. Because He was more than man, He could lead us back to God. He knows the way, for as it is recorded of Him in the book of *Yahaya*, He said He, Himself, was the Way.' Gentlemen, something in my stomach tells me that story is true. I believe it."

It was early morning before Alhaji and his friend left Malam Ibrahim. In parting, and, as they left, Ibrahim said:

“I know that following this way I will lose many friends. Many will refuse to eat with me. My wife will perhaps leave me, and my children will curse their father. However, this world in relation to the next, is like a man with two wives . . . ‘If he is pleased with one of them, he is displeased with the other.’ ”

Walking across the town to their respective homes the two men were strangely silent. Although the hour was late, somehow Alhaji was sleepless. The many things he had heard that night had struck him deeply in his heart, even though outwardly he had despised Ibrahim for his stand with Christ.

### XIII

#### ALHAJI OBSERVES THE FEAST

Since long before dawn the noise of pounding grain and the shouts of children's voices could be heard. Farmers, and those living in small villages in the country, were passing the mission house in an unending stream. It was the tenth day of the first month of the new year, a holy day in Islam. It was the day of the feast of the mutton. Then as the eastern sky brightened, with the sun soon to rise, the sound of the muezzin calling the faithful to prayer, brought a hush as they prostrated themselves on the ground wherever they were.

Several hours later the people gathered in a great crowd near the compound of the chief. As they waited, the silence was suddenly broken by a rifle shot which pierced the air, and instantly the people shouted. Mounted on a beautiful black horse, the chief appeared in the doorway. The procession formed behind him, and quickly passed out of the town, through the gate, to a selected sacred spot. Dismounting and arranging themselves comfortably some distance behind the chief, the people sat on the ground. The chief mullah of the village stood erect. He was an aged patriarch, with his gray head wrapped in a long white turban, and his spotless white robe wrapped about him. Facing the crowd, with the Koran in his hand, he began to address

the people. They listened as he alternately read and exhorted them in the precepts of Allah.

Several young men approached leading a fine big ram, pure white. There before the chief mullah they stopped, holding the ram on the ground. With the prayer *Bismillah* (in the name of God) upon his lips and a knife in his hand, the mullah sacrificed the ram, allowing the blood to pour forth upon the ground.

With the slain animal before them, the people stood together. Following the lead of the mullah, who now turned his back to them so that they might all face the east, they began to pray in unison. Alternately prostrating themselves on the ground, and rising with hands outstretched toward heaven in supplication, the people prayed.

Their prayer finished, the crowd dispersed. Returning to their homes the head of each family group again made a sacrifice similar to that of the chief mullah. If they were able to afford it, the sacrifice would be a pure white ram. In many of the homes it was a chicken. This second sacrifice was for the family, as the women and children were not permitted to take part in the first one. The conclusion of this rite was the signal for great celebration and feasting. The whole day and night following was a display of hilarity and hospitality, as friend and neighbor visited in each other's homes.

Late that afternoon Alhaji climbed the hill to visit his friends, the missionaries. As they sat together in the living room of the mission house, they were discussing the day and what had taken place.

“Alhaji, just what does the feast of the mutton and the slaying of the ram signify?” asked Mai-nasara.

“It is merely another one of the customs and practices of our religion brought down to us through many generations, and we follow on in the way of our fathers,” replied the old man.

“But what is its significance? What was the reason for it in the beginning? There must be a purpose to it.”

Alhaji was silent for a time. Then lifting his head, he said,

“Yes, Mai-nasara, the books tell us the reason. Long, long ago there was a prophet named Abraham. One day God commanded Abraham to take his son up on a mountain top and there to offer him as a sacrifice. And so Abraham, obedient to the will of God, took his son Ishmael and went to the place where he prepared to sacrifice his son. Then, just as he was about to plunge the knife into his son’s breast, God, calling to him, said, ‘Abraham, I know that you will do all that I have commanded you to do, but spare your son. Catch the ram caught in the thicket and bind it upon the altar, sacrifice it in place of your son!’ And so Abraham did as God commanded him. God promised Abraham to make a great nation of his son Ishmael, and so He has, for all the followers of the prophet (Mohammed) are his seed. This is the reason that today we have sacrificed a ram, even as the prophet taught us to do.”

“That is a most interesting story, Alhaji. Do you

know that that same story is found in the book of Moses, with but one notable exception? Many centuries before the prophet was born, Moses recorded the story of Abraham and the sacrifice of his son, Isaac, on Mount Moriah. Strange, that now in your story, it should be Abraham's other son, Ishmael!"

"Which proves again, Mai-nasara, that the books of Moses are not trustworthy."

"Why do you suppose God asked Abraham to make such a sacrifice, Alhaji? asked the missionary.

"He was doubtless testing his servant, Abraham."

"True, and He found that he was faithful. But God must have known beforehand that he was going to prove faithful, for He knows all things. Don't you suppose that God was also teaching Abraham something?" continued Mai-nasara.

"The doings of God, who can know them?" stated the old man piously.

"Alhaji, listen to me. Although you may not be willing to agree, the story which you have just told me today is a true picture of what God has done in bringing salvation to man. The Scriptures say that 'without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin.' God was showing Abraham that day, and has been showing men ever since, through that story, that it was necessary for blood to be shed, another life to be taken, if the life of the sinner was to be spared. God provided an innocent lamb to die upon the altar in place of Abraham's son.

“In the same way, God provided the innocent and sinless Lamb of God to die upon the altar of sacrifice for us, so that in place of our having to die, He died for our sins. *Yahaya* (John), in his book, has said that Jesus was that Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. That is the true Word of God, Alhaji. I believe it with all my heart. I know that Jesus is the only One who could meet that high standard of perfection, as even your own books say. And so, if He is the only One who could pay with His life, He is the only Saviour, and not only the Saviour of the white man but of the black, the Christian as well as the Moslem. I pray every day, Alhaji, that God may give you to see in Jesus the True Way.”

The old man sat for some time, silent, lost in thought. It seemed that a great battle was being fought in his heart. Earnestly, the missionary prayed for the Light of the world to dawn in the tired old man's breast.

“Alhaji, I am so certain of the truth of what I have told you that I have left my father's house, my people, my loved ones and my country, to come here and to help you find God through Jesus Christ. Many others, too, in our country, who follow Christ, think about and pray for you every day. We want more than anything else to show you that Christ is the Saviour from sin and hell. You have never seen us doing anything else but tell this story of salvation. That is the purpose of our coming. I pray God that He will help you to see in Jesus, by faith, salvation from sin.”

Still Alhaji remained silent. The missionary too,

was still. The blessed Holy Spirit was speaking to the old man's heart. Then, almost visibly, he struggled. A shadow passed across his face. Suddenly it seemed cold. Alhaji rose to his feet and said,

“Mai-nasara, we have been friends and let us remain friends. I can see that you have something we do not have. What it is, I don't know. Today, may God grant forgiveness to the teacher, for the first time in my life I wonder which is the true way.”

Together the two walked out of the house and down the front walk to the gate of the mission compound. Turning to go, Alhaji bowed himself and said, “May God give peace to the teacher until tomorrow.”

Mai-nasara stood at the gate watching the old man shuffle down into the valley. In his heart he longed more than ever to possess the power to bring new life, the Life of God, to these people.



## XIV

### SO, WHICH SHALL IT BE . . . ?

**I**f we consider numbers, Islam is one of the largest of all the non-Christian religions. From the geographical standpoint, Moslems spread their prayer mats toward Mecca in almost every country of the world. An accurate estimate of the total number of Mohammedans in the world is difficult, but it may be safely placed at more than 300,000,000, or one out of every eight people in the world. Islam alone, among the religions of the world, can claim to have met and vanquished Christianity.

In Africa, Islam has covered the largest area in its conquest and missionary propaganda. Thirty-six per cent of Africa's entire population is Mohammedan, or fifty-nine million souls out of one hundred and sixty-four million. The situation is alarming. North of twenty degrees latitude Moslems constitute ninety-one per cent of the total population. Their influence began at the Mediterranean in the eighth century and continues to sweep southward over the Sahara like some great sand and dust storm, blotting out the sunlight and blighting all life. Broadly speaking, it has reached the equator. The time has come when Christianity must meet Islam face to face.

Paganism, at last beginning to awaken out of its centuries-long sleep of seclusion in superstition, sin,

and darkness, is dissatisfied and seeking something different. In the near future Christianity and Islam will be the only religions in the field. Which shall it be in Africa? Shall it be Christ, or shall it be Mohammed? Shall it be Christianity or Islam?

The Church of Christ has not yet attacked this problem with the seriousness and earnestness of loving witness which the undertaking requires. When she does, her Lord will glorify His Church and Himself by crowning her efforts with success. Unless the Church awakens to the peril of Islam she may once more be defeated in Africa.

Across Africa, from east to west, the crescent throws its shadow over fifty-nine million Mohammedans. To deliver them from out of the shadow of death, God laid the burden of the Sudan upon the hearts and shoulders of three young men in 1893. With the great Moslem walled city of Kano, Nigeria, as their objective, these men, Walter Gowans, Thomas Kent, and Rowland Bingham set forth. When these early pioneers set foot on the West African shore, a few missionaries were working along the coast. None had penetrated the interior, where spread the great Sudanese kingdoms. Obstacles and difficulties were great, but with their faces set, they tramped through the jungles and swamps, over plains, and across rivers, "the love of Christ which constraineth us," pushing them forward. Two of this trio laid down their lives in that initial drive, thereby marking the trail over which many would follow, to carry the blessed Gospel of Christ to those who so sorely needed it.

The country was in turmoil owing to the devastating slave-raiding wars being carried on by the powerful Moslem kings of Sokoto and Kontagora. Several attempts were made to gain an entrance into the great northern kingdoms without success. For forty years "the gates of brass" were assaulted by faithful and fervent prayer warriors. Then the answer came and the doors began to swing open. Today we find seven million Mohammedan souls living in these districts now needing to be reached for Christ. Over two hundred and fifty missionaries are daily going up and down the sandy, desert trails of Northern Nigeria and French West Africa sowing the precious seed which is the Gospel. "The birds of the air" are quick to steal it away. The soil is hard and unproductive; we believe, with great assurance, that the faithful preparation of the soil is being done through the love of Christ, as manifested in caring for the physical suffering which abounds on every hand. The sowing of the seed, which is the Word of God, in the hearts of ready listeners by preaching, teaching, and distribution of the Scriptures, continues. Watered and cultivated by faithful, fervent, and unceasing prayer by God's people throughout the world, the seed will germinate, spring forth unto life eternal, promising a great harvest of Moslem souls. Already, Moslems are accepting Christ!

Some will say, why should we go to the trouble and expense of bringing Christianity to these people who have a religion of their own? Having chosen to follow Mohammed, do they not possess the right to seek God in their own way? Most certainly they are

sincere and zealous in their religion, and, if they are happy, why should we seek to force our religion upon them?

Such a question can be asked only by one who has never lived for any period of time in a Moslem village, or has never sought to know the true condition of the Moslem's heart. True, multitudes of Moslems put most Christians to shame by their devotion, sincerity, and zeal, even though it be misguided. But for one to say that the Hausa people have chosen to follow Mohammed and should not be molested is a contradiction of truth. The Hausa people are born, live their lives, and die in an environment which never, for eight centuries, has permitted one ray of Gospel light to penetrate and shine into their darkened minds. They have never had the opportunity to consider any other Saviour, any other way, any other hope, or any other salvation.

Three centuries before Columbus discovered America, Moslem hordes swept across North Africa and subdued or wiped out Christianity and conquered pagan tribes with the edge of the sword. Later, as the Introduction shows, the Western and Central Sudan were largely conquered. For these millions of Africans there was no liberty of choice. Either they became Mohammedans, or were taken as slaves, or else killed outright. During these centuries, as Islam has filtered and fused its way across the Sudan, the people have been called upon to follow a religion which has made bankrupt their moral nature, blocked their progress, blinded their eyes with prejudice and ignorance. "Their religion demands

ablution, but they have no water; fasting, but they always feast; almsgiving, but they have no money; pilgrimage, but Allah is everywhere.”

These urgent appeals from living missionaries, who form the long, thin line at the forefront of the battle against Islam, must not fall on deaf ears. They are a challenge to faith and to sacrifice. They are a call for immediate reinforcements. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself said, “Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest” (Luke 10:2).

For the evangelization of the Mohammedan world we need, first and foremost, a mighty avalanche of prayer. The winning of the lost to Christ is a three-strand cable, no strand of which can be missing or broken without notable slackening, if not total failure. God has clearly shown in His Word that He expects every child of His to have an essential part in the great enterprise of witnessing to every tribe and nation and tongue, that Jesus is the Christ. His command to “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature” is no less binding upon one Christian than another.

If John 3:16 really means “whosoever,” and is to be applied individually to every soul seeking after God, should not Matthew 28:19, 20, and Acts 1:8, be equally universal among those who know and love the Christ—who speaks to them, too? Yes, the business of every Christian, the charter of the Church, is to make the Good News of salvation available to all men.

Our time, our money, and our very lives belong wholly to Christ. Should we not use them to the furtherance of that which is dearest to His heart?

God expects every Christian to be a missionary. He expects YOU to do all YOU are able to do to carry the Gospel of Christ to Moslems. That means that if YOU are able to go, YOU must go. It means that if YOU are able to give, to give. It means that if YOU know how to pray, to pray. The call is for volunteers. Volunteers to go, to give, and to pray. Each one, old and young, deliberately to offer and dedicate himself or herself to the task.

The time is ripe. Christ's rightful glory has been given to Mohammed for many centuries in these many lands and in millions of hearts. Surely, our Saviour Himself is waiting to see and hear the Moslems turn to Him. God wills it. That was the battle cry of the old Crusaders. Yet, there was a thousand-fold more enthusiasm in the dark ages to wrest an empty tomb from the Saracens than there is in our day to bring them to the knowledge of a living Saviour. Shall we take up that cry in a nobler crusade with the Sword of the Spirit?

What is to be the measure of MY consecration? What is to be the extent of MY loyal devotion to the cause of MY King? Shall His place be occupied by a usurper and His glory be given to another? Shall we not arise and win back the lost kingdom? This is not a war of gun-boats, or of diplomacy, but a Holy War

with the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. Let God arise, and let His enemies be scattered!

If Islam is a challenge to faith, faith alone can and does accept the challenge.

“For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?”

“Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit saith the Lord.”

“Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my Name. Ask and ye shall receive.”

“Through the promise on God’s pages,  
Through His work in history’s stages,  
Through the Cross that crowns the ages,  
Show His love to them.”

—Dr. J. C. LANSING

### *The Sudan Interior Mission*

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