

The Present Need

BY C. STANLEY G. MYLREA, M. D.

Arabia is the hardest mission field in the world. This has been acknowledged again and again till to-day it is almost a platitude. The problem of Islam is the most difficult of solution of any of the Missionary problems, and though the outlook for the success of missions to Moslems is brighter to-day than ever before, still the fact remains that Islam is a stubborn, powerful, courageous and fanatical foe, proud in its own strength and very far from being beaten as yet.

Especially true is this estimate of the position in ancient Arabia where education is still non-existent and where true civilization is not wanted except by an insignificant minority. Arabia was Islam's birth-place and the spirit of the country is the same old uncompromising spirit that characterized the Arab of Mohammed's days.

The spirit of absolute superiority to and intolerance of all other religions, whose followers are all summed up under the one contemptuous heading—Unbelievers.

The spirit of absolute certainty that their religion cannot be defeated but that Islam will ultimately dominate the world, and that all nations, creeds and tongues will one day own the prophet of Arabia as the last of the prophets, the seal of God.

The spirit of Pharisaic self-righteousness which fasts and tithes and thanks God that it is not as other men are, that makes clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within is full of extortion and excess.

The spirit of hardness of heart, perhaps the most prominent trait in the Semite character—the same spirit that persecuted and killed the prophets of old—the same spirit that finally crucified the Lord of All.

The spirit that wearied Jehovah in the wilderness and wore out Christ in Jerusalem, till He cried out heartbroken, "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life."

The spirit that murdered Raymond Lull and that has been responsible for the hundreds of thousands of murdered Armenians.

The spirit of contempt for the Christian missionary who in their opinion is wasting his time and cannot possibly attain any measure of success proportionate to the effort he is making.

This was the spirit which the pioneers of Christianity in Arabia had to face. They accepted the challenge to their faith and went out in the name of the King of Hosts whose armies were being defied by the Philistines.

Arabia was only given the Gospel some twenty-eight years ago. It was almost the last country to be occupied by the missionary. The church was a long time making up its mind to carry the war against Islam right into the enemy's camp. Thank God for the spirit of the pioneers which shall yet prove stronger than the spirit of Islam.

The task which faced those pioneers was stupendous. How were they to make the self-sacrificed Moslem feel the need of Christ? There were no congregations to preach to; on the contrary they were shunned and avoided by everyone. Bazaar or street preaching was forbidden. It was a case of casting the bread upon the waters and the distribution of God's Word was steadily persisted in. Precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little, the Arab was to begin to know Jesus Christ at first hand, as he is portrayed in the Gospels and not as Moslem tradition paints Him.

These early efforts were along the lines of a ministry of friendship. It was soon discovered that there was another ministry which would prove a mighty force in the spreading of the Gospel in Arabia. Sickness and disease were all around them and though our pioneers were not doctors they were soon obliged to do a considerable amount of medical and first aid work. The value and efficiency of Western remedies made them many friends, opened many doors, and gave them the opportunities they sought, for conversation and personal work. They began to plan medical work with the result that first Basrah and then Bahrein were developed by our medical men. The Mason Memorial Hospital at Bahrein was opened in 1902 but on account of the difficulties of acquiring land in the Turkish Empire it was not until 1910 that the Mission owned its Hospital Building at Basrah, the Lansing Memorial Hospital. In 1908 Dr. Thoms who had already done pioneer medical work in Bahrein went down to Matrah near Maskat and opened up our third medical station. In 1910 Kuwait was visited by Dr. Bennett and negotiations commenced which ended in our being able in 1912 to begin steady medical work in that station. In 1914 a fully equipped, if somewhat small Hospital was opened in Kuwait, bringing our total number of Hospital buildings in the Persian Gulf up to three, while Medical work could be carried out in four distinct centres. It should be mentioned that these four centres do not include the dispensary for Women at Maskat where only women are treated. In other hospitals men and women are treated.

So much for the Plant. How about the personnel? The position is critical in the extreme. In 1912 we lost Dr. Thoms who died as the result of an accident. He has never been replaced. In 1916 we lost Mrs. Bennett, M.D. from typhus and at present we have to face the possibility that her husband Dr. A. K. Bennett who is at home on furlough may not be able to return to the field. It is likely also that health reasons will prevent the return of Dr. Worrall our pioneer Medical man in Basrah. Finally it is not at all certain that Dr. Van Vlack, an independent worker from the University of Michigan, who has just gone home on furlough will be able to come back. The only

medical men left whose connections with the Arabian Mission are reasonably secure, are Dr. Harrison of Bahrein and Dr. Mylrea of Kuwait. This means that with both of them on the field, two hospitals out of four are without a doctor. At this time both Basrah and Matrah are unmanned. Shall this state of affairs be allowed to continue? Shall the mightiest agency for Evangelization in Arabia be thus crippled and must all the work that has been so patiently and so laboriously built up be allowed to die of inanition? Had it not been for our medical men it is probable that Kuwait, at all events, would still be without a missionary, and in the present fanatical state of Bahrein, medical work is almost the only kind of work possible. Our medical clock is running down. It must be wound up very soon, or it will stop absolutely.

Since the need is so imperative, some of us have thought that if a couple of men would come out at once on a short term agreement and go to work in the Hospitals immediately upon arrival on the field, not stopping to learn the language but doing everything through an interpreter, this would tide us over until the new men whom we must have, should have learned the language and qualified themselves to take charge as a regular missionary. Short term men are only an emergency measure. We want the real thing, men who are glad and willing to put their lives at the disposal of the first medical missionary—The Great Physician.

“At even ere the sun was set, The sick O Lord around Thee lay,
O in what divers pain they met. O with what joy they went away.”

The Missionary Physician's life is not all hardship by any means. In fact the probability is that he has far more variety and novelty in his professional work than the average doctor at home. Tropical medicine is still comparatively virgin soil with unbounded possibilities for the man whose talents lie in the direction of research. Some of the greatest discoveries in medicine of recent years have been made in Tropical Medicine, witness the work of Manson and Ross in Malaria, of Reed in Yellow Fever, of Bruce in Malta fever, etc., etc.

If surgery is the preferable field, the man coming out here will have unbounded scope for his genius, for all sorts of cases in all sorts of conditions will be brought to him. He will get more practical experience in three months in one of our Arabian hospitals than he would in twelve at home. He will be able, nay forced, to do work which at home he would merely look on at.

And then surely it is worth something, everything, to know that one is a part of the machinery for setting up the true religion and a new civilization in a dry and thirsty land, instead of being a mere wage earner at home. A friend of mine used to say that any fool could earn a living. Are you satisfied to do what any fool can do? Come out here and help us, you may rest assured you will never regret it. We are bound to win our fight. Every knee must bow and every tongue

must confess that Christ is Lord of All. But the sooner the forces on the field are increased and the sooner the fighters are supplied with all the munitions they need, just so much the sooner will victory be ours. There is no conscription in Christ's army, but the burden of proof is nevertheless upon you to show that the circumstances in which you are at present placed were meant by God to keep you out of Arabia.

Since this was written Dr. Van Vlack has become a member of the Medical Reserve Corps of the U. S. Army and thus will probably not return to Arabia until the present crisis has passed.—EDITOR.

Dr. Harrison's Visit to Riadh and its Significance

By REV. L. J. SHAFER.

In the original plan of the Arabian Mission occurs these words, "Our ultimate object is to occupy the interior of Arabia." After a quarter of a century of struggle and sacrifice, God seems to have opened the way for the accomplishment of that purpose. Several letters have been received from members of the Arabian Mission calling attention to an event which may mean more for the future of our work in Arabia than any one thing that has happened in that Field since its occupation. We are quoting below the letters that convey to us the knowledge of this event.



RIADH FROM THE SOUTH

This photograph appeared in the *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society* for May, 1914, and is used here by permission of the Editor. It would probably be impossible to get similar photographs out of the country to-day.

In a letter from Mrs. Harrison dated Bahrein, July 14th, she says, "Dr. Harrison and I got back last week from Dareen, near Katif, where we had been for six weeks on an obstetrical case, when a letter came from Ibn Saoud inviting the Doctor into Riadh. He left Tuesday. If he really gets in, he will be gone for two months. As you can

imagine, it is very hard to have him away for such a long time, but when we realize that the prayers of the last quarter of a century are about to be answered and how much it will mean to the work, we are glad that the Father considers us worthy of the sacrifice and that He can use us in this way."

Referring to Dr. Harrison's visit to Ibn Saoud's capital in a letter written from Kuwait, July 20th, Mr. Calverley says. "We have received a note from Dr. Harrison dated the 10th inst., saying he has received an invitation to go to Riadh and asking to be remembered in prayer. I am glad to pass on the request."



GREAT MOSQUE AND TYPICAL MINARET, RIADH

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Our first knowledge that Dr. Harrison had arrived safely at Riadh was gained from a postscript to a letter from Mr. Dykstra from Bahrein, July 30th, which read, "Just received a letter in Bahrein from Dr. Harrison in Riadh, stating that he arrived there safely and had a hearty welcome from the Sheikh."

In a letter written the next day, Mr. Dykstra gives further details, "You will rejoice with us over the fact that Dr. Harrison finally received a call from Riadh, and that he arrived there safely after a ten day trip. Being a guest of Ibn Saoud, his position is unique, and he will have all possible opportunity to find out the lay of the land