

LANDING-PLACE IN THE HARBOR OF MUSCAT.



SELLING GOSPELS OUTSIDE THE TOWN, NAKHL, OMAN.

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OPEN DOORS IN OMAN, ARABIA.

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Missionary of the Reformed (Dutch) Church, 1890-.

Historically, politically and geographically, Oman has always been the most isolated part of all Arabia. As far as outside communication with other Arabs is concerned, Oman was for centuries past an island, with the sea on one side and the desert on the other. The people are even more primitive in their habits than Arabs generally. Only Muscat has its eyes open to the wide world. Colonel Miles, a recent traveler in this part of Arabia, speaks very highly of the Oman Arab as "a plain man, simple in his habits and free from ostentation." He says, "I always had reason to be grateful to the Arabs for their zeal and self-sacrifice on my behalf. They never resented the inconvenience and fatigue I often caused them, and seemed to regard my safety and comfort as a main point of consideration." Our experience on a recent journey in this hitherto so neglected country has been the same. The purpose of this article is to show what a large and open door there is here to preach the Gospel to these simple mountaineers and peasants who have nothing of the proverbial Moslem fanaticism; the story of our adventures with a few notes by the way will show it; the experiences of Rev. James Cantine at Muscat and on his journeys correspond with our own.

On May 9th last a colporteur and I put our two chests of books and medicines on board a small *sambook*, and at four o'clock the wind was favorable to leave Bahrein harbor. We intended to visit the pirate coast, and thence, if the way proved open, to cross the horn of Oman to Muscat, overland.

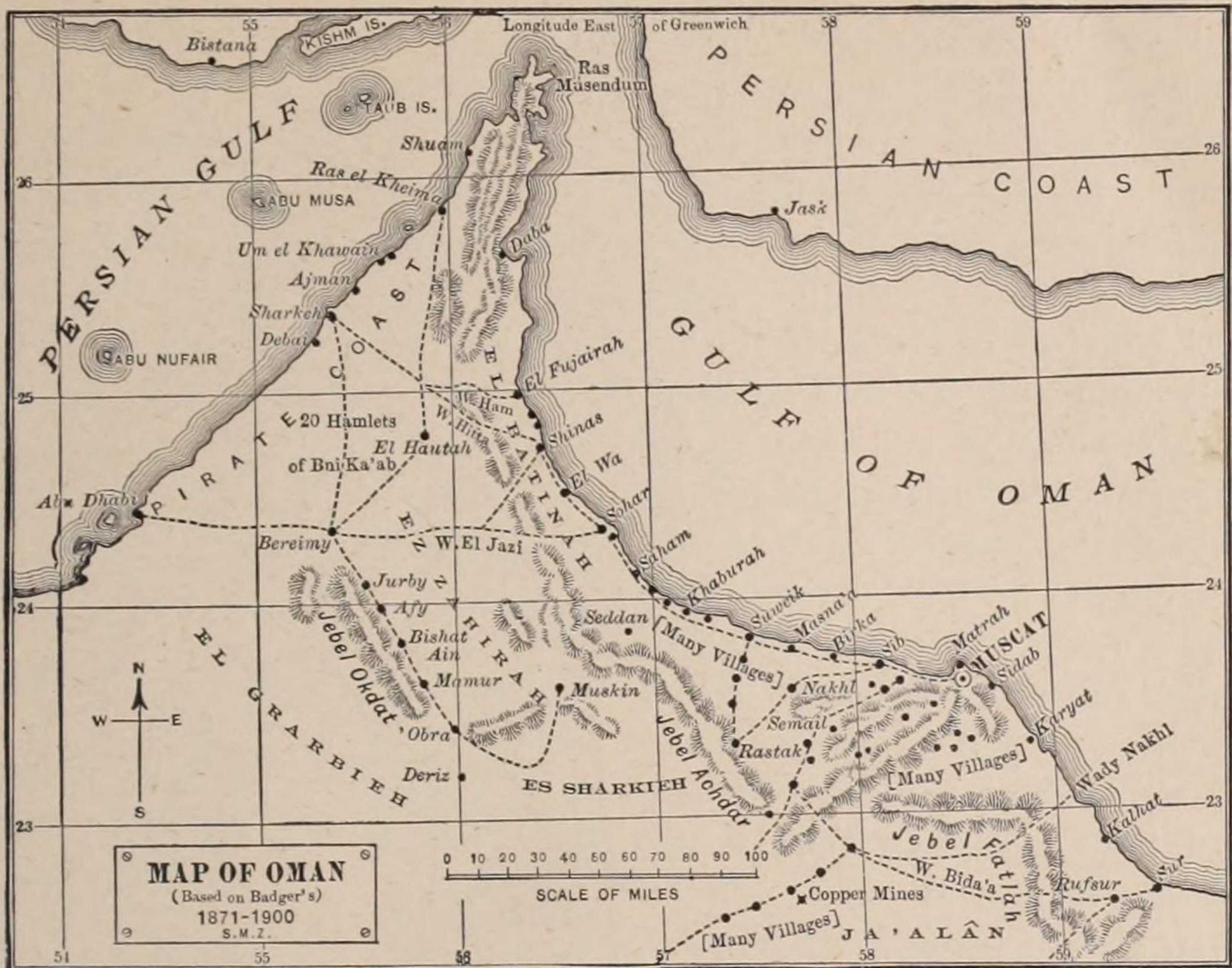
The captain and crew of our boat were all strict Wahabis, and made no secret of the fact that formerly they were slave-traders. Crossing by zigzag lines to the Persian coast to avoid shoals and catch the wind, we reached Bistana and then sailed across the gulf direct for Sharkeh. Half-way across is the little island of Abu Musa, with a small Arab population, but splendid pasturage, good milk, and water.

The chief export is red iron oxide, of which there are two hills with a boundless supply. Steamers occasionally call here for this cheap, marketable ballast; we left our witness in the shape of Arabic Gospels.

On May 14th we reached Sharkeh, the chief town on the pirate-coast. Formerly this entire region was noted for the savage ferocity of its inhabitants. Sir John Malcolm wrote forty years ago, "Their occupation is piracy and their delight murder; they are monsters." Thanks to English commerce and gunboats, these fanatic Wahabis have become tamed; most of them have given up piracy and turned to pearl-diving for a livelihood; their black tents and rude rock dwellings are making room for the three or four important towns of Sharkeh, Debai, Abu Dhabi, and Ras el Kheima. We found the Arabs very hospitable, not at all fanatical, and quite willing to hear the merits of Christianity discussed. At the house of the Abd el Latif, the British agent, we were entertained, and the mat hut, set apart for our use, we for seven days made dispensary and reception-room. Here over two hundred Arabs came to get medicines, buy books, or discuss the reason of our errand. Many were the quiet talks during those busy days with all sorts and conditions of Arabs. Reading the Scriptures, proving a doctrine, pointing a moral, or answering cavils—there was often no rest until long after sunset; and no sooner had the muezzin called to daylight prayer than the visitors began to walk in again. They were a pleasant lot of people, and more sociable than the Arabs of Yemen while less dignified than those from Nejd.

One strong drawback there was to conversation: no part of Arabia that I have visited can vie with this coast in the coarseness of talk and the looseness of morals; perhaps it is partly owing to the fact that nearly one-half of the population is negro or of negro descent. In spite of all assertions to the contrary, the trade in slaves is still carried on secretly. Four distinct African languages were spoken in the bazaar in addition to Arabic. Nominally the Arabs are nearly all Wahabis, but they are not strict followers of the sect. For example, tobacco-smoking is permitted and the weed is even cultivated. Among other visitors we met the Sheik of Bereimy, a large town four days' journey inland. He was an intelligent man and expressed a desire to hear what Christian prayers were like, so I repeated the fifty-first and the sixteenth Psalms, with which he was pleased. He gladly took with him a large Arabic Bible, and invited us to come to his country for a visit. Between the coast and Bereimy there are twenty hamlets of the Bni Ka'ab, and two of our colporteurs are now on their way to accept the invitation.

At Debai, twelve miles distant from Sharkeh, we sold thirty-five portions of Scripture in three hours, and could have sold more had our supply lasted. At Sharkeh some were friendly enough to offer us a shop for rent, in which to sell our Bibles. Shall we go? All along the coast there is a splendid field for colporteurs, and a medical mis-



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sionary could make his journey free of charge, as the people are utterly without any medical assistance, very willing to pay for it, and several very wealthy. The chief trade is in pearls; others have inherited riches from their forebears, who made fortunes when the Zanzibar slave-trade was brisk.

We heard on every side that traveling in the interior of Oman was safe, so, after bargaining with camel-drivers, we secured two companions and five camels to take us to Sohar for the sum of twenty *rials* or Arabian dollars. At nine p.m. on May 20th we left, and, after a short rest at midnight to water the camels, marched until nine o'clock the next day. By going as much as possible by starlight to avoid the heat, and resting during the day under some scraggy acacia tree or in the shadow of a Bedouin fort, we completed the distance of ninety odd miles in a little over four days. A large part of the way we took was desert, with no villages or even nomad booths; the more usual route by Wady Hom being a little unsafe, we followed Wady Hitta. On the second day we passed villages and cultivated fields; that night we slept in the bed of the wady surrounded by thousands of sheep and goats, driven in by Bedouin lasses from their mountain pastures. Even among these shepherds we found readers, and the colporteur sold books wherever the camels halted long enough to strike a bargain. It was late on Wednesday, May 23, that we entered the narrow pass of Hitta. Our guides preceded, mounted, but with rifles loaded and cocked; then followed the baggage camel, to which mine was "towed," and in similar fashion my companion on the milch camel,

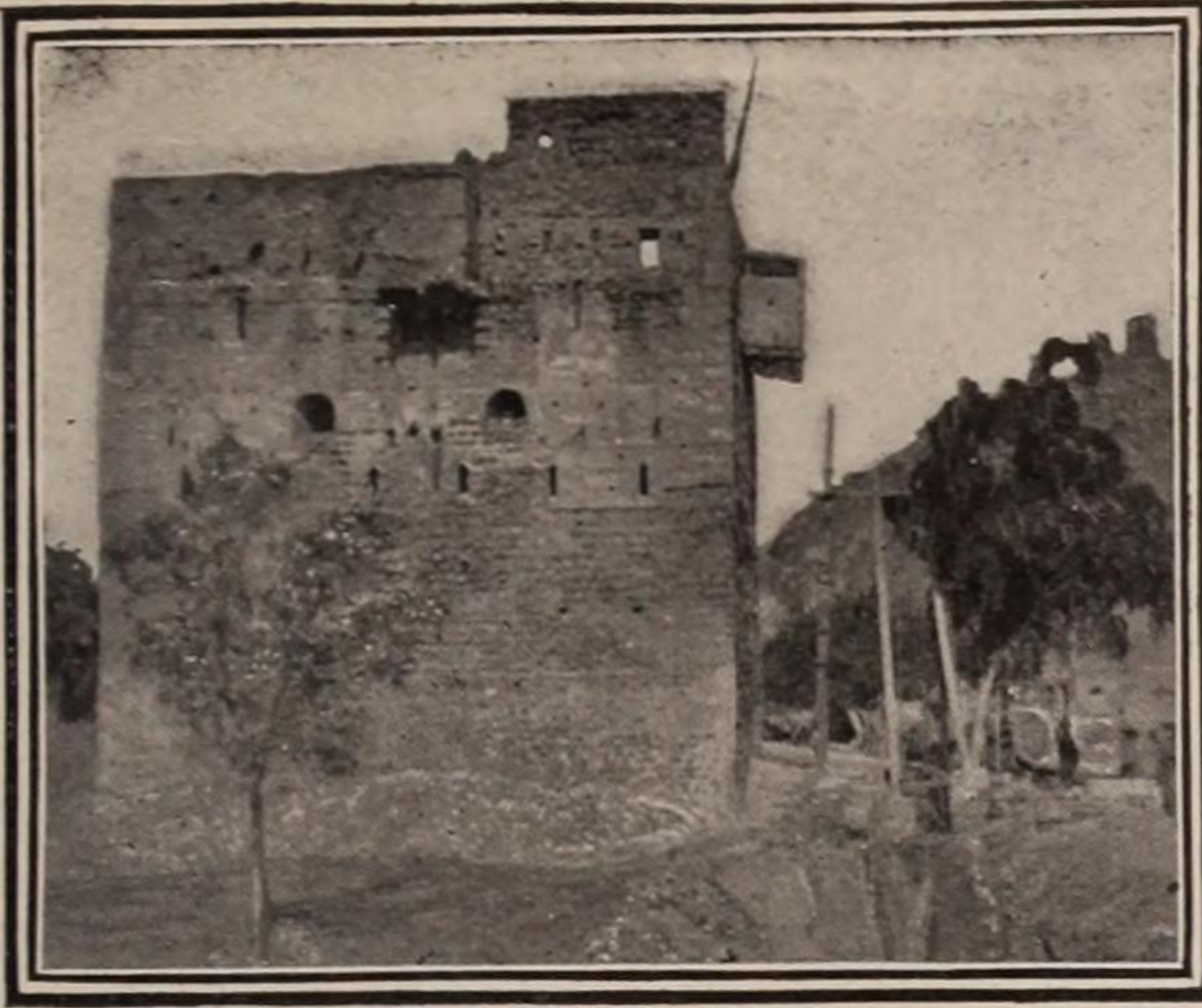
followed by its two colts. We were not troubled with the heat at night, but during the day it was intense, and it was refreshing to come to an oasis (common in this part of Oman) where water burst from a big spring, and trees and flowers grew in luxury. In the mountainous parts of Oman the roads run almost invariably along the wady beds; sometimes these are sandy watercourses, again deep, rocky ravines or broad, fertile valleys. Vegetation generally is tolerably abundant. Tamerisks, olean- ders, euphorbias, and acacias are the most common trees and shrubs. Where the country appears arid and sterile we were surprised to find a considerable population of shepherds and goatherds. Their dwellings are mere oval shanties constructed of boulders or rocks, and they subsist on their flocks. In the fertile valleys the population always centers in villages, and scarcely ever is a dwelling found at any distance from this common center. Here often are the fresh-water wells with the watch-tower to protect them, as in our picture.

Just at the top of the pass of Hitta is the village 'Ajeeb, rightly named "wonderful." The view down the mountains over the fertile stretch of coast called the Batinah and out over the bound- less Indian Ocean was grand. We descended to the sea, and the turbulent mountain stream, so cold to our bare feet as we waded it in the early dawn, dwindled to a brook, and at last ebbed away along the beach a tiny stream of fresh water. These perennial streams are the secret of the fertile coast all the way from Wady Hom to Birka.

At Shinas, on the sea, we spent a hot day. The mosque was our pulpit and salesroom—so little is there of fanaticism in these parts. One graybeard took us to his hut after noonday prayer to offer us his simple hospitality. He spoke with fervor of the missionary (Peter J. Zwemer) who came to his village three years previous. We spoke of Christ's second advent, and the old man then produced an Arabic



SHEIK MOHAMMED,
Brother of Muscat Sultan.



A WELL WATCH-TOWER IN OMAN.

milk and fruit to us ere we dismounted, and the boys, instead of mocking the strange foreigners, *salaamed* with evident delight to hear that in spite of our appearance we spoke Arabic. Not one copper did we expend for food and lodging; it is the land of large-hearted hospitality. To help a sick child or give quinine to some ague-tormented Arab was to them a large return for their natural grace to a "son-of-the-road." There is not the least doubt that every one of the villages on the coast is ripe for evangelistic effort. Previous journeys here had given our mission this hope; the large sales of Scripture by colporteurs from Muscat only made it more evident; the past year, as well as this journey, have demonstrated the fact beyond dispute. In the whole of the year 1899 only five hundred and fifty-seven portions of Scripture were sold from Muscat station throughout Oman; this was more than any year before. Yet in the nine months past of the present year already one thousand three hundred and thirty-six portions of God's Word found eager purchasers in the same territory. In some towns never before visited our colporteur Elias sold nearly a hundred books in one day! Noth-

treatise on the signs that precede the last day. His heart was almost ready for the seed.

From Shinas our camels took us to Sohar. At the large village of El Wa we were unable to stop, as the camel-men were afraid of small-pox, which was prevalent there. Every one we passed on the way was friendly to a remarkable degree. The women brought fresh



AN OMAN PEASANT

ing impressed us so much on our journey along the Batinah to Muscat as the fine opportunities now open for sowing the seed largely and liberally on this virgin soil. Everywhere there seemed to be a scarcity of books and a love for them. The women even left their huts to run after "the man with the Arabic books" and bargain for a two-cent Gospel.

We heard that the caravan routes were safe in the Zahirah as well as along the Batinah. If this be so, there are fifty more villages where the missionary and the colporteur can go, from Bereimy to Obra and Muskin—all virgin territory yet untouched by those of our mission who have penetrated with much encouragement into the Jebel Achdar from Muscat. Then there are Wady Jazi and the whole region of Ja'alan, two other centers of population and yet untouched. Our Arab friends told us that the entire region was open to travel, and that a doctor would be worshiped rather than welcomed everywhere. Now is the time to seize this golden opportunity; it may not last long. Nearly a year ago the Arabian Mission appealed for an unmarried physician to do missionary work by touring and preaching in these highlands. We still await some one who will take up the challenge and help us win Oman for Christ. Is there not *one* among the many volunteers for foreign service who will forsake all and take up this work in the spirit in which James Gilmour worked among the Mongols?

There is every indication, humanly speaking, that the fields are white unto the harvest, and that the soil in the hearts of the Oman peasantry is not as hard as the hills that hem in Muscat. Nor can we forget that no part of Arabia is so sacred as is Oman, because of the prayers and sufferings and death of the three missionaries who laid down their lives to win it for Christ. God has not forgotten their work of faith and labor of love and patience of hope. The laws of the Kingdom are as sure as those of nature: "When energy in any form seems to disappear, it is really only changed into some other form and gives rise to a perfectly definite amount of energy again."—*Joubert*. "Other men labored and ye are entered into their labors." Those who know how many prayers and tears have been offered at Muscat for the sake of Oman will not be surprised to see wonderful spiritual awakening there when the seed begins to germinate, and the *latent* power of prayers yet unanswered becomes *potent* through the Holy Spirit of promise.

[For a fuller description of Oman, see Mr. Zwemer's interesting and informing chapters (pp. 78-96) in his valuable book "Arabia, the Cradle of Islam."—EDITORS.]

FRANK CROSSLEY, OF MANCHESTER, ENGLAND.

BY THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF.

Four years ago, March 27, 1897, at Star Hall, in Manchester, England, a funeral service was held over one of God's true noblemen, and such a procession moved thence to the cemetery as seldom honors even a monarch's dust. A motley crowd of probably fifteen thousand people came unbidden from distant parts of England, and even from Scotland and Ireland; the poor and the rich, the educated and the ignorant, the saintly and the sinful—all drawn as by some mighty magnet about the dead body of a universal benefactor. Tears ran in floods from eyes unused to weep, and voices choked with sobs said, in grief's half-mute whispers, "*He loved us so!*"

Frank Crossley had not reached threescore years. Born in Ireland in 1839, his early life gave little forecast of his heroic after-days. His school record was more of brawn than brain; but forsaking "sports" as cruel, he was drawn to the calling of an engineer, and, after a brief experience in the militia, at about eighteen he found his life sphere. He entered the works of Robert Stephenson at Newcastle, and four years later went to Liverpool as draughtsman to Messrs. Fawcett, Preston & Co. His removal to Manchester was providentially determined by his uncle's purchase of the business of a manufacturer of rubber machinery, and Frank and his brother William began work together there in 1867. Here were spent the remaining thirty years of great spiritual growth and widespread blessing.

The business proved at first unprofitable, but these trials only fitted him for keener sympathy with the toilers for bread, with whose wants and woes he chose to be so closely linked. Stern economy reduced expenses, and about ten years later, by the purchase of German patents for the "Otto Gas Engine," and the exercise of his own inventive powers, he achieved success, and prosperity continued until, in 1881, a limited private company was formed which after his death expanded into a public company.

It is not, however, with his business career that we are mainly concerned. But one fact should be written large: Frank Crossley abode in his calling with God; every step was taken by him and his brother in prayer, and in the alembic of faith even poverty and misfortune were strangely transformed into blessings.

During his earlier years he read little outside of his Bible. He had learned to pray, and, through praying, to believe and trust. Soon after he moved to Liverpool, and, with characteristic frankness, he at once announced to his sister Emmeline his conversion, challenging her to mark the change in him when he came home at Christmas. The family could all see that God had wrought in him the birth from above. The renewed temper and tamed tongue, so often last fruits of