

The Log of the *Barala*

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NOTE—The ensuing is a series of extracts from a journal of a visit to the stations of the Arabian Mission, located on the Persian Gulf, made by Dr. Chamberlain and the writer as a Deputation from the Board of Foreign Missions, during September and October, 1920. The Deputation was especially fortunate on this journey in two respects; first, they were able to attend a regularly delegated meeting of the Arabian Mission in which representatives from every station of the mission except Amara were present. This is the first time in the history of the Mission when any representative from America has been able to be present at its regular meeting. This, of course, gave them an unusually favorable opportunity for getting a conception of the work of the Mission as a whole. The meeting was held at Kodaikanal in South India where members of the Mission were taking their biennial holiday and where they enjoyed the kindly hospitality of the buildings erected by the Arcot Mission in one of the most delightful spots in the world for a vacation sojourn. The second great advantage which the Deputation enjoyed was that they made the voyage from India to the Persian Gulf on the British India Steamship *Barala*, in company with Dr. and Mrs. John Van Ess and their two children, John and Alice, Dr. and Mrs. Paul Harrison, and Rev. E. E. and Dr. Eleanor Taylor Calverley and their three little girls, Grace, Elizabeth and Eleanor. There are two classes of steamship service to the Persian Gulf, the express from Bombay to Basrah in less than six days, with practically no stops, and the local service scheduled to make the trip in fourteen days, but frequently stretched out, as it was in the case of the *Barala*, to twenty days or more, and stopping at fifteen or sixteen ports in India, Beluchistan, Persia, Arabia and Mesopotamia, including all the stations of the Arabian Mission. It can easily be imagined what these twenty days of close fellowship with representative members of the Mission meant to the Deputation and how much it aided them in getting a grasp, both of the difficulties of the work and of its encouragements. It has been suggested that some extracts from the journal of experiences of these twenty days might have an interest to the friends of the Arabian Mission. In presenting them he wishes it to be clearly understood that they are but a series of impressions by the way and that they are in no degree to be compared for accuracy with the more careful records and accounts of our Arabian missionaries, who have proved themselves such masters in their field.

Sept. 25.—We went on board the *Barala* about three in the afternoon, but she did not sail until after seven. There was much interest in watching the arrival of our fellow travellers. We of the Arabian Mission had the first cabin nearly to ourselves, there being only one other passenger. There were three or four second-class passengers,

Eurasians, and several hundred deck passengers, Arabs and Indians. Some of the wealthier Arabs had purchased accommodations for themselves on the promenade deck and lived under comparatively spacious conditions, but the great multitude of them were huddled together in a promiscuity that only one who has visited the East can picture. Dr. Harrison already has begun to recognize old friends among the Arabs, and the way they come to him with all their troubles and perplexities and their confidence that he can quickly set them right is very striking.

Sept. 26.—A Sunday at sea. We had service in the cabin at eleven and Dr. Chamberlain spoke. During the afternoon we stopped at two towns on the Indian coast. At the first we had a very picturesque view of a walled town and a considerable palace or castle a mile or two outside the town. We came to the second town late in the evening and though the *Barala* whistled, no boats came out, and in a little while we moved on.

Sept. 27.—All day at sea. The missionaries seem to have a personal acquaintance with most of the Arabs on board and the Arabs are continually hunting them up. An incidental benefit that we get from this is that from time to time the Arabs send round a boy with coffee, which the rest of us share. Once or twice a day, Dr. Harrison makes a round of the ship and his favored companion has many experiences of Arab hospitality. Because of the heat we are sleeping on deck, and the full moon is gorgeous. Had a pleasant talk today with the chief engineer, who is Scotch, as I judge all chief engineers are.

Sept. 28.—During the morning we reached Karachi, a very large port with a great deal of shipping. It has enormously increased in importance of recent years because it has been so largely used by the British as a base for their operations in Mesopotamia. We anchored about two miles from land and were quickly surrounded by a multitude of sailing boats that move with incredible swiftness. All of us went ashore in the afternoon but Mrs. Calverley and Mrs. Van Ess and the children. You may be sure, however, that young John was of the party. For four rupees a sail boat took us all ashore and brought us back again. Landing, we took a tram for a five-mile ride to Karachi proper. The country is very flat and very dusty and the town is to me one of the least attractive I have seen in Asia. It is located on the edge of the desert of Scinde, the hottest and, on the whole, the least desirable part of India. The stores are quite good. Those of us who had not steamer chairs secured them. Dr. Harrison stocked up at the drug store and we all of us had ice cream and cakes at the Grand Cafe. We then took "gharries" and drove out to the zoological gardens, where there is a very good collection. I was especially attracted by the pelicans and flamingoes; also by a magnificent Arabian lioness, presented by the Sultan of Maskat. We saw also a number of wild boars, which furnish the English sportsmen pig-sticking. Savage brutes they were, too. Then back to the pier by tram and a sail out to the steamer by moonlight, arriving about half-past eight.

Sept. 29.—At anchor all day. I did not go ashore, although Messrs. Van Ess, Calverley and Harrison did. Mrs. Harrison received from an Arab friend a quite ornate gold watch. A big troop ship, on its way to Mesopotamia, left port today.

Sept. 30.—We left Karachi about noon, after taking on about three hundred additional Arab deck passengers during the morning. Most of them were returning from the Mecca pilgrimage. They are getting so thick it is hard to see where they are going to store themselves. It is getting quite hard to travel along the lower deck without stepping on somebody. They travel encumbered with all kinds of luggage, some with cages of parrots, some with two or three live sheep apiece, and all with boxes and bundles galore of all sizes and shapes. Some have perched themselves on top of high piles of boxes, where they do their cooking, say their prayers, and carry on the other operations of life quite unconcernedly. It is interesting to watch the Arabs at their prayers morning and evening; they seem quite insensible of the crowd about them and perform their devotions quite as punctiliously and carefully as if they were alone. The prayer groups usually consist of six or seven, of whom one acts as leader.

Oct. 1.—The morning at sea. In the afternoon we stopped at Guardir, the principal port of Beluchistan, but could not see anything of the town as it was hidden by an island, in the lee of which we anchored. A number of boats came out. Their oars are a queer board paddle fastened on the end of a long pole. One boat came in great state, seven oarsmen on either side, a drum playing, and the oarsmen chanting. When it came alongside the oarsmen stopped rowing and accompanied their chanting with a rhythmical clapping of the hands. Then they encircled the ship before their passengers came on board. I did not learn the meaning of it all definitely but assume that they were the escort of some specially distinguished person who was to sail with us. This was the first view I had of the Beluchis, a stalwart looking race, tall and very dark. Beluchistan is now a British dependency and administered from India. We stopped about two hours.

Oct 2.—We did not reach Maskat as early as we expected. It was four o'clock in the afternoon when we dropped anchor. About two hours earlier we got our first glimpse of the bleak, rocky hills of Arabia. The port of Maskat is picturesque beyond any that I have seen. Entrance is gained through a narrow gap in the rocks, which you scarcely see until you enter it. It is not a large harbor, and is completely encircled by high rocky cliffs on which are perched castles and watch-towers that go back to the days of the Portuguese. The city of Maskat is at the inner end of the harbor. The cliffs we passed were thickly inscribed with the names of hundreds of ships that have visited the harbor, which the sailors have emblazoned upon the rocks, each striving, it would appear, to find a place more conspicuous and more inaccessible than his fellows. The only American ships I recognized were the U.S.S. Brooklyn and the *Isla de Luzon* (on her way home from Manila after Dewey's victory); and I saw no earlier date than

1861. We anchored very near shore, and Van Peurseem came out in a small boat to meet us. The men of the party, Mrs. Van Ess, and the children went ashore with him, the latter going directly to the mission house while the men tarried to make some calls Mr. Van Peurseem had arranged for us. Maskat has a Sultan of its own and has been a place of very great importance. It was formerly, and down to the time of the grandfather of the present Sultan, linked with Zanzibar as one sultanate. It has been a great centre for the slave trade, a noted depot for gun-running and, in days gone by, the centre of Portuguese power in the Near East. The present Sultan has gotten pretty badly involved financially and the British are giving aid in extricating him from his difficulties. He is spending the summer in Karachi and will not return until November. Our first call was at the palace of the Vali or city governor. We were received in considerable state by an armed guard of about twenty who presented arms as we passed between them. The Vali came to the head of the staircase to meet us with the Mullah of the Mosque, the most influential religious leader among the Moslems of Maskat. They are both grey-bearded men of much dignity, clothed in handsome brown abbas and each with the silver dagger, without which no gentleman of Maskat can be considered fully dressed, in its scabbard at his girdle. They greeted us most graciously and led us out upon the veranda, where we were seated comfortably and had a fine view of the harbor. Sherbet, a rather sweet, insipid, somewhat warmish drink, was served. Shortly afterwards the Sultan's brother arrived. He was younger than the others and black-bearded, but similarly attired. He was accompanied by an Afghan orderly, who was seated with the company. Van Ess did most of the talking. (Immediately upon arriving, Harrison had gone up to our hospital to operate for Dr. Hosmon.) Van Ess talked principally Gulf politics. He is probably the best informed man on this subject outside the British service. Our call was not a long one and at its close we were dismissed with the same ceremony with which we had been received. We then went on to the British Consulate. This building has the most desirable location in Maskat, on the shore at a point where it catches every stray breeze that may come through the two or three crevices in the cliffs which surround the harbor. Here, too, we were received on an upstairs veranda overlooking the waterfront. We met the British Political Agent, Mr. Wingate, the son of the distinguished Wingate who was formerly Sirdar of Egypt. This younger Wingate is an extremely clever and able fellow and thus early in his career has scored several substantial successes. We also met Captain Pearson, who is in command of the British military force stationed a few miles out of Maskat, and also a Mrs. L., wife of one of the British political agents assigned to Mesopotamia, who had recently come out from England with her husband, but who, as yet, had not been permitted to proceed any further than Maskat. Owing to unsettled conditions the Government is extremely reluctant to allow women near the front.

(To be Continued.)

Peace in Oman

REV. G. VAN PEURSEM.

DURING the last year especially, the British Government made repeated attempts to establish peace between the Sultan of Maskat and Sheikh Esa and others of Oman. Most Omanis, including their leaders, were willing for peace but the brother of the late Imam seemed to be the main force to block it. He kept the Imam from entering upon any negotiations or even any consideration of peace. The Sultan's Government then increased export duty, 25 per cent. on dates and 50 per cent. on pomegranates, taking it in kind, the result being that the population made but little in sending their produce to the coast for shipment. This pressure seemed to drive the population to demand peace between their leaders and the Sultan. As an indirect result of this the Imam was killed last August while at prayers in a mosque. The new Imam



SOLDIERS OF THE SULTAN, MASKAT.

refused to be elected except peace were restored, and after his election hurried things along. Sheikh Esa with his soldiers came to Seeb in September requesting a parley with the British consul in order to make steps for peace. The British consul with military escort went to meet them there and immediately peace negotiations were begun. It took some time to satisfy both parties as to the official titles to be used in the documents. The Omanis insisted that the Sultan was making peace with the Imam al mussalmin. To this the consul objected since only a handful of the millions of mussalmin recognize him as such. It was finally decided to use only the names of the Imam and the Sultan without any title whatsoever. Sheikh Esa was the first to sign, and