

NEGLECTED ARABIA.

October-December, 1908.

A MONTH IN OMAN.

DR. C. STANLEY G. MYLREA.

It was a glorious sunshiny morning in the middle of March when we dropped anchor off the city of Debai. As soon as I had breakfasted Ameen, our colporter, informed me that the boat was ready. It was not without some regrets that I left the hospitality and civilization of the steamer. As I went down the side I realized that I was going to be alone in a strange country, that is, alone as far as having anything in common with any of my companions was concerned. However, we were soon busy counting our packages and making sure that everything was safe in our rowboat. I say, we, for the party consisted of Ameen, the colporter, already mentioned; Julius, our dispenser, and myself.



PEARL FISHING-BOATS DRAWN UP ON THE BEACH.

The boat was a typical native pearl-boat, such as they use in the shallow water diving before they go far out to sea. It was provided with a sail, but there being no wind, the oars were got out and with eight sturdy African slaves to pull we were soon cutting through the water at a fair rate of speed in the direction of Shargh, a town about

eight miles away, and our first objective. The rowers sang as they rowed, and their chant, with any amount of "Ya Allahs" scattered through it, became rather tiresome after a while. The sun also began to be rather hot, but after about two hours rowing we reached our destination.

Our host did not come to meet us in person, but sent his brother, who hustled about and saw that everything was right. Our host, Abdel-Latif by name, is in the employ of the British Government, acting as its representative in Shargel. He has built accommodations for a European guest, so I found everything fairly comfortable, an upstairs room to myself and a downstairs room for the two helpers, to say nothing of a bathroom! I was glad I had brought a bath. My room, moreover, was furnished—a bedstead, two tables and plenty of chairs. The meals, too, were not impossible. Breakfast consisted of bread, jam, and tea; lunch of rice and fish; supper, fish and rice. If a storm came up and the fishing boats were unable to go out, then rice without the fish. In between whiles, at odd times, a servant loafed in with Arab coffee. As a secret, which must not on any account be violated, let me tell you that I had brought a box of tinned things along, so occasionally we were able to make an addition to our table.

The first two days in Shargel were rather quiet owing to the fact that the son of a neighboring Sheikh had died and everyone was in mourning for him. After that people began to call thick and fast, both socially and professionally, although, as a matter of fact, there were very few social calls that did not terminate professionally. For instance, a man would drop in and we would chat for awhile. Then, just as he was about to leave, he would recollect some obscure pain somewhere or other and ask for treatment. Then, as likely as not, before I had finished writing his prescription, he would think of another disorder of an entirely different nature from which he had apparently been a sufferer for years. If I suggested that he was letting his imagination run away with him he would say, "Well! my eyes itch anyhow; put some drops in."

One young sheikh came to me with a fairly simple hare-lip, which needed an operation. I told him he must take chloroform and stay in bed a day or two, and, incidentally, pay a fee. He deliberated a few days and then said he could not take chloroform because there was wine in it, and that was forbidden in the Koran. It was idle for me to tell him that he was laboring under a delusion. A friend of his who was sitting by observed, "You don't mind gambling day after day, which is forbidden in the Koran, but here where you are asked to do something sensible you trump up silly objections." However, he never consented even though I offered to do the operation under cocaine.

Perhaps he was afraid of the fee. Fees this year have been hard to obtain owing to the scarcity of money consequent upon the dulness of the pearl market. So you see when you people at home don't buy pearls, we missionaries can't get our fees. But perhaps this is dangerous advice.

We spent a fortnight at Shargeh, treating all sorts and conditions of diseases. In fact, we had some 700 cases altogether. Sunday was our only day of rest, and on this day we absolutely refused to see any but emergency cases. After breakfast we would take a stroll out to the so-called "Gardens"—a sorry show—just date palms eking out an existence in the burning sand and never receiving any water save the little they may collect from an occasional winter shower. We would



A CORNER OF DEBAI BAZAAR.

look for a spot which had most pretensions to shade—the date palm is but a poor shade tree—and sit down to read, write, or talk. When the sun became too hot we would walk slowly home.

We had rather a miserable time going back from Shargeh to Debai. Perhaps because it was April 1st we did not take any rowers. Just as we got out to sea the wind changed. We were all day making the eight miles between Shargeh and Debai. When we reached Debai it was low water and we could not get over the bar, so had to heave to until about 2 A. M., when we crept in. No one was about, so we stayed in our boat till sunrise, and very soon found the way to our host.

Debai, like Shargeh, when it can, does a big business in pearls. There are simply hundreds of boats engaged in the pearl fisheries. It

is a much bigger place than Shargeh, and is situated on a desert where the sand goes over your ankles at every step. Even a shopping expedition is quite a tiresome process. The daily experience there was much the same as at Shargeh, and we treated about 750 patients during the fortnight we stayed there. We were not entertained quite so well, being all in one room, and that on the ground, so that the people stared in at us through the windows all day long.

With regard to evangelistic work, some hundreds of scripture portions were sold. We can only trust and pray that some of the seed fell on good ground. In Oman there is still a good deal of fanaticism. When we went out we were always hooted at, and the cry of Nasrani! Nasrani! (Christian, Christian) rang out from all sides. But, on the other hand, the door *is* open and the opposition could be lived down.

At last the day came round for the steamer. She had not been at anchor long before we and our belongings were aboard, and a few days later it was "Home, sweet Home."

BAHREIN PARISH LETTER.

REV. FRED. J. BARNY.

MUSCAT, July 1, 1908.

Why I should write a parish letter from Muscat about work at Bahrein may need a word of explanation. The right to do so is unquestioned, according to the appointment of the Mission placing the evangelistic and school work of that Station under my general supervision. Having but recently returned from there after a stay of nearly three months, there is also the qualification. There are two topics of which I wish to write in particular.

THE BOYS' SCHOOL.

My last task just before leaving was to preside at the closing exercises of the school. Hence, although this is not to be a yearly report, a few general remarks will be in order. The year has been one of solid growth. This showed itself not so much in increased numbers, though there has been a gain here, too, but in the nature of the attendance. All, except a few of the smallest children stayed with us the whole year. Nor were there any interruptions caused by opposition or epidemics. Day after day the "halls of learning" were open, teachers and scholars worked faithfully and there was steady progress right along. From last Annual Meeting on, a second teacher was employed during the afternoon, and since the great attraction, by means of which we hold the Moslem children in attendance, is instruction in English, I gave lessons each day to the two upper grades. As a result of all this the