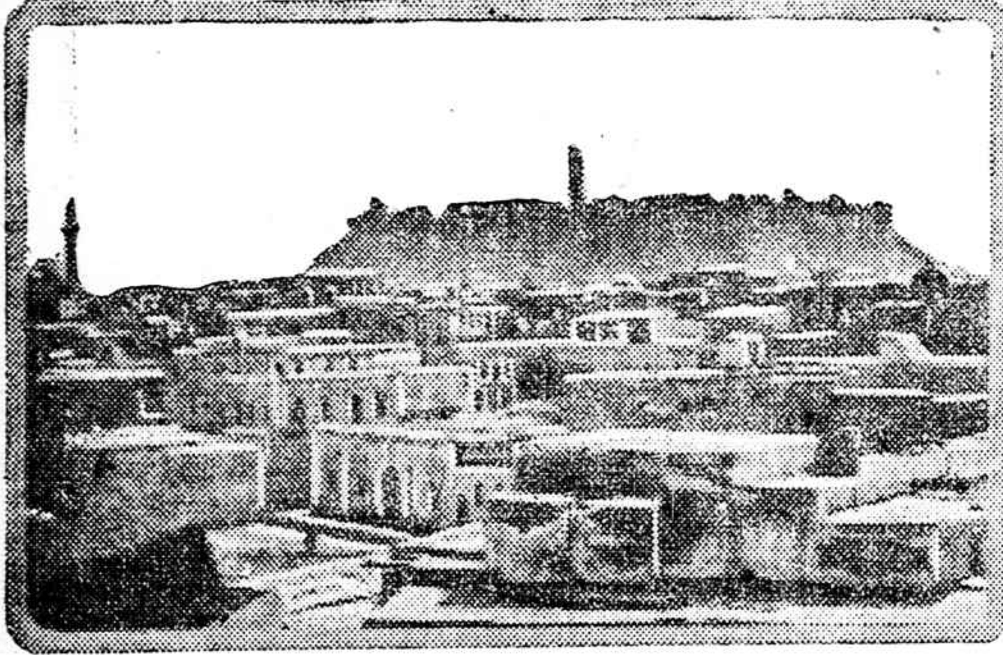
ALEPPO



View of Aleppo and Its Citadel.

ALEPPO, the capture of which by General Allenby on October 26, 1918, was the culmination of the conquest of Syria, is, like Damascus and Konieh, one of the ancient cities of the world. It may, indeed, be older than either; certainly it appears in history as early as Damascus and before Konieh. It was one of the Syrian towns captured by the Egyptian conqueror, Thothmes III, about 1480 B. C., and thereafter is of frequent occurrence in the agitated annals of those early times, says a writer in the Sphere. Under Roman rule it enjoyed a long period of prosperity. Its ancient Syrian name of Halban, or Khalban, was corrupted by the Greeks into Chalybon, but it was also known as Beroea. When, after seven centuries of Roman rule, it fell into the hands of the Arabs, it was called by them Haleb, a nearer approximation to its ancient name than the Greek Chalybon. The Venetian and other Italian visitors, of whom there were many in the middle ages, blundered Haleb into Aleppo—that is, they dropped the aspirate, as Latins so often do, sounded the final "b" as a "p," and added in the arbitrary fashion of Romans, Greeks and Italians their termination "o."

The secret of Aleppo's long prosperity, which endured even under Turkish rule, is its splendid commercial position at the junction of at least four great trade routes. This was perhaps largely due to the destruction of Palmyra (Tadmor) by Aurelian, after which the bulk of the trade which had passed through the city of Solomon and Zenobia now diverted itself by a more northerly route through Aleppo. By caravan it traded with Persia and India through Mesopotamia, with Egypt by way of Damascus, with Asia Minor and Constantinople by the ancient route through Taurus. In Romano-Persian times the caravans passed by Ctesiphon, but after the Saracen conquest was the half-way station on the way to Persia.

Byzantine Versus Hamadanite.

During the middle ages Aleppo's existence was a life of stormy magnificence. During the earlier wars of the Saracens with the eastern Roman empire it was more than once taken and retaken. In the tenth century it became the seat of a brilliant local dynasty from Hamadan in Persia. The most noted ruler of this family was Seyf-ed-Din, whom the Byzantine historians call "Khabdanos," i. e., the Hamadanite. Seyf-ed-Din kept great state at Aleppo, and probably the chief portions of the present fortifications of the citadel were built by him, though it is quite possible that they are older. He was a patron of art and literature and also a mighty warrior, who led many expeditions against the eastern Roman empire with alternate success and defeat.

After much success he sustained a terrible defeat in 961 in the Taurus passes, and himself escaped only by a breakneck scramble up a precipice. Next year his fate was upon him, for the great Byzantine marshal, Nicephoros Phokas, soon to be emperor-regent, marched against Aleppo with all the available forces of the East. Seyf-ed-Din made desperate efforts; he levied all the citizens of Aleppo and intrenched himself to guard the approaches to his capital, while in Mesopotamia a holy war was proclaimed, and the troops of Mosul, Edessa, Mardin and many other places marched to the relief of Aleppo. Could all these forces unite the Byzantine general must have been defeated, but he was so prompt that he reached his goal before the Mesopotamians could arrive. By one of those masterly turning movements which in those days only Byzantine generals and Byzantine troops could achieve, Phokas flanked Seyf-ed-Din out of his intrenchments and forced him to fight in the open before the city gates. He was utterly defeated, and as his beaten troops poured back into Aleppo sedition broke out. The citizen soldiers laid the blame of the rout upon the Arab and Turkish mercenaries; they turned their swords against one another, and amid this internecine strife the Byzantine cuirassiers stormed the walls and came pouring into the streets, sweeping the last army of "Khabdanos" before them in rout and ruin. For three days the victorious army wrought its will on unhappy Aleppo, while upon the sack and destruction the fallen emir and a remnant of his army looked down from the walls of the impregnable citadel, perhaps those self-same piles of tawny masonry which crown the fortress hill to this day. When the Mesopotamians arrived they found that Phokas and his army had quietly retired with their prisoners and plunder, leaving ruin and destitution behind.

Aleppo in the Middle Ages.

Aleppo's brief political greatness thus fell beneath the hammer stroke of Nicephoros Phokas, but its commercial eminence did not leave it. For two centuries it led a precarious political existence—usually in vassalage to the dominant great power. It was part of the empire of the mighty Saladin, and probably the work of his masons is to be seen today in the citadel walls. After Saladin and his house had passed away Aleppo fell to the Mameluke sultans of Egypt. Thither in 1402 came the terrible Timur (Tamerlane) on his way to overthrow the army of Egypt at Damascus.

Timur left terrible traces of his presence on Aleppo, but the city, thanks to its splendid situation, recovered, and for the next century or more, indeed, was at the height of its prosperity. It was injured by the discovery of the passage round the Cape of Good Hope, but remained great and wealthy until 1822, when it was smitten by an earthquake and almost completely destroyed, with a loss of life calculated at the lowest at 20,000 persons. During the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries it was foremost among the trading cities of the world, and its renown spread far and wide.

It was from Aleppo that the first pioneers of England's Indian trade and empire started on their long journey to the courts of the moghul emperors. Doubtless it was from some of them, or reports of their journeys which must have been current in Elizabethan London, that Shakespeare and Marlowe learned of the oriental city. At all events, references to Aleppo are to be found in the plays of both—less in Shakespeare than in Marlowe, whose bent was clearly in the direction of oriental glamor.

Modern Aleppo still suffers from the destruction wrought by the catastrophe of 1822, but there is no doubt that the researches of skilled archeologists would meet with rich reward in a city which has existed continuously for 4,000 years, which has seen the charioteers of Egypt and of Khatti, the phalanx of Alexander and the legions of Rome, no less than the mailed horsemen of Byzantium and the savage riders of Timur and Selim the Grim. The citadel walls still stand intact and imposing; the walls of the inner city are mainly in ruins. In the western rampart there survives—in the form of an inscription—evidence of the presence of the Hittite conquerors, who wrested North Syria from the weak hands of the heretic Pharaoh Akenaten. The flat roofs of the houses are often laid out as gardens, and south and west of the city extend wide plantations and orchards. Water is supplied by means of an ancient aqueduct, a relic of the Roman rule, which, in Syria, as in Gaul and Britain, has left indestructible evidence of its passion for works of practical utility. There is much local industry, and as a principal station on the Trans-Syrian railway close to the Bagdad line, Aleppo still occupies a position of great importance. Under civilized rule it has every opportunity of recovering its former prosperity.

"FAMILY HOTEL" CAUGHT ON

Ridiculed When First Established in London, Idea Has Met With Enormous Success.

The first "family" or "temperance" hotel in London, the forerunner of tens of thousands of such hostelries in all parts of the world, was opened in Covent Garden about 145 years ago. An inn for the more or less permanent accomodation of families, and minus bar, was an undreamed-of thing, and other hotel-keepers laughed the project to scorn. Despite their derision, the scheme was successful, and made a snug fortune for its founder, David Low. London now has hundreds of family and temperance hotels, and the United States has thousands of them.

The edifice in which Low started his hotel is still standing. The building was erected early in the seventeenth century, and was originally the home of Sir Kenelm Digby. Cromwell's council held sessions in the building, it is said, and it was the scene of many other noteworthy gatherings before it was converted into a hostelry.

The Mysteries of Prayer

By REV. HOWARD W. POPE
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TEXT—He hath attended to the voice of my prayer.—Psalm 66:19.

One of the greatest mysteries of prayer is its ability to produce conviction of sin. Just what the philosophy of prayer is, or how prayer leads to conviction of sin, perhaps no human being can explain; but the teaching of the Bible seems to be that when any child of God has a strong desire that another person should be saved, and prays earnestly for it, the Holy Spirit produces in the heart of the one prayed for a feeling equally strong that he ought to be saved.

Not that God converts any one against his will, for conversion means the surrender of one's will, but that God in answer to believing prayer can put the sinner into such a hell of conviction that he will gladly accept Christ in order to get out.

Some years ago, in a town in Ohio, four women who had unsaved husbands agreed to meet once a week to pray for the conversion of these four men. After a few weeks one of them was saved and joined with the four women in praying for the other three men. A little later a second man surrendered and joined the circle, and later still a third. Nor did these women confine themselves merely to prayer, but by their daily life and example and testimony did all they could to help answer their own prayers. Finally on a certain day the four wives and three husbands agreed to meet to pray for the conversion of the fourth husband. When his wife returned from the meeting, she found her husband glad to see her. He said: "I know where you have been, and what you have been doing, and I am glad to tell you that you needn't pray for me any longer, for I have accepted Christ as my Savior."

Not only does prayer bring conviction of sin, remove difficulties, and soften prejudices; but often it opens the way for us to meet the very person whom we desire to help. I heard a minister say recently that he was urgently requested to interview and lead to Christ a lady who was entirely unknown to him. She did not attend his church, and he had no reasonable excuse for calling upon her. He began to pray that God would open the way for a meeting, and the very next Sunday at the close of the service a lady came up and introduced herself to him; and it proved to be the very one whom he was anxious to meet. She had come to his church for the first time, and entirely without the solicitation of any one.

When George Miller was in this country a friend of mine asked him how long he had ever prayed continuously for any object. Taking a little book from his pocket, he said: "When I was converted I was a wild boy in college. My conversion broke friendship between my roommate and myself, for he would 'have nothing to do with such a fanatic,' he said. I wrote his name in this book, and promised God that I would pray for him each day until he was converted, or until I died. I prayed five years with no apparent result. Ten years went by with no change. I continued for fifteen years—twenty years, and still he was an unbeliever. I did not yet give him up, but prayed twenty-five years, each day mentioning his name at the throne of grace, and then came a letter saying: 'I have found the Savior.' Then," said Mr. Miller, "I checked out this petition as answered. In this same book I have names of others that I have prayed for, five, ten, and fifteen years, and scores of names against which there is a cross, showing that the requests have been granted."

Here, then, was a man who made a business of prayer, and who kept his accounts with the Lord in a business-like way. When he had a matter to present to God's attention, he first found a promise on which to base his appeal, always making sure if possible that it was according to God's will. Then he recorded his petition in a book, and watched and waited for the answer. Is it any wonder that this man's faith grew rapidly, and that he became the most notable, and possibly the most successful, praying man of modern times?

It is said that in battle it takes a hundred pounds of lead to kill a man, because ninety-nine pounds and fifteen ounces of it is wasted in wild firing that aims at nothing and hits no one. On the other hand the sharpshooter wastes no ammunition, but picks his man, and makes every bullet tell. So, if we would pray for fewer objects, more carefully selected, and then make a record of our prayers and watch for the answer, we should not waste so much breath, and we should obtain more results.

Cannot Claim All.

What is mine, even to my life, is hers I love; but the secret of my friend is not mine.—Sir P. Sidney.

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