



interest, and the aforetime Kafir, or unbeliever, has become the present-day friend.

But we must pass on to the more material accomplishments of our twenty years' effort. The first step towards the permanent occupation of a country is an accurate survey. We can nearly say now that our field is well known. By boat, its coasts and rivers, and by caravan, its wide plains and its rugged mountain valleys, have been visited again and again. With its chief cities and their interlying villages we are well acquainted. There are still vast regions unexplored, but year by year takes us further afield and nearer to the realization of our ideal—the evangelization of "Neglected Arabia."

An inventory of our real estate would be interesting to those who think they can judge of the prosperity of a commercial enterprise by the buildings in which its working force live and labor. In this direction the Arabian Mission has still much to hope for. Within the last few years ample ground has been obtained at each of our stations. But as yet we own dwellings for only three families and two or three single workers; only one hospital, one school, and one school and church combined. The undoubted returns in added health and efficiency show that here our comparatively small investment is of great value.

What we have done in touring, in scripture circulation, in medical work, in our schools and in our house visitation appears yearly in our reports and may require only brief mention.

The Bible work for which many a friend at home has given directly, and which from the first has absorbed much of our time and means, is represented by a total circulation of 62,000 copies.

To appreciate the return from our investment in medical work requires us to consider what is meant by the coming to us of 225,000 patients, treated with Christian kindness and skill and individually brought to listen to Christian truth and prayer.

But what we see of good accomplished, directly and indirectly, at home and abroad, is only one factor, the other is the divine; together they will give the grand result, infinite in value. The investment from *our* hands is but small and finite; the returns from God's hand are priceless and abiding.

OUR UNFINISHED TASK.

REV. S. M. ZWEMER, D. D.

The task for which God called the Arabian Mission into being Arabian Mission it was stated that "Our ultimate object is to occupy twenty years ago is not yet completed. In the original plan of the

the interior of Arabia," and Major-General F. T. Haig, who perhaps did more than any other man to call attention to neglected Arabia in the early days of our Mission, rightly interpreted the plan and purpose of the new enterprise when he wrote: "To such an appeal there can be but one reply. The Dutch Reformed Church when it took up the mission originally commenced on an independent basis as the Arabian Mission, did so with full knowledge of the plans and purposes of its founders, which, as the very title of the mission shows, embraced nothing less than such a comprehensive scheme of evangelizing as that above described." The description to which he refers occurs in a paper published at that time by the mission and included a description of the needs of all the neglected provinces of Neglected Arabia.

Looking back over the past twenty years and remembering how God has blessed us in opening doors and hearts, we need once more to catch the vision of the whole divinely imposed task, the evangelization of Arabia.

I. In planning and praying for this work we need first of all to remember as a pioneer mission those pregnant words of Livingstone, "The end of the geographical feat is the beginning of the missionary enterprise." Arabia must be known before it can be reached with the Gospel, but the end of the geographical feat is not yet. Nowhere else in the world are there such great and difficult problems of exploration which remain to be solved as in Arabia. Almost all of the southern half of Arabia is, according to native report, occupied by a vast wilderness generally called Ruba el-Khali—the empty abode. No European has ever entered this immense tract, which embraces some 600,000 square miles, although three travelers, Wellsted in 1836, von Wrede in 1843, and Joseph Halevy in 1870, with intrepid boldness gazed on its uttermost fringes from the west, south and east respectively. Some Arabian maps show caravan tracks running through the heart of this desert from Hadramaut to Maskat and Riad. For the rest we have only vague reports at second hand in regard to this whole mysterious region. Burton and Doughty expressed the opinion that an explorer might perhaps cross this unknown, waterless territory in early Spring with she-camels giving full milk, but it would take a bold man to venture out for the passage of 850 miles west to east, or 650 miles north to south, through this zone of the world's greatest heat, to discover the unknown in Arabia. Such an enterprise, although of value to geography, would count for little or nothing in the work of evangelization, and yet who knows what it may hold of ruins of former civilization. A recent writer says: "There is, in all likelihood, very little to see from one end to another but sand, gravel, naked outcrops of rock, wind-carvings of the friable surface, and here and there a group

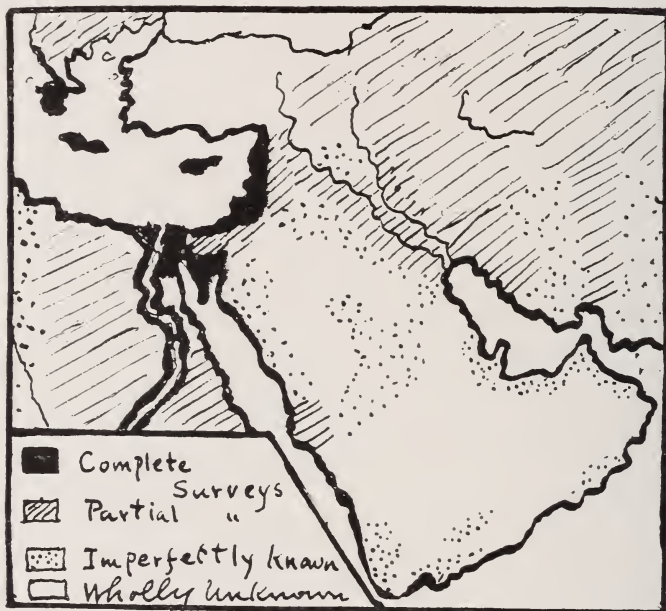
of wild palms. Still, who can say for certain? Here is a region as vast as the circumpolar sanctuary, and as little seen. It must receive some precipitation from the monsoons which affect the district east, south and north. It does receive drainage from the Oman mountains and the wadys of Nejran. It has been reported to contain black Bedawis and tracts of palms. It may be ranged by a curious drinkless fauna like the northern Arabian desert, the Nefud. It may hide anything you like to imagine in its secret area, three times the size of these islands of ours. We know just as much or as little of it as the Moslem geographers knew in the middle Ages—and that is all."

There are, however, other districts in Arabia which are not entirely desert, but inhabited by large tribes and in some cases containing groups of villages and smaller cities which have never been seen by western eyes. The biggest geographical feat left for a traveler to perform in all Asia is to get across the Yemen, on to Nejran and pass from thence along the Wady Dauasir to Aflaj and Nejd. We know that this journey is followed by Arab caravans, as I met many of the Arabs from that district on my first and second visit to Sanaa. There are plenty of wells and the journey would lead through a long palm track of over 100 miles march in its early stages. This region has two important villages called Kharj and Hauta, and it is said to be the chief breeding place of the Nejdean horse.

Nejd is the heart of Arabia and has never been visited by a missionary. The experiences in that region of Doughty and Nolde in 1893 prove that it may require moral and physical courage of no common order to explore the country, but nevertheless, even Doughty did not abjure his Christianity and a medical missionary might be able to penetrate into every part of this great unknown center of Arabia, if he secured the protection of the various tribes through his medical and surgical skill. Western Arabia is becoming better known since the survey and construction of the Hejaz railway. That railway is now far within the borders of the Moslem holy land and will reach Mecca itself in 1911. Since there was a compromise in building the railway station a long way outside of the city of Medina and Christian engineers are working on the line, it may prove possible at no distant period for Europeans to make pilgrimages, if not to Mecca, to within a short distance of the holy city. We can learn, however, all we wish to know about Mecca without giving further offense to Mohammedan feelings by sending travelers there in disguise, as scores of Indian educated Moslems visit the Arabian capital every year.

In Oman there remains much unexplored and undiscovered territory, especially in the region of Katr and Ras Musundam, although some of this territory has been crossed once and again by our Arabian missionaries.

II. Not only is there much work of exploration to be done in Arabia, but even those parts of Arabia which are well known on the map are unknown to the Church of Jesus Christ, and the message of the Gospel has never reached the people. Arabia can still be called "neglected," because it is almost wholly unreached by the Gospel. The accompanying map tells the story.



* *Unexplored Arabia.*

Along the four thousand miles of coast from Sinai all the way around the peninsula to the head of the Persian gulf, there are only four mission stations, Aden, Muscat, Bahrein and Busrah. In addition we have out-stations, but in these out-stations there is no resident missionary. Muscat is further from Aden than Chicago is from Denver by two hundred miles and if you imagine the region between wholly untouched by missionary effort with four workers at Aden and two at Muscat, you know what Neglected Arabia means on the south coast. The distance between Muscat and Busrah in a straight line is about as far as from Chicago to New Orleans, and to go to the annual meeting means a thousand mile return journey for the missionaries at the two extremes of our field. Busrah is only three hundred and sixty-five

* From Hogarth's "The Nearer East," p. 9.

miles by the zigzag steamer route; it is a three days' journey and boats sail once a week.

The total number of missionaries in Arabia with a population of at least eight millions is not half as many as the number of clergymen in Grand Rapids, Mich. In this country there is one physician to every six hundred of the population, a drug store on every corner and hygiene taught in the schools; Arabia has ten medical missionaries and those out of touch with their work of mercy on the coast must suffer the horrors and cruelty of superstition unaided when sick, and uncomforted when dying.

Arabia has seven provinces—Hejaz, Yemen, Hadramaut, Oman, Hassa, Irak and Nejd. Only three of them are occupied by mission stations. Oman is occupied and has two missionaries for a population of over one million scattered in hundreds of villages and hamlets! The nearest mission station west from Bahrein is at Assuan, Egypt, eleven hundred miles away; and looking East from the mission house across the Gulf and Southern Persia and Baluchistan, the nearest wireless station for the telegraphy of the Kingdom is at Quetta, one thousand miles distant.

It is nineteen hundred years since the Great Commission and thirteen hundred since the great apostacy of Islam, and yet the following cities of Arabia are without a witness for Christ, who said, "nothing is impossible with God": Mecca, Medina, Sanaa, Hodeida, Makalla, Shehr, Boreyda, Hail, Hofhoof, El Jowf and a score of others nearly equally important strategically.

In view of all these facts, which are in themselves the strongest plea for missionary effort, shall we not all pray for NEGLECTED ARABIA and *labor*, not as if we had already attained or were already perfect. Forgetting the things that are behind—the years of service and suffering, the lives poured out and the love poured in on the field, the prayer and sacrifice of the faithful few at home—let us press toward the mark of our high calling, the evangelization of Arabia. God has blessed us during the last twenty years in permitting us to lay foundations. Shall we not attempt now to complete the temple to His glory? We have a base of supplies on the coast, shall we not in our prayers as well as in our purposes adopt the old battlecry of the Arabian Mission, and secure workers enough and of the right stamp to speedily "*occupy the interior of Arabia*" for Christ?