

Our Foreign Letter.

HAJI JAMILI.

Haji Jamili unquestionably deserves a place amongst the list of "Nurses of Note," as will be seen by the history of her life and work. Unfortunately, being a Mohomedan, it has been impossible to obtain a photograph, for Haji Jamili is a holy pilgrim and a devout follower of the Prophet. She was born at Beyrout, of lowly parentage, and was married at the early age of 11. As she grew into womanhood, she developed into an exceedingly handsome woman, both in figure and face. Conscious of her good looks, her energetic brain and character, having had no culture or discipline, got the better of her. Her uncontrolled feelings, aggravated by a restricted atmosphere and loveless marriage, caused her to kick over the traces and overstep not only Mohomedan customs, but those of all nations.

Her husband divorced her, her people disowned her, and she became outcast.

Realising her position, being really a lofty nature, she was overcome with remorse and repentance. Still young, beautiful, possessing great charm of manner, energy, and initiative, she went on a pilgrimage to Mecca.

Only those versed in Moslem customs and religion will understand how, though penniless, she could undertake such a costly, long, and perilous journey. At such times the generosity of the rich pilgrims to their poorer co-religionists would satisfy the most exacting demands of European Socialists, for they share alike and sit at the same table with their attendants and any strangers who plead for help. No better illustration can be given of the beautiful sense of equity and equality than the following story, which Arabian historians give as authentic. During the Caliphate of Omar, one of the Kings of Syria became a Moslem and went with him to Mecca. In the "House of God" a poor man trod on his cloak, at which the King was so enraged that he struck the man, who made his complaint to Omar. The Caliph told the King he must either allow the man to strike him back, or indemnify him to his satisfaction. On the King asking whether no difference was made between monarch and citizen, the reply was: "In the eyes of God and the law all men are equal."

The proud King returned to his kingdom and Christianity.

Thus it was that Jamili returned as a Haji to her native town. She had lost much of her beauty from all the hardships she had to bear during her pilgrimage, which in those days—about twenty years ago—was long, fatiguing, and full of perils from the attacks of the Bedouins of the desert. But her physical losses were compensated by a changed mind and spirit.

In her distress, she came and put her case clearly and truthfully to my father, who was known to be an admirer of the Koran, and by his knowledge of classical Arabic was in favour in the eyes of the Mohammedans, and therefore his opinion would carry weight.

He advised her to qualify as a trained midwife,

for such women did not exist in those days even amongst the Christians.

The difficulties were almost unsurmountable, for Jamili could not even read or write the alphabet! For a year she went to an infant school, sat on the same benches with the little children, and learnt how to read and write. Miss Cutler will doubtless remember her first admission at Kasr-el-Aini Hospital in Cairo, when she was Superintendent of the Midwifery School there.

Poor Haji Jamili was found incapable of following the classes, and was obliged to continue her elementary education in a Cairo Missionary School for another year before she could return and resume her course. She always speaks gratefully of Miss Cutler's kindness to her, but she does not like to refer to those days of humiliation and hardships now. On her return to Beyrout, armed with a "dibb-lomah" (diploma), as she calls it, helped by all the doctors, with whom she continued to be a great favourite, she soon acquired a large and lucrative practice. Money does wonders, even if it cannot do everything. Her good looks and fascinating ways resumed, her house compact and beautifully furnished, fine feathers on her person, and a pocket full of gold, Haji Jamili became a desirable *parti* for the Moslems notwithstanding her erratic and unconventional ways. It is needless to narrate the many *affaires de cœur* she had. She succeeded in getting officially nominated as the Municipal Midwife at a salary of £70 per annum. (This was apart from her private practice.) In her official position she made the acquaintance of the Military Hospital chemist, a Turk. On him fell her last choice. His rank and nationality suited her; she married him, and he entered into her comfortable home.

But she was not satisfied; she had ambitions. Her cards were good, luck was on her side; why not play high? She did, and she won. Her husband is now Directeur of the Beyrout Military Hospital. She has two soldiers waiting upon her, standing at her gates. She moves in the best Mohammedan society, entertains high officials, generals, and governors, drives in a carriage, and continues her practice.

Professionally, she has made a remarkably capable and skilful obstetric nurse, both medically and surgically. Quick, observant, experienced, her diagnosis is almost infallible. As such she has won the confidence of the doctors and patients. Amongst Moslem women she has done invaluable work, and has filled a great need. Added to this is her goodness to the poor, whom she treats free of charge, and who have received much charity from her open hands.

She has three children by this marriage, a girl aged 12 and two younger boys, all of whom she sends to the Prussian School, which is the most costly and *élite* in Syria.

Here is a character full of generosity and nobility. Had she been born in a higher social stratum, she would have made a splendid "grande dame" of the Eastern type; but her lack of opportunities and poor up bringing in her earlier life have produced a strange and ill-balanced result. I shall never

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)