

prophet is not altogether free from calculations as to the possibilities of turning religion to a good account.

There is nothing startling in the idea of Mohammedanism attempting to gain converts. The followers of the Arabian prophet amount to about two hundred millions in Asia, Africa and Europe, and on the first mentioned continents converts are made yearly. Mohammedanism is far from being a petrified system. It is a living organism seemingly well suited to grow in the soil in which it was first planted. But it seems hard to believe that any Christian, who has even a faint idea of the doctrines taught by Jesus of Nazareth, can from honest conviction become a convert to Islam. No person normally constituted would preter the flickering flame of a tallow candle to the bright light of an electric lamp. Yet the experiment to convert Christians to Islam by means of persuasion has never been made; for the conversion is by fire and sword effected by the early Chahs cannot be classed as such. Our own country seems to be selected for the honor of being the first where the experiment is to be tried, and it will be interesting enough to see what will be the result.

Islam is a monotheistic religion, and like Judaism and Christianity claims to be founded on revelation. The teachings of the system are no doubt traceable to the Abrahamic tradition, as this had been preserved for centuries among the descendants of Ishmael. This tradition the founder of Islam purified to some extent and augmented with a few doctrines apparently borrowed from Jews and Christians. The essential dogmas of Islam are therefore the unity of God, His selection of Mohammed as His special messenger, and a final judgment, by which every human being will be assigned a place in paradise or hell, as the case may be. A slight coloring of Gnosticism seems to be perceptible in the doctrine of mediation between God and man, when it is asserted that revelations come only through angels or exalted human beings—prophets. As the chief of the angels, Gabriel is recognized and Mohammed, of course, holds the same place among the prophets.

As less important doctrines are taught the free will of man, which by the way is flatly contradicted by the doctrine of kismet according to which nothing can avert the unavoidable "fate."

The moral system of Islam consists exclusively of a very limited table of vices to be avoided and virtues to be practiced. It knows no broad principles as the foundation of right and wrong. It recognizes injustice, revenge, pride, lying, blasphemy, avarice, etc., as vices, and benevolence, justice, honesty, reverence, gratitude, mercy, kindness to slaves, patience and resignation to the will of God as virtues. It must be remembered, however, that what would be wrong to do to a Mohammedan is often considered lawful in dealings with outsiders. To lie to a "heathen" and to cheat him in every way is rather considered a virtue than otherwise.

The ceremonial law of Islam prescribes a great many duties and is of more consequence in the system than the

moral law. Most important among these is the commandment to pray five times a day, at regular hours. With the prayers are certain ablutions combined. The total abstinence from certain kinds of food and from strong drink is a special feature of the law, which, however, can be canceled by the ecclesiastical authorities if considered necessary. A fast lasting one month is prescribed once a year. That is to say, no food and no drink can be taken during the daytime in this month, but at night feasting even to excess is allowed. Once in a lifetime at least every faithful believer is expected to make a pilgrimage to Mecca and perform certain ceremonies in the sacred places.

These are a few of the principal features of Islam, the doctrines with which Mr. Webb proposes to favor the people of the United States.

FROM THEIR POINT OF VIEW.

Commenting upon Mr. Cleveland's extraordinary popularity, Col. Fellows, of New York, points out the interesting fact that 160 congressional nominating conventions last year declared for free silver coinage, and coupled the declaration with the most emphatic endorsement of Mr. Cleveland, "knowing him to be a specially uncompromising enemy of free coinage." This prompts an anti-silver exchange to remark that "a man so esteemed by the people will be forgiven, perhaps, even for the friendship of cranks and intemperate doctrinaires whose utterances he is unable to control and for whose indiscretions he is not justly responsible."

Of course, in the contemplation of eastern speculators and theologians, those who will not meekly consent to the striking down of the greatest commercial enterprise west of the Missouri river and one of the greatest in the world are "cranks," and those who insist upon it that silver was designed by nature and adapted by usage of mankind to fill the office of a circulating medium are "intemperate doctrinaires." It is such language and such lack of reasoning as this that makes the breach between the discoverers, plodders and men of enterprise in the West, and those who produce nothing and live only by connivance, juggling and questionable "deals" in the money centers of the East, widen day by day. It shows us out here how little we have to depend upon at their hands and illustrates once more and in a painfully vivid manner how futile are all attempts at compromise, arrangement or agreement upon any reasonable basis. So far as all practical results are concerned the Brussels conference has adjourned sine die.

"THE MISSING WORD."

The dispatches which have of late appeared in the papers regarding the newest subject of diversion in high circles in England—that is, "missing word" contests—have led some of those who accept everything of that kind from that source as a matter of course, to place it alongside of the baccarat and other scandals; whereas it is a

rather mild form of swindle with not even a semblance of scandal connected with it. A few days since the proprietors of a London newspaper which had been carrying on the game were arrested and taken to Bow Street police court for trial on a charge of violating the gaming act. The court held them guilty and in arriving at this conclusion decided that the word "competitions" in the invitations to take part in the games was an infringement of the act, whereupon he imposed a fine of one shilling each. Even this trifling sum the defendants used to pay, holding that the whole business was a stretch of judicial prerogative and altogether too technical to "hold water," and at once took an appeal.

It seems that the diversion, or whatever else it may be called, was not confined to the "common people" by any means, but had drawn to it some names that are marked up pretty high on the roll of "blue bloods," these including Henry of Battenberg, who won quite a comfortable little purse which he was not allowed to enjoy the pleasure of spending, because the government confiscated or at least withheld everything. It seems to have become a craze especially throughout the world's metropolis and was growing at a great rate when the intervention of the law occurred.

The plan of "competitions" was to publish a short poem or a sentence with an important word missing, which people were invited to supply, each guessing to forward a shilling, the proceeds or pool to be divided among those who selected the right word. The competitions soon became a craze, and so great was the demand for shillings that that coin began to disappear from the usual channels of trade. The opponents of gambling took the matter up, holding that the competitions were games of chance, while the newspaper proprietors held that they were games of skill, not chance.

The thing that now suggests itself is as to the disposition of the funds in the Bank of England derived from the competitions, which aggregate a vast sum, running up to considerable over £100,000. Suggestions are rife, but none are so far acceptable. There are of course many ways in which it could be applied and accomplish much good; but if it has been unlawfully or even improperly acquired, it is not the government's nor any particular individual's to dispose of. It is tolerably certain that none of the victims and none of the beneficiaries of the scheme will ever get a cent of it, which gives rise to the ever-ready question, Why?

CHRISTMAS THOUGHTS.

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." Thus sounded the jubilant strains of that memorable night when Christ was born. Multitudes of heavenly hosts praised the Lord, and shepherds listened in silent wonder; and the sweet harmonies of that anthem have ever since vibrated in the hearts of the redeemed, and more especially at this time of the year, when the Christian world celebrates the advent to the world of the greatest of men, the Son of God.