

them, where I found many opportunities to talk to them on religious subjects. This year I had a chance to stay nearly three months with them. Medical work was given the second place. Religious talks and readings were invited on both sides. Mainly the harems of the rich took great interest in what was read to them so that some began to read the Gospel and one to study the Bible to convince herself of the prophecies. How their confidence and trust in us have grown shows in the fact that mothers wished to give me their children to bring them up Christians. I could not comply with their intentions on account of the fathers whom I wished to be consulted about it, although one bright little girl of about seven years old was sent along with me, whose week day dream is to go Sundays to church, and she disdains to go back to her former surroundings. I hope she will be the nucleus for the girls' school in Busrah.

Looking into the future Zobair will be one of the railroad stations and will link Kuwait and Busrah together. Besides the caravan road from Nasareah and many inland tribes terminate there, it is only a question of a few years more that also the women of Zobair will enjoy a greater freedom, civilization, and travel will enter with the railroad, and as we hope to see a Girls' Boarding School erected in Busrah the people of Zobair will have the best opportunity to send their daughters the short way, always in their parents' reach. When we have gained that step Kuwait will follow in the same way.

MARTHA VOGEL.



Arab Home Life.

Home life has such sacred and holy memories that to us it can only be associated with the highest virtues and the purest morals. Without them, it is no more home life. Home life associates one's thoughts immediately with a place where peace and love reign. Father, mother, or children are bound together by these holy ties. If either, father, mother, or children have left their home, the circle is broken. Home life is no more complete. Our Christian home spells "Union and Unity." The Arab home spells "Division and Separation."

Upon visiting an Arab home the first thing we notice after getting inside the dead, windowless walls, is division. A special place, the harem, is reserved for the women. No matter how much luxury we find in the harem, we may be certain that it is inferior to the men's quarter. The most comfortable rooms in the house can be occupied by the women and their visitors only when the men have left the house. Modern luxuries, such as chairs, are found in the men's *mejlis*; and

as one woman told me, when the men do not want furniture any longer because it is damaged, it is then given to the women!

However, we find the harem well furnished with Persian rugs, the walls decked with mirrors, large and small, with here and there a Koran text. On the floor there is an assortment of pillows to recline on.

Housekeeping is not very strenuous for Arab women. Nearly every rich home has a certain number of slaves. The meals do not consist of many courses. Our readers are no doubt familiar with the Arab custom of sitting around one dish, and all eating from the same with the right hand. This custom certainly saves a lot of dishes and dishwashing and polishing of knives, forks and silverware.

But here also we find division, at least in large households. The men are served first, and the women eat after they have finished and not in the men's presence. One woman told us she would not even dare drink a glass of water in the presence of her husband. She was from a high class home. But another woman told me that she always eats with her husband if he is the only man in the house and she the only woman. The latter is a woman of the poorer class. The middle and poorer classes seem to me more content than the higher and wealthier. They have more freedom. It is also more difficult for a poor man to have several wives, or to have slaves. Therefore his wife will be called upon to do her own work, which surely cannot be a hindrance to contentment.

In the rich home the slaves do all the work,—cooking, washing, sweeping, caring for the children, carrying the water from the well, etc. So the Arab lady in a wealthy home has very little work to do. The soft and graceful hands testify to this. They spend their time in sleeping, eating, sitting around to talk and entertain.

Among my limited number of acquaintances about three per cent. can read the Koran, but according to their own statements, they read very seldom. About the same percentage do good needlework and spend a great part of their time sewing. Many of the women busy themselves with *telul-work*. This work when finished is a kind of gold braid used on their garments as anklets or sleeve cuffs. The work is done on a pillow, and they use from four to forty or more bobbins, making a succession of half-stitches with gold thread, fastened with ordinary cotton thread. I have seen about six different designs, but very likely there are more.

When it comes to a plain, straight seam their sewing does not amount to very much. But they work a peculiar kind of embroidery stitches that may be compared to our buttonhole stitch, and others to our plain chain-stitch. They embroider the most artistic designs on

their garments with both gold and silk thread, and I have often wondered at the beauty of this work.

These are some of the ways in which our Arab sisters busy themselves within their blank walls. Industrial work, I believe, might have a chance among the girls in Arabia; their hands seem to be adapted for art embroidery and lace making. If girls could be taught a trade by which they would be able to earn their own living and help their mothers financially, the evils of child marriage and divorce might be lessened, and this would mean one step towards a happy home life.

Few Arab women I have met seem happy. When one visits them at first, they often appear content; they will entertain cheerfully and are always hospitable. It is sometimes only after a series of visits, and after they are convinced of the sincerity of our friendship and love for them, that they have confidence enough to unburden their hearts. As one of them said last week, "Over us hangs a heavy sword continually, and we do not know when it will drop suddenly upon us." They live in constant fear.

The other day during my visit in a house where I call weekly, a wife of a high class Arab came in to make her call. After the usual formal greetings, she began an eager and fluent conversation with the hostess. Expressions of anger, scorn, mockery and laughter succeeded each other very rapidly on the faces of the women who were listening. The hostess was anxious to find out what I thought about the matter; I had to admit that I only understood part of it. She then turned to the speaker and asked her to take off her veil that I might understand her better, and to tell me her story. "These people," said the hostess, referring to the missionaries, "always do the right thing; they are better than we are; ask her what you should do." So she turned to me and said: "It is just this way: I am my husband's first wife. I have three sons and one daughter. The latter is married. All my children are grown up. Since my marriage my husband has married three other wives. He brought them all into our house, and I have trained them all in household duties and taught them how to sew. You see each of them was young and knew nothing when she married. I cared for their children, and I was the head of the harem. Now my husband is sick, and he says 'I do not care for you any more. When I get better I am going to marry another. You are divorced and will have to go.' You see our book allows a man only four wives, and if he marries another he will have to divorce one. All his wives I have trained to do the work well; my sons are big and I am old, and of course I am the one he needs the least now. Do you not think it would be best if he should die? He told me to send for the doctor. I refused and told him to die." I let her finish her long story, and then tried to

give her the advice she asked by showing her the wrong attitude she was taking to gain her point, and did my best to tell her that in God's sight she was the only lawful wife and that it was her duty to care for her husband while ill. I told her how love and devotion are expressed in time of illness in our homes. She seemed to think it impossible that this high degree of love could exist between a father and mother.

Is it true, as many claim, that these women are happy because of their ignorance? Is it true that plural wives live with each other and love each other as sisters, as others hold? All that I have seen so far and information that I have gained from other missionaries and from the women themselves, deny this idea most emphatically.

Not until God has revealed the Christ to Moslems will all these evils disappear and womanhood be lifted up; not until then will our Arabian sisters know what home life can be, and what God wants it to be.

Even those whose lives do not directly touch Arab home life, because far removed, can pray with us the prayer of the Lucknow Conference: "O God, to Whom the Moslem world bows five times daily, have pity upon them and reveal to them Thy Christ."

JOSEPHINE E. SPAETH.



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