

Neglected Arabia

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The Present Urgent Medical Situation

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This article was written at Hassa, which is between Riadh and Bahrein, probably on Dr. Harrison's return journey from his visit to Chief Ibn Saoud. See article on "Dr. Harrison's Visit to Riadh and Its Significance."



Dr. Harrison ready for the Dispensary. Preaching with which the Medical Missionary begins his day.

There is nothing new in the statement that Arabia needs more doctors. She has always needed more. But certainly never since the Mission work was begun in her borders has the need been what it is now.

The medical work in Matrah is closed. It has been closed for four years. Other missionary effort has continued and not unsuccessfully, but any man who has travelled among the friendly, hospitable, kindhearted people of that province of Oman, and has seen how practically every city and village is open to the Doctor, will have a mist over his eyes, or at least a cloud in them as he thinks of their physical and spiritual need and their present neglect. There are not many districts in Arabia where men collect in the room of the itinerant missionary, when work is over at night, with the simple request that he read to them out of "the Book." But the friendliest and most

receptive corner of our field is practically abandoned because its penetration requires a Doctor, and no Doctor is to be had.

The Hospital in Basrah is closed down, and that just as the dawn of a new day appears. Through evil report and good report, among enemies as well as friends, the work of that institution and its impress on the whole northern part of Arabia was such that men "thanked God on every remembrance of it." The reputation of its professional triumphs, and the spirit of Christ in it, was a reinforcement to the work of missionaries hundreds of miles away. But it is empty now, when of all times its work is most needed. Mesopotamia is face to face with a new epoch. Old things have passed away. Irrigation, prosperity, efficiency, civilization, are what the new era under the British is going to mean, if human judgment can be relied on at all. We ought to enlarge the hospital in Basrah, and definitely plan for the creation of an Arab Medical profession, using it as the necessary base. The possibilities open out like a page in Arabian Nights. Basrah is a major strategical point in the present world situation. But a Hospital cannot run without a doctor, so the Hospital is closed.



Nurse Sundri Dr Harrison Mrs. Harrison Mrs. Dykstra
Eating an Arab meal Arab fashion at Dareen, Hassa

Hardly less is to be said of Upper Mesopotamia. A Doctor would have been an incalculable asset to the work in the past. He is needed even more now. Arabs exiled for years from Amara and other places in Mesopotamia, by the intolerable oppression of the Turks, are planning to return as soon as the war is over. The opportunities and blessings of civilization as well as its temptations and dangers are to be given to a considerable part of the Arab race. The air is full of confident expectation. Such an opportunity the Church of Christ has not had before. To overcome hostility, to melt prejudice, to make possible the whole work of Christ which should be done to those

who constitute such a great opportunity, a Doctor is needed. But none is at hand. When established hospitals are being closed, how are we to undertake new work?

And as to Inland Arabia, words fail us. There has been the object of our hopes and prayers and the goal of our plans and endeavours for the past twenty-eight years. Now as the doors swing open, who is to enter? Kateef would be glad to have a resident Medical missionary now. Hassa probably could have been entered before this if any one had made the effort. Riadh itself, the key position of Arabia, and indeed as some of us think, of all Islam, is opening its doors. Of course, if we have an opportunity to enter Riadh it will probably be done, but the only way it can be done now is by the abandoning of another of our coast Hospitals.

This is the day of big things. The vision of Christ's universal reign is becoming more and more the supreme aim of his church. There has never been a time when the finer ideals of service in medicine have held so complete a sway in that profession. The vision of a world whose diseases have been conquered, of a humanity thus redeemed, is keeping the finest men in medicine patiently working day after day in the laboratory, and sending them out into Africa and Asia to give to the nations there some of the blessings we enjoy at home.



Dr. and Mrs. Harrison at an Arab tent, Dareen

It is to men who have caught something of the vision of the real glory of medicine and above all to men whose hearts burn with the fire of Christ's own ambition for His world that Arabia makes her appeal. Let Hassa serve as an example. Here is a city of probably thirty thousand inhabitants, surrounded by date gardens which stretch for miles. There are fifty-one cities and villages in this area, many of them cities of thousands, some of them mere villages. The evidences of material prosperity are everywhere. The whole district is

one of date gardens, wheat fields, and beautiful stretches of dark green alfalfa. It is the richest district of Arabia, and doubtless also the most densely populated. The inland bedouins come here to trade from almost the entire eastern half of the peninsula. The Church of Christ occupies no point in Arabia comparable to this in strategic importance.

But it is a bigoted fanatical place, whose doors are shut to every one except the Medical Missionary. What are the opportunities for medical work? Opportunities of the sort that break men. A mass of diseases to be treated, of surgery to be done, such as ten men could not overtake. Indeed, fifty men could not handle it properly. A sanitary situation as bad as human ignorance and filth can make it. The worker in Hassa with his little hospital must undertake single-handed the fight against the forces of hygienic depravity of the whole eastern part of Arabia. The inertia of centuries, ignorance so profound that it is almost sublime, some of the bitterest religious prejudices of the world, will all be pitted against him. But an inch at a time he will forge ahead and finally win, because the Promises of God and the Laws of God are with him.

To the man of softness and ease, Arabia has little to offer, but to the man who thirsts to fight for the bodies and the souls of men, against everything that the world, the flesh, and the Devil can muster, it has everything to offer. Hard tasks for strong men. Dangerous tasks for brave men. Long, tedious, back-breaking tasks for faithful men, who serve the Lord Christ.

Progress

BY MRS. EDWIN E. CALVERLEY, M. D.

There are some mission countries in which missionaries are looked upon as gods. As in the case of the early disciples it is sometimes necessary for the messenger of the Cross to restrain those whom he has helped from worshipping him as divine. In Arabia we are free, at least, from this drawback. The missionaries to the descendants of Ishmael are considered by those whom they would serve not as gods, but as infidels.

"Kafirs," they call us; "infidels." Should the missionary stop for a cup of tea in the tea shop by the road side, he may not, perhaps, be refused the beverage, but he must not be surprised if, after he has drunk, the owner of the shop dash the cup to the earth breaking it into a thousand bits lest some true believer be polluted by partaking from the same receptacle. "Unclean dogs," "eaters of pigs," "Would you go to *them* for medicine?" our enemies ask of would-be patients. Sometimes we hear the sick in the hospital talking quietly among themselves after they have been treated kindly and eased of their sufferings—"Why do people call them kafirs?" they ask.—"Surely they fear God; they are more merciful than the Moslems." "Have nothing to do with them" adjures the ignorant, fanatical mullah, "do not even listen to the telegrams which come daily with news of the war; beware of them; they are English magic!"