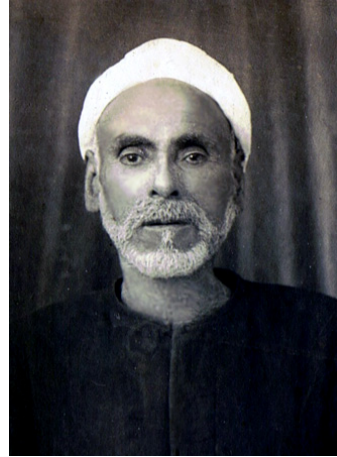


AN EGYPTIAN CANDIDATE FOR THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE

-----*-----
Sheikh Tantawy Gohary
-----*-----

IN AN UNPRETENTIOUS TWO-STORY-house in the Egyptian quarter of Sayeda Zeinab lives Sheikh Tantawy Gohary, one of Egypt's leading thinkers and the first Egyptian candidate for the Nobel Peace Prize, which is awarded annually to "the person who has most or best promoted the fraternity of nations and the abolition or diminution of standing armies."



Sheikh Tantawy lays claim to the prize on two books entitled "Where is Man?" and "Political Dreams", which advocate international co-operation and universal peace.

Sheikh Tantawy was proposed for candidature by Deputy Abdel Hamid Said who seconded by Dr Mostafa Mesharaffa Bey, Dean of the Faculty of Science at the Fouad Awal University.

The application, with comments and summaries of the two books were sent to the Committee of the Nobel Prize who returned them with the request that the books should be translated into French or English.

The Minister of Education to whom the matter was submitted, has given instructions for the immediate translation of the books, which should be ready by the middle of January 1940.

Sheikh Tantawi was born in the village of Kafr Awadallah, Sharkia Province in 1862. He learned the Koran by heart at the village kuttab. In 1877 he joined Al-Azhar, where he studied for three years, but for family reasons he has to return to the native village.

Describing the next three years in his village, he said to an Egyptian Mail

At Al Azhar Again

" The advent of the railway which I saw for the first time run past a neighboring village, filled me with awe and wonder, and made me think of the people of the West. I had no doubt that the inventors of the locomotive were masters of Science and I wanted to know something about their belief in God. Another enquiry in I which was engaged was about the causes of Moslems being backward.

" I returned to Cairo after the Orabi rebellion and again entered Al-Azhar, whence I joined Dar-ul-Oloum.

" There were a suggestion that I should be appointed a Sharei Judge but for certain reasons, I became a teacher of Arabic at the Damanhour Government School, from which I was transferred to Cairo to join the teaching staff of the Training College.

Learning English

It was while I taught at the Sakieh Secondary School that a pupil of mine asked me why I did not study English, and I made up my mind to learn the language in my spare time.

" I made sufficient progress to read English books and at the time the book which impressed me most was " Beauties of Nature " by Lord Avebury, with whom I corresponded for many years.

"In 1909I wrote" Where is Man? and a few years later

Sheikh Tantawi is entirely devoid of fanaticism; he is a modern Moslem with an open mind on matters calculated to bring about fraternity between East and West. He advocates the ways of mutual love and confidence.

In his book "Where is Man?" he has chosen the mode of discussions between himself and spirits of the Astral world, to discourage the question of perfecting human society.

Sheikh Tantawy challenges mankind to stop for a while and examine their case and the great responsibilities all people assume by not taking their share of collaboration for the establishment of this great order of human beings willed by God.

Sheikh Tantawy is unrelentingly opposed to the atheist materialistic phalanx of the innumerable adepts of Nietzsche and Darwin who may also discover in the precursor of Communism, Tolstoi, one of their torchbearers.

Egypt's Role

Sheikh Tantawy believes that Egypt's role in world collaboration will be mainly to unite all Arab and Moslem countries into a great brotherhood which will work for world collaboration with people of other faiths. He hopes that all human races will be progressively brought to a degree of philosophical maturity such as will open the way to inter-continental compensation, effected by a league or grouping all the different nations of the

representative: "I had no book learning, but I studied the world. I was tortured by doubts as to the existence of a creator and earnestly asked God, if he really existed, to help me in my dilemma; telling myself that I could not believe in God unless I found the universe to be based in order and I then made a solemn vow that if my doubts were cleared, I should write books to such young men as might like myself, tormented by doubts. It was also at that time that I read the Koran, not passively but with the intention of discovering the truth.

"I was surprised to find that the Koran encouraged my attempt at investigation.

"One morning on the bank of a canal, I saw a small insect on the back of which were crossed parallel lines drawn with such precision as lead me to the belief that there was after all perfect order in creation.

"I began my observations of plants and animals by day, and of the stars by night.

"At that period, I was occupied with another thing. My father and I had been suffering from diseases for which there was no treatment in any of the neighboring villages, as there were no doctors in such places and I had to depend on prescriptions from old books of medicine. One of the prescriptions for my stomach trouble had such good results that I have never suffered from it ever since.

acted as Professor of Philosophy at the Egyptian University. In 1922 I was placed on pension having attained the age limit and have since written many books.

His Works on Peace

It is not possible, with the limited space at our disposal, to review the many books written by Sheikh Tantawi on literary or religious subjects. Suffice it to say that he is a believer in modern science and in his own religion.

His commentary on the Koran, in 25 volumes, was written to prove that Islam is not opposed to the truths expounded by modern science. In dealing with his two books advocating peace, it must be stated that they have been welcomed by such eminent orientalists as Professor Margoliouth Professor Santillana and others.

Professor Margoliouth says in one of his reviews:

"My acquaintance with the Sheikh dates from 1904, when he had already commenced what is now a long series of works, all of which have lofty and philanthropic aims.

"He has endeavoured not without success, to eradicate prejudice and to promote good will. It may be hoped that his books may do something to compass these ends."

The books have also been warmly received by Prof. Glibb, of the School of Oriental Studies in London, Baron Caradigo, Dr. Joseph Schachi and others.

world. This is at the root of the philosophical speculations indulged in by Sheikh Tantawy when he writes his imaginary dialogues with the higher spirits of other planets.

Although Egypt is in Africa, she is the mother of European civilization, and as such is entitled, he thinks, to address the nations of Europe, particularly as she is the ideal mediator between the West and Asia, which from Tokyo and Moscow sends forth a mighty claim for power and supremacy.

His main task is to establish friendly and brotherly relations between the East and West to reconcile Christian philosophy with Islamic philosophy in a common bond of benevolence, atoning for the errors of the past by collaborating for a radiant future, bringing equal rights to each and mutual understanding, a task worthy of support by all the nations.

He earnestly hopes that his voice, coming from a sincere heart, will crush the hard crust of national selfishness in various parts of the civilized world and call statesmen to reason before their vain glory has driven them to a final catastrophe.

He believes that the force of thought is stronger than all the energies accumulated in the tremendous modern war machines. For this force must sooner or later win over to its side the victims of these aberrations, victims who are called upon to use this murderous weapon.

The success of Sheikh Tantawy's reconciling effort depends upon the echo his message will have abroad.

H. K.