

The Lepers in Muscat.

Many mission periodicals describe the work that is being done among the lepers in various countries. Some of the large missionary societies have asylums in which these poor outcasts are housed, clothed and fed, given medical care, and where they are daily taught of Christ.

It is well known that leprosy exists in those parts of Arabia where our missionaries are working, and mention is often made in letters, of some leper in whom we are especially interested. It was through such an one, who, while she lived in her mother's home, was a frequent visitor to the mission house, that I learned to know something of the small leper colony in Muscat. And it has occurred to me that you, too, would like to know something about the life of those, whose dwelling now, as in the days of old, is without the camp; so I am going to ask you to come with me and make them a visit.

Leaving the mission house, a walk of about fifteen minutes through narrow, zigzag streets brings us within sight of the colony. As we are nearing it, we meet an old man who urges us to go back, saying it is not good for our health to be walking here. "Why do you not go where the air is pure?" And he shakes his head as we go on. It is, indeed, a filthy place, and squalid beyond description. And, as if to make it seem even more so by contrast, just beyond is the mountain pass to Sudab, from the top of which one sees a beautiful picture of a village with palm trees against a background of sea and mountains.

It is nearly sundown, when the road between Muscat and Sudab is much travelled, and the lepers are sitting by the roadside in the hope of getting something from the passers by. Here is the blind man with his little basket in front of him. A little farther on is Azzu, the negro woman. She has the happy disposition of her race, which, no doubt, stands her in good stead, but her condition awakens our pity none the less. Next to her is Faidu with her baby. Have you ever seen anything more pitiful than this poor leper woman, her fingers all gone, trying to hold her little child with the palms of her hands? Surely her Moslem brothers and sisters are kind and generous to one in so sad a plight! I am afraid you will scarcely believe that most of them, like the priest and the Levite, pass by on the other side, but so it is. On careful inquiry I have found that these lepers get an average of nine coppers a day, which is equal to a cent and a half in American money. While this is enough to keep them from actual starvation, it goes but a little way toward satisfying their needs. Poverty and hunger seem to have taken away most of the common traits of humanity and left them almost like animals. They quarrel and fight over their common possessions, and personal gifts are sometimes taken away by force and sold and the proceeds divided.

Early in the year when the Sewing Guild's boxes came I gave each of the women and the baby, a dress. Imagine my surprise when I was called upon the next day to rescue them from the hands of the men who were about to sell them. Realizing the extreme need that had caused the men to act thus, we gave them each a cheap garment, and so the women did not have to lose their pretty dresses.

We cannot stop and see all the lepers today, but we must not pass by Zahara. If you could learn to know her as we and others of our missionaries who have lived in Muscat know her, I am sure your hearts would go out to her as ours have done. She is so gentle and



TREATING PATIENTS NEAR MUSCAT.

lovable. Most of the lepers come from the very lowest classes and the life in the colony is not unlike that to which they are accustomed. But Zahara's people, though reduced to extreme poverty, are very respectable, and we know how hard it was for her to leave her mother's home to come here and live intimately with people so low and coarse. She does not complain, however, and tries by example and precept to teach them that kindness and love are better than abuse. She helps Faidu to bathe and dress the baby, sees to it that the blind man gets his portion of whatever is given them in common, and frequently shares her few *picc* with some one of the poor Baluchis, who live near the leper huts.

Nearly five years ago, Zahara first came to us for medical help. The disease was not very far advanced then, but it was commonly reported that she had leprosy, and the people frequently threatened to petition the Sultan to send her to the leper colony. While we feared she could not be cured, we were glad to give her what relief we could. From the first she showed great interest in the Bible, seeming to be much impressed with its teaching. She also began attending the Sunday services, which she enjoyed the more because knowing how to read, she could join in the singing of the hymns and the reading of the psalms.

For more than two years the advance of the disease was scarcely perceptible, but she gradually grew worse, and finally the much dreaded order came from the Sultan that she must go to the leper colony. She cannot come to us as often as formerly, but being allowed to visit her mother twice a week, she arranged for one of the visits to fall on Sunday so as not to miss the church services. Sitting on the veranda by the open window, she is one of our most attractive listeners. On her other visiting day she and her mother come for a Bible lesson. When reading about Christ healing the sick she often says: "If He were here now He would heal me." There is no doubt but that she loves Christ and is striving to live according to the teaching of the Scriptures, which she reads faithfully. We believe she is near the kingdom, but we long to see her fully entering in. Pray for Zahara that she may have faith to be spiritually healed, and for her fellow sufferers that they, too, may be led to the Great Healer.

And will you not also pray God to open a way whereby all the lepers in this part of Arabia may have the gospel brought near to them? Every large town has its leper colony, and in this land where the love of Christ has not yet softened people's hearts and taught them to relieve the sufferings of their fellowmen, none are more in need of our sympathy and help than these poor outcasts.—*The Mission Gleaner*.

ELIZABETH G. CANTINE.

A Day in Bahrein.

Wouldn't it be splendid if you could pay us a visit in Bahrein? Let us imagine that you really have come as a delegation from our Church to find how it seems to be a missionary in Arabia.

It is a great day for us when we go out to join you on the Persian Gulf Steamer which has brought you from Bombay to our pearl fishing island of Bahrein, and we are delighted beyond measure with this opportunity to introduce you to the land of our adoption.