



A SCHOOL IN THE DESERT—From *National Geographic Magazine*

NEGLECTED ARABIA

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Neglected Arabia

Missionary News and Letters

Published Quarterly by

THE ARABIAN MISSION

Pictures of the Past

CHARLOTTE B. KELLIEN.

The letters that came to us to-day from far-away friends not only brought joy and cheer, but reminded us afresh, by the very address which they bore, that the fashion of this world changeth, its pomp and glory leading only to decay. Which of Uncle Sam's postmen, handling so carelessly the letter marked "Persian Gulf," and needing the injunction "Via Bombay" to ensure its despatch in the right direction, imagines that that letter is destined to traverse one of the most historic waterways in the world, where empires were rising and falling while as yet the Red Man roamed unfettered over the North American Continent. Except for Busrah, at the head of the Gulf,—which has been made famous for all time as the starting point of Sinbad the Sailor, the story of whose seven voyages is dear to the hearts of children everywhere,—one could well write *Ichabod* over this whole region, as far as it touches the thought and imagination of the West.

Yet as long ago as the 4th century B.C. Nearchus, the Admiral of Alexander the Great, starting from the mouth of the Indus, where Karachi is now situated, sailed up the Gulf and left so careful a record of his route that we can follow in his footsteps to-day. The history of this whole tract for hundreds of years afterward can only be learned from research in libraries larger than Bahrein can boast; but in the 16th century the Portuguese in their high-pooped vessels came seeking new worlds to conquer along the shores of the Gulf, and we find numerous indications of their occupation in ruined battlements, watch-towers, and churches at various points. In spite of opposition from Arab and Persian seamen, the Portuguese continued to reap a rich harvest here for 150 years, but finally disappeared only to be succeeded by the Dutch, the French and finally the English in whose hands the control of this inland sea still rests.

These foreign ships of a bygone age have long since vanished, although the Arabs still cling to the type of sailing vessels used by their fathers, and we are able to make our journey in the more comfortable, if less romantic, line of English steamers which bind our distant mission stations with India and thence with the homeland.

Maskat, our first port of call, is shut in on three sides by high barren mountains, and is not visible until we are almost abreast, when it suddenly appears like some robber stronghold hidden from the outer world, a fitting center for the forbidden slave trade which continued even to recent years. In spite of the vivid sunshine, the dark, forbidding mountains give a sombre note to the picture, besides adding to the discomfort of the place by radiating with redoubled intensity the heat of the sun. Upon closer inspection the picturesqueness of Maskat's first appearance is sadly offset by its squalor and filth and all the unlovely features of a truly Mohammedan environment. Through the narrow, dusty streets a motley crowd of Arabs, Baluchis, Indians, Persians and Negroes go their different ways in leisurely oriental fashion; and looking at some of them we are inclined to accept the verdict of an old sea captain that "manners they have none, and their customs are beastly." The missionaries working here, however, would deny such a sweeping condemnation, and visiting the little cemetery in its lonely cove at the foot of a rugged peak one cannot but believe that the lives here laid down will yet influence for good even such unpromising members of the human race.

Jask, on the Persian side, two hundred miles away, owes its chief interest to the fact that it is the connecting link in the Indo-European Telegraph line, the overland wires from Karachi and the under-sea from Bushire meeting here.

From here we turn toward the Arabian coast again and as we round Cape Musandam, a rocky promontory rising abruptly out of the sea, we see in the distance one of the most historic spots in the Gulf. Here on an island twelve miles in extent, and said to be the driest in the world, without a single well or spring of fresh water, flourished the city of Ormuz in the 16th and 17th centuries, amazing Western travelers by its splendor. Seeing it now in its bareness and desolation one can hardly credit the reports of its magnificent palaces with their rare furnishings and jewels and princely banquets, and we can only marvel at the genius which made such an uninviting spot into the earthly paradise of the historian. On the Persian mainland, at a distance of a few miles, is Bunder Abbas, so named by the English who helped Shah Abbas to drive the Portuguese conquerors from this port between Ormuz and the interior. An English factory was afterward established here, making this the chief entrance across Persia to Ispahan. With the opening of other trade routes its greatness waned, and it now occupies no important place, commercially or otherwise.

Kishm, a nearby island, seems more closely related to the Western world than these other ancient ruins, it being the burial place of William Baffin, the explorer of the bay which now bears his name. He was one of the Englishmen who lost his life in the Anglo-Persian attack which wrested the island from the Portuguese intruders.

Remarkable tales of lawlessness, wild adventure and mystery center around these dead cities, and Kishm is a name to conjure with. One story concerns the adventures of Thomas Horton, an English tailor's apprentice, whose later life was one long chapter of intrigue and daring. In the early years of the 19th century he left the merchandise in which he was then dealing at Busrah and became commander-in-chief of the "naval forces" of the Arab Sheikh of Kishm. This Sheikh he afterward murdered, had himself elected ruler in his stead, and settled down to the life of an orthodox Moslem. For twenty-five years he governed kindly and justly the people whose customs and religion he had made his own, and with which he was so contented that he never returned to the land of his birth.

This forgotten corner of the East is full of more recent stories of strange careers, some surprising almost to the point of incredibility in our prosaic Western world, but with a farewell sigh for its vanished greatness we must hasten on our way until we finally reach our destination,—the pearl islands of the Gulf, where your missionaries are to-day adventuring for God.

Picnics in Kuwait

MRS. BESSIE A. MYLREA.

What does the word picnic bring up to your mind? A cloudless sky—a warm but fresh invigorating day—a shady grassy spot—lovely trees with graceful drooping branches and a brook or spring near by.

When I tell you that Kuwait is exactly the opposite I am sure you will say, "Then there is no word for picnic in the Arabic language." Kuwait has the sea in front of it and then sand, sand, sand stretching off into —, the very last place for picnics and yet this spring I have realized as never before how much man is the same the world over.

There are two small hills, about 35 ft. above sea level, just outside the town of Kuwait to the west. The first one is called the Hill of Joy and the second the Hill of Light. The mission doctor's residence now stands on the Hill of Joy, and many of our callers consider it still quite a picnic to come to the Hill of Joy, but of course the Hill of Light is *the* place for picnics.

The last of February when the coldest weather was over—the cold which the missionaries revelled in and which our Arab friends said "ate them"—the picnic season began. Our friends with a certain light in their eyes would say, "Have you been picnicking yet? Will you go with us some day?" We used to see little black groups on the Hill of Light, sitting in the full glare of the relentless sun, enjoying themselves as much as if they were in a lovely woody spot. They know no better. The joy to the women and young girls is to get outside of their walled-in courtyards, throw aside that everlasting fear of men seeing their faces and to feel the freedom and vastness of the desert and the sea.

The Moslem schools have from a week to ten days' holiday, and the little girls, dressed in their best bright coloured silk gowns with gold ornaments on their hair and bedecked in all the bracelets and rings they own or can borrow, looked like little groups of butterflies when we met them on the roads. They spend the first few days in the school courtyard learning to dance and finally the day comes when their teacher takes them to the Hill of Light. If it is a cloudy day so much the better. They are all up soon after dawn, and as the toilet consists in dabbing a little water on face and hands, feeling each gold ornament to be sure it is firmly attached and then slipping on the silk gown which was reluctantly laid aside last night, the little butterflies are ready. They are too excited to drink much tea and so after hard play and dancing are ready for their picnic lunch, consisting of rice and fish or mutton. Their mothers are much relieved when they come home safely with all their jewelry. Many times a nose-ring, a bracelet, or perhaps a hair ornament is missing and of course it is sure to be the borrowed one.

One day some very nice neighbors of ours asked Miss Schafheitlin and me to go on a picnic with them. We went to their house at 11 A.M. and found they had decided to have our lunch at home and just take our tea with us. This pleased us, as the sun was pouring down the Hill of Light and we had not looked forward to eating our lunch on the sand. Lunch over, a small basket was packed. A few pieces of charcoal were put in first and then a bit of camel thorn and on top the cups and saucers, a little bundle of tea and a bundle of sugar. The young girl put the basket on her head and carried a kettle filled with water in each hand. The daughter-in-law carried the little son and led the little girl by the hand and the mother followed a little behind us all. The hill was very popular that day and as soon as the different groups spied our white toppees they rushed upon us. This did not suit our hostesses and yet we could not get the women and children to go back to their own picnics. We were almost carried off bodily by our friends but our hostess said to them, "If you want them you must invite them and take them from their house as we did." Finally they left us and we were able to start our fire and make our tea. After that we played games and tobogganed down the sandy hill.

We promised to go with them soon again dressed in our Arab clothes, hoping in that way to attract less attention. We went again in about ten days and all would have gone well if our big dog had not caught the picnic spirit and insisted on going with us. As soon as the children saw him they knew we must be near and soon spied us by our feet. We can't go bare-footed when we dress as Arabs and I am afraid it always gives us away. However, we had a very good time.

Our last picnic was only a few weeks ago. The Sheikh's wife invited us to go with her to what is called Sheikh Jabir's Castle, a house in the Eastern end beyond the town and near the sea, where the Sheikh or the harem go for a few days to get away from city life.

The Sheikh's wife came for us in the carriage about 9 A.M. As it was strictly Ladies' Day we were entertained in the big airy room belonging to the men. There were a number of women and children there and every one seemed ready for a good time. The children all had birds to play with. I wish I could have counted the number of pretty little birds that were tortured that day. As at home the season comes around for marbles, hoops, jumping rope, etc., so the time comes here when every child must have a bird. These birds can be bought in the bazaar, and the older boys catch them with clever little traps. The children cut or twist one wing and tie a string around one leg. Every few minutes the little bird thinks he is free and is pulled back with an awful jerk.

The middle of the morning we were given Arab bread and sweets and then were told that there was to be dancing in our honour. When we went back to the big room there sat a slave with a big mandoline and soon girls took turns dancing. It was amusing for a while but soon became monotonous. There is none of the gracefulness which we are used to in our Western dancing.

The lunch was prepared in town and sent out on donkeys, so was very late in coming, but was very good when it came. About 4 P.M. I asked if the carriage were ready. They said it was ready, but they would be delighted to have us stay on to supper. We made our excuses and said good-bye. Our Christian home looked so inviting when we got back—we were once more thankful that we were not Moslem women.

Entering the New Doors

BY REV. CHARLES R. WATSON, D.D.

There has come to us in these days a very unique stimulus. We are beginning to analyze our devotion to Jesus Christ and to ask ourselves whether, after all, it has amounted to much, viewed in the light of the exhibitions of men's devotion in other quarters.

A few months ago I returned from the nearer East by a route that took us through the war zone of Europe. Whatever one may see passing through that war zone, I am sure he can never get away from the impression made by the devotion that men are revealing in their defense of earthly kingdoms and earthly causes . . .

On the way to London we passed through Cambridge and Oxford. Ordinarily there are thirty-five hundred students in each of these colleges but now there were only seven hundred. They told me that every man who was able to pass the physical examination had gone to the front. . . .

In London, I found that the casualty lists were ten thousand a week, and one could imagine at least four mourning for each one that would fall. That brought a fresh army of forty thousand mourners into the life of the nation every week. The last night I was in London made a deep impression on me. . . . Through the open window of my hotel I could hear the broken-hearted sobs of a woman in a room near by. It was a little bit of news from the front that had struck home. . . .

In France I learned that there are thirty thousand men who have lost one or both eyes in the war. They are being taught piano tuning, music, and things like that whereby they may be able to learn a living in the next twenty or forty years they have to live. . . .

One cannot see such examples of self-sacrifice in the service of one's country and be satisfied with the way we are serving Jesus Christ. . . . Those men and women of Europe have set new standards of devotion. . . .

If we are to press into these open doors presented to us in the mission fields with the devotion to Jesus Christ that we ought to have, we must set our wills and our resolutions in the direction of action. . . . We cannot long hold in solution our emotions; we must relate them to special activities and agencies.

What then are some things we can do through this American Christian Literature Society for Moslems? First, we ought to *enlarge our membership*. This organization is young and has less than two hundred members. It ought to have five hundred members speedily.

Then we must have not only enlarged membership, but *enlarged vision*. We have taken on a new name: "The American Christian Literature Society for Moslems." Tremendous it is! "American"? How much of America has been related to this enterprise? How many churches of America are even represented remotely in our meeting? And "Christian Literature"! What a limited area of Christian literature have we undertaken to put forth! What fields there are for us yet to explore! "For Moslems"! We have as yet just touched the Moslems in a few places and that in a most superficial way.

And then we want a *deepened life*. It is not right that we shall be related to a great cause like this without having a deep purpose that will reach down into our prayer life, down into the plans of our life, down into our whole relation to Jesus Christ. . . .

Then I plead also for *prayer*. Surely we ought to make that a very definite objective. We have not lifted prayer yet to the level of efficiency. We seek contributions of money. Do we get contributions of prayer with equal definiteness? There are those who hold the talent of money. There are also those who hold the talent of prayer. Are we enlisting them? . . .

To those things we may add this. Not only do we need enlarged membership, not only do we need enlarged vision, not only do we need the deepened life, and not only do we need more prayer, but we need specifically and definitely *greater achievement*. There are certain things that ought to be done. Let us discover a way to get them done! One hundred dollars will actually put forth an entire edition of a certain type of leaflet and finance it as it goes forth in all these different Moslem lands. A little comes back on sales that can be used over again in the further issue of that same leaflet. Another specific piece of work is the engaging of colporteurs. At from two to five hundred dollars a year a man may be engaged who will be the distributor of the Christian leaflets among Moslems, and furthermore by his life he will drive home the message. Or there is the establishing of reading rooms, estimated to cost from five hundred to a thousand dollars each. They will be placed where they have been asked for. For example, they are asking that one be put at Port Said at this time. Then, too, a single foreign missionary may be supported for seven hundred dollars, a married man for fourteen hundred dollars. Some one then can be released and given the distinctive task of translating some of our Christian literature for the benefit of Moslems. . . .

These are among some of the specific things that can be done by the members and friends of the American Christian Literature Society for Moslems.

Personal Letter

The "Fushimi Maru,"
October 14th, 1916.

DEAR DOCTOR MILLER:—

We are out on the Yellow Sea pointed toward China, and one stage of our journey is over. Our stay in Japan was longer by two weeks than we had planned, but in a long journey like ours plans are seldom fully carried out, and one must learn to take the despoiling of one's time with patience. As a matter of fact since we learned that our Annual Meeting was not likely to be held this year as is usual, early in November, our reaching Arabia by the first of that month does not seem such a vital thing, and we are more cheerfully enjoying the privilege of seeing more of Japan. A combination of circumstances, among them a week of rain, has confined our activities pretty much to Yokohama and Tokyo, and prevented us from seeing our missionaries and their work at the stations inland; but our people at the former places were most cordial, and left nothing to be desired in the way of hospitality and kindly attention. Besides our own schools we were able to visit a number of those of our sister denominations, and certainly brought away a hearty appreciation of the opportunity offered for influencing for good the young men and women of Japan. It was also a great privilege to worship on a Sunday with the Japanese congregations, of which there are many in these two cities. These