

The Log of the *Barala*

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(NOTE.—Continued from the last issue. The “log” begins in this installment with further description of Maskat.—Ed.)

FROM the balcony of the Consulate we were fortunate enough to see a strange sort of magical religious function that was being carried on upon the shore for the purpose of securing success for the fisheries. There were six or seven hundred people taking part in it, dancing to the music of their drums and posturing with their long sticks. They had paper models of a horse, an elephant, a camel, and a ship, inside of each of which was a man, and these were the centres around which the dance revolved. Looking down upon the crowd one could perceive how mixed racially was the population, and how large the African element in the mixture. It seems that the performance of this ceremony was prohibited last year by the Sultan as being out of harmony with the tenets of the Moslem faith. The fisheries had a poor year and much ill feeling resulted. This year, in the absence of the Sultan, they are carrying out their ceremonies with much ardor, and by a curious irony, the first day after the festival began they had the largest catch of fish that has been known for a long time. What we saw was no doubt an excellent illustration of those curious animistic corruptions of Mohammedanism of which Dr. Zwemer has written so interestingly in his recent book. Fish are very plentiful and cheap in Maskat. I saw large fish weighing six to eight pounds sold for four annas, or about eight cents in American money. They have them both large and small. I saw the lifting of one net from which were taken several bushels of sardines. The *Barala* was surrounded by little fishing boats selling to the passengers, and the chaffering and bargaining that went on between them was very amusing.

While watching the fish invocation I could look across to the balcony of the Sultan's palace and could see there a number of members of his harem curiously peering out upon the unusual spectacle below. Our walk from the Consulate to the Mission House took us through the heart of the city. The streets are narrow and crooked with overhanging archways, quite the Orient of the picture books. Maskat is a walled city and the gates are still closed from nine o'clock at night until sunrise. In the centre of the city we stopped to see our Bible Shop, well located close to the bazaars, in a building which we own. It does quite a thriving business under the direction of the Colporteur, Abdullah, who also assists Mr. Van Peursem in the school, although unfortunately his educational attainments are quite limited. Maskat is much smaller than I supposed. Its present population is probably only about six thousand. It is in a rather decadent condition, as of recent years most of the business is being done in Matrah, which is only about three miles away and which now rivals Maskat in size. The decay of the place has

been brought about by the war which has been waged for nearly eight years between the Sultan of Maskat and the Sheikhs of Oman, the rich hinterland on whose trade and commerce the prosperity of Maskat depends. This conflict, through the mediation of Mr. Wingate, now seems likely to end. A treaty of peace has been prepared. To this treaty the Sultan has assented and it has already been signed by more than three fourths of the Sheikhs. (Note—This treaty has since been promulgated and is now in full force.) The main conditions are the reduction from 25% to 5% of the tariff on products of Oman entering Maskat, and mutual promises of fair treatment. The acceptance of this treaty will mean a radical change for the better in conditions, so far as our Mission is concerned. It will again give them access to Oman, where they worked with so much encouragement before the outbreak of civil war. Mr. Van Peursesem hopes to make a tour in Oman in the near future, and Dr. Hosmon is longing to do so as soon as she can be permitted. This means that an additional missionary doctor ought to be stationed at once either at Maskat or at Matrah, and that the hospital for which we have money on hand should be built either at Matrah or at some point in the interior of Oman. Which it should be is a point in Mission policy not yet determined.

We reached the mission property at last and found it to consist of four buildings on the outskirts of the city, just beyond the walls. The buildings are The Mission House, where the Van Peursems live, the Zenana House, occupied by Miss Lutton and Dr. Hosmon, the Dispensary, where the latter holds sway, and the chapel, between the Mission and Zenana House. We first visited the Dispensary. There are three rooms and a mat covered portico in front where the patients assemble and where the religious services are held. Within there are a consultation room, operating room, and ward. Dr. Harrison had just finished operating on a girl; scraping the bone of her leg and in all probability saving it from amputation. They need a better operating room and another ward and more ground, as they are badly crowded. They have two nurses from Madanapalle, who were trained in Dr. Hart's hospital and who were greatly delighted when Dr. Chamberlain spoke to them in their native tongue. The Zenana House has a central hall and Miss Lutton and Dr. Hosmon have each a reception room on the first floor and a parlor or living room on the second. Dr. Hosmon sleeps on the back veranda and Miss Lutton on the roof. They dine with the Van Peursems. Between the Zenana and the Mission Houses stands the Chapel, a neat little one story structure with benches that seat about sixty. They say that it is often crowded and that there is need of enlargement. The Mission House is the oldest of the buildings and was occupied by the Cantines when they were here. It has a reception room for Arabs and study on the first floor and living apartments for the family on the second. The veranda was cool in the afternoon with a nice breeze. Here we found Miss Lutton who has not been very well since her return, and also Mrs. Van Peursesem and the children, Gerald, Lucile, and "Bobs." Gertrude the oldest, they left at school in Kodaikanal and our boat brought the first letter from her. Our tea at the Van

Peursems included fresh dates and two delicious cakes baked by Dr. Hosmon, who is an expert. We met Henry, one of Peter Zwemer's slave boys, who is the Van Peursems' house servant, and also a poor lad who is Miss Lutton's servant. He is much afflicted but gives good evidence that he is sincerely seeking light and life through Christ. He has recently been subjected to rather sharp persecution and was for a time held in practical slavery, but Miss Lutton now has him back and the missionaries believe that he is almost, if not altogether, a Christian. We went back to the boat at six only to sail to the outer harbor and there to be informed that we are not to leave Maskat until tomorrow evening. We are not sorry for it gives us a Sunday in Maskat.

Oct. 3.—We got off early this morning,—Harrison, Van Ess, Chamberlain and I—for Matrah. The name means literally "the unloading" and it is so called because it is the terminus of the caravan route. Its business is growing and Hills Bros. have here one of their date-packing establishments. It is from this locality that the Fard date, one of the choicest varieties produced in Arabia comes. We stopped at the date factory for a few moments and were much impressed with the cleanliness with which operations are carried on among great difficulties. Then we took a little walk through Matrah, which is much like Maskat though obviously much more modern and with much more evidence of business activity. We saw from a distance the house where Dr. Thoms formerly lived and where he had his dispensary. He only rented it and it has now fallen badly into disrepair. At this point we separated, Chamberlain and Harrison walking over the hills to Maskat along the route where Dr. Thoms was erecting the telephone line when he met with his fatal accident. Van Ess and I took a boat across the bay to the hamlet of Koluba, from which it is an easy half mile walk to the Mission House. The ride across the bay gave us about the most direct exposure to the sun that I have ever experienced, and not only our heads but also our spines had to be carefully guarded. Our walk to the mission property was among the rocks, passing several hamlets composed of about the flimsiest structures for human habitation that I have ever seen, and then through a Moslem grave yard, where the graves were each hedged in by small rocks and with an additional rock in the centre when the grave was that of a woman. It was one of the most forlorn places imaginable with absolutely nothing in the way of inscription or attempted ornament,—nothing but desolate rocks. We came out at the mission property at half past eight and found the Arabic service just about to begin. Van Peursems conducted the service and preached from "I if I be lifted up from earth will draw all men unto me." The singing (as in Japan and China, but not in India) was of Western tunes set in Arabic words. The number of Arabs present at the service was not as large as usual because this was the first Sunday after the missionaries' return from holiday, and consequently it was not generally known that the service was to be held. The Calverleys arrived from the ship in time for service. We had breakfast at the Van Peursems and after that I had to sleep. There was English service at three in the afternoon. I spoke on "We are saved by hope." The service seemed to be helpful. Afterwards Dr. Hosmon

showed me a Sheikh's grave in an enclosure in front of the Zenana House, where the Arab women frequently come to make vows. We had tea and Miss Lutton walked down with us through the town to the place where we were to take the boat. She is now a welcome guest in practically every Arab woman's house in Maskat. We passed the house where Peter Zwemer lived and which was sacked by the desert Arabs during one of the raids they made in the city. They threw his organ out of the window and almost demolished it, but he was able to repair it so that at least it made music of sorts again. We also saw the house where Bishop French lived. On taking to the boat we were rowed to the place where some of our missionary heroes are awaiting the resurrection. They lie in two little coves to the south of the town. In the first cove are the graves of Bishop French and Stone, in the second of Dr. Thoms. By Stone's grave I heard for the first time the story of the way in which he came to die. He was a recruit, and was living with the Cantines. Being slightly ill he was advised to go out with his language teacher to a little village on the sea coast. They stayed in a mat hut, and while his teacher had gone to the bazaar to buy some provisions Stone fell asleep. A ray of sunlight coming through a crevice in the hut fell upon his head, and when the teacher returned he was unconscious and the same day he died. The story of the martyrs of the Arabian mission is a moving one. Somebody ought to tell it fitly. Peter Zwemer, Wiersum, Dr. Thoms, Stone, Dr. Cristine Bennet, and the others. Nor should one forget the missionaries' children who have given up their lives that Arabia might have the gospel. The little cemeteries are very pathetic, but with a beauty of their own in striking contrast to the grim desolation of the Arab burying ground through which I passed this morning. We got back to the *Barala* about half past five and sailed shortly after. In the evening we had a pleasant song service in the cabin, in which the ship's officers took part. Chamberlain gave a very stimulating talk on the contrast between the law of a carnal commandment and the law of an endless life. We slept on deck again, for the heat below was intolerable.

Oct. 4.—We reached Jask about seven in the morning. A desolate looking place, it is a British cable station developed when they were suppressing the gun runners some years ago. Chamberlain and several others went ashore. It was so very hot that I did not go. This is our first stop on the Persian side of the gulf. On his return, Chamberlain reported that they found nineteen people connected with the telegraph service, mostly Indians. The longest time that any stay is three years. We had a detachment of sepoy from Maskat on board who left us here. While on board they maintained military discipline, one soldier continuously standing guard.

Oct. 5.—We made Bunder Abbas in the morning. This also is on the Persian side. It is on the site of the ancient Ormuz of which Marco Polo writes as the great metropolis in his day. It is still a port of considerable importance, though there is but little to see and there are comparatively few houses. The principal products shipped here are Persian carpets and shelled almonds; of these latter great quantities. The town

stands at the head of the straits which lead into the Persian Gulf proper. The western shore of Persia seems to be lined by low lying cliffs, quite black, with scarcely any signs of vegetation. In the afternoon we went on to Henjam, an island utterly forlorn, more depressing, if possible, than Jask. This is a wireless station and a base for naval stores. We stayed until midnight as we had only seventy miles to go to Linga and did not wish to arrive before daybreak. The weather has been very hot and muggy; even on deck it is difficult to sleep.

Oct. 6.—About seven we reached Linga, quite the most pretentious town we have seen since leaving Maskat. It is spread out along the shore for a considerable distance and about it there are groves of palm trees. Its buildings are white and well built, and in the centre there rises a lofty minaret. We were quite close to land but as our stop was very short we could not go ashore. For a time the Arabian Mission had a colporteur at Linga, treating it as an out station from Bahrein, but that was found not to be a practicable arrangement and Linga (and all the Eastern side of the Persian Gulf) is now one of the unoccupied mission fields of the world. The *Barala's* course now took us across the Gulf to the Arabian side. On the way we passed close to Abu Musa, a small island on which several hundred Arabs live. This is the island which the Germans tried to take a few years ago on the pretext of mining for red oxide, and in the attempt created an international incident. An Arab steamer on which Van Ess was travelling once went aground off this island and it was ten days before it could be floated. At the Captain's request Van Ess went ashore to see the Sheikh and enlist his help, but discovered that the Sheikh took the position that since the ship was fast aground it had become an integral part of his territory. Van Ess asked him what he proposed to do with it. He said it would be pleasant to sit on the bridge on moonlight nights and that the engines would no doubt start of their own accord and furnish light when there was no moon.

We reached Debai, on the Pirate coast, at five o'clock. This is a point which the missionaries used to visit when touring until some fourteen years ago, but which has latterly been entirely closed to Westerners. Dr. Harrison was received here last year and he thinks that in the near future a missionary doctor could be permanently located at this point. We did not know whether we would be permitted to land or not, but the men of the party determined to try. We made several attempts to get a boat to take us ashore but the local boatmen evidently feared that to do so would draw down upon them the displeasure of the Sheikh. Finally, however, some Arabs who knew Calverley and who had come aboard the *Barala* from their ship which anchored in the harbor, said we might come with them. We left our helpful friends on their own ship and they sent their boat, with four negro oarsmen to take us ashore, wait for us, and bring us back again. The boatmen rowed in rhythm with an antiphonal chant between one as leader and the other three as chorus "As Allah will it; so must it be," giving a weird sensation as we glided over the bay in the gathering gloom of nightfall. On the way we passed several pearl ships going out. They looked very much like pictures of the old Roman Galleys. They have sails but depend

principally upon the eight long oars on either side of the ship. Their oarsmen also chant as they row.

Debai is made up of three villages separated by a narrow arm of the sea that runs several miles inland. With the adjoining tributary villages on the coast here is a population of about twenty thousand. We asked to be landed near the home of the Sheikh and had only a few hundred feet to travel before we reached his mejlis, or reception hall, a narrow shed-like building of coral rock covered with plaster. We removed our shoes at the door and passed over matting to the handsome carpets arranged round three sides of the room, on which we seated ourselves. Very soon the Sheikh, a fine stalwart man with martial stride, and dagger at girdle, entered the room accompanied by several of his counsellors. He gave us a cordial greeting. From time to time others came in and took part in the council, including the Sheikh's brother and the Imam of the Mosque. Next to Van Ess sat the Sheikh's Wazir and they had a very interesting conversation on politics. His first question was "Is it really true that peace was made at Paris?" His second "Did President Wilson get his heart's desire with regard to the fourteen points?" He also had a large fund of misinformation as to Turkish successes in Mesopotamia;—that the Turks had retaken Baghdad, that river traffic from Basrah was interrupted, etc. Van Ess told him of the sixty aeroplanes and two divisions of soldiers that had just come up. While we were talking the call for evening prayer was sounded and our hosts promptly left us without apology and as a matter of course and went out to pray. One little Arab boy just fresh from the desert stayed with us and talked to Calverley. He was much interested in his tope (pith hat) and wanted to try it on. On the return of the Sheikh and his company refreshments were served. First a lighted pot of incense was handed around for the company to inhale. Second the hubble bubble pipe was circulated. From this part of the ceremony foreigners were mercifully excused. Then there was brought in a large heavy tray of helwa (a sweet meat); and finally coffee was poured with great dash and vigor from a large handsome Arab coffee pot by a negro servant. Harrison tried to get the Sheikh to say that he wanted a physician to come and stay. He answered that he would send for him when the time came. He was friendly but unwilling to be rushed. On our way out we noted fine hunting falcons on three perches in the Sheikh's courtyard. They are used here principally in hunting the gazelle, which abound. The falcon badgers the gazelle so that it can be overtaken and captured. When we got back to the boat we found two live sheep and two goats which the Sheikh had sent as presents. It was practically dark by this time and we did not see much of the town. Harrison says, however, that it is all much like the small part through which we passed. The tide had fallen while we were away and we were carried to our boat by two negroes, who accomplished their task very deftly. On reaching the *Barala* we found that we were not to start until morning after all, because there were five lacs of silver rupees to be delivered in connection with the marketing of the pearls.

(To be continued)

The Arabian Mission and Mesopotamia

The extension of the work of the Arabian Mission into Mesopotamia has been officially approved by the British Mandatory Authority in that area as will be seen by the following very gratifying letter from Sir Percy Cox, the High Commissioner of Great Britain for Mesopotamia:

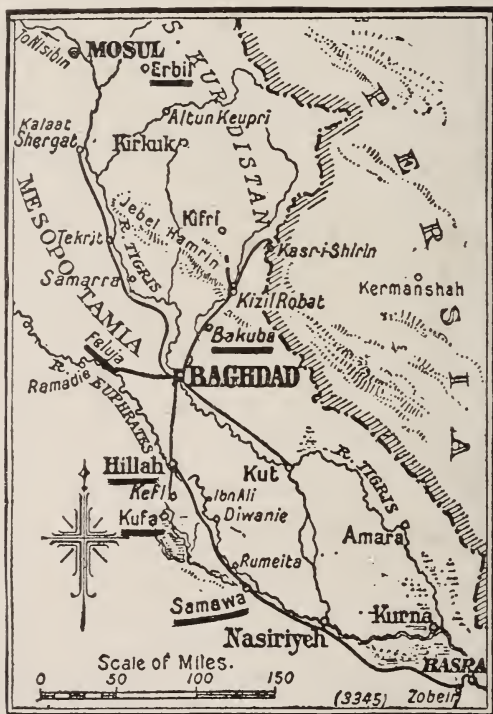
"In reply to your letter dated November 6th I am desired by His Excellency, Sir Percy Cox, to say that the advent of the Arabian Mission to Baghdad will be very welcome and that there is no objection whatever to the arrangements you propose.

"I have the honor to be, SIR,

Your obedient servant

(s) C. G. GARBETT, *Secretary*"

In addition to the above formal and official assurance, the Deputation, when on its visit to Mesopotamia in October, 1920, received from the Military Governor of Baghdad, who was in temporary control of the property of the Church Missionary Society in that City, the assurance that it would be surrendered cheerfully to the Arabian Mission in the event of its desiring to come into possession of it.



This cut is published by courtesy of "The Independent"

The Arabian Mission has for some years occupied, in lower Mesopotamia, in addition to Basrah, the Stations of Amara and Nasiriyeh. (Nasaria) On this map Hillah is the site of Babylon, Mosul of Nineveh, Nasiriyeh of Ur of the Chaldees, and Kurna, at the junction of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, the traditional site of the Garden of Eden.