



# NEGLECTED ARABIA.

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## The New Laborer in the Plenteous Harvest.

REV. G. J. PENNINGS.

"Then saith He unto His disciples, The harvest indeed is plenteous, but the laborers are few. Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest that He send forth laborers into His harvest." These verses are familiar to all who have any interest in Missions. They are quoted and repeated at every missionary gathering. It is well that they should be. Here in a small compass we find mentioned the great factors in all missionary work, the need, those who are to supply the need, and the source from which they are to draw all their strength. The truth of these words cannot be emphasized too much. Let them be repeated again and again until they become to all, not merely a combination of convenient and time-worn phrases, but a tremendous, living fact.

But the new missionary, as he goes out for the first time, and catches a first glimpse of the harvest field, gets a clearer understanding and a more powerful impression of the meaning of these words of Christ than he has ever had before. To him they become terribly real. That was our experience as we went out to the mission field, and for the first time saw the multitudes of our brethren living in heathen lands. We saw something of it at Port Said, and caught a glimpse of it at Aden, while the week spent at Bombay gave us a very vivid impression as to the meaning of the words "the harvest is plenteous."

But we were especially susceptible to impressions when we neared our own future field of labor and entered the Persian Gulf. Since our boat was a slow one, and stopped at several ports, we had the better opportunity to see something of the field. The first port at which we landed, after leaving Karachi, was Muscat. As usual, crowds of swarthy natives crowded about the boat to discharge the cargo. When we landed we had to walk some distance till we found, outside the old city wall, the only missionaries in Oman. But there were the multitudes of natives, there was the harvest field. Again, after we left Muscat, we remained for a day in the

harbor of Bunder Abbas. There lay a large city, with the mountains back of it towering heaven high. Thousands of people live in that city. Another day we spent in the harbor of Lingah. In the evening we could hear the muezzin call the people to prayer, but in answer to the question as to whether there were any missionaries in those cities, we were told that a colporteur visits them about once in two years. True, these last two cities are on Persian soil, and, therefore, do not rightly belong to the field of our Arabian Mission, but in the eyes of Him who spoke of the plenteous harvest they belong to that harvest.

Afterward we were for a day off the Pirate Coast before the city of Dubai. Dubai is on Arabian soil, and is rapidly growing in commercial importance. But how many missionaries are there here to work in this part of the harvest field? Not one. About once a year our missionaries are enabled to make a tour to this coast, and colporteurs sometimes go twice a year, but this is the only way the Gospel is preached to them. How much can we expect the masses to hear and remember as the result of these short visits, of which many are not even aware. Besides, only a comparatively small part of the coast can be touched at a visit.

Bahrein is a refreshing exception to this dearth of missionaries, for here is another of our Mission stations. But what about Hassa and Katif, where our missionaries are sometimes denied admittance, and what about that long string of towns and villages, not to mention the towns of the interior, which lie scattered for hundreds of miles along the coast between Muscat and Hassa and Katif? Not a single permanent missionary is found there. And then farther up from that strategic point Kuwait, until we come to Busrah, not a single missionary. Yea, indeed, now we realize some of the significant meaning of these words, "The harvest indeed is plenteous," and also the meaning of that other phrase in all its dread reality, "The laborers are few."

There are no lighthouses in the Persian Gulf, and ship captains will tell you long tales of the dangers of navigating that Gulf, especially by night. It is a type of the spiritual condition. It is true that we have three spiritual lighthouses, if we include Busrah some distance up the river, but there is a limit to the area to which they can effectively supply the light, so that there are thousands upon thousands of human beings in dense darkness, without spiritual light, in hourly danger of suffering spiritual shipwreck.

We thank God that we as a Church may do something to relieve that intense spiritual darkness, and when we see the extent of the field and the difficulties of the work, we are amazed that so

much impression has been made. But the fact remains, also for Arabia, "The harvest is plenteous, but the laborers are few."

Not that we despise the day of small things, or ever doubt that the mustard seed can grow into a large tree. But this does not say that the Church of Christ may be satisfied with small things. If the smallness of the effort is due to the lack of interest or unwillingness to sacrifice, the Church has no right to expect great results. He that soweth sparingly shall also reap sparingly, is true in this respect. May the Church of Christ, in view of these conditions, increasingly labor in prayer to the Lord of the harvest, for now, as in the days when Christ was upon the earth, the harvest is plenteous, but the laborers are few.

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## Odds and Ends of the Bahrein Girls' School.

MRS. MINNIE W. DYKSTRA.

It is not to introduce to you a new department of the work, or to introduce you to new friends, that this letter is written, but to renew acquaintance, to increase interest, and to benefit the work.

Through lack of help the teaching in this school has been done by the different missionary ladies as they have found time to add it to other work. The attendance is not of Arab girls, as many suppose. According to the law of their prophet, Arab girls of eight years old and upward practically become prisoners in their own homes, and so attending school is entirely out of the question, however much they might wish to come. The Persian girls and women, however, enjoy much more freedom, and it is from among these that the roll is made up. This, of course, brings its own difficulty. The teachers ought to know Persian as well as Arabic, but till now it has been impossible for them to do so, either because of lack of time while still studying Arabic, or because of inability to find a Persian teacher. The total enrollment, of Persian girls only, has gone above forty, but, of course, not nearly all of these are in regular attendance.

There is no compulsory school law in Bahrein or anywhere in Arabia, neither is there any law against child labor. The parents have not been taught, and why should the children be taught, especially the daughters? If garments are to be had, or at Christmas time a doll and some candy is given, perhaps a covetous mother may send her little girl, or encourage her to go, in the hope of obtaining a gift. In such a case the teacher must use much discretion in distributing the gifts, so as not to foster this spirit of begging,