



we could draw away the veil that hides from them His surpassing love and the agonizing Cross; how He was tempted, bled, and died for them, and is now interceding before God that they, too, might be happy for evermore and share in His glory.

But we can only tell them and pray and keep on working to relieve their suffering, believing that God's Holy Spirit will do this great major operation, on which the eternal life of each one depends. It remains for the church at home to send more evangelistic workers, specially trained and practiced in prevailing prayer, to help us in carrying out more effective preparations for these great operations about to be performed to save souls from everlasting death.

EMMA H. WORRALL.



Touring in Oman.

Ezekiel's prophecy, "and everything shall live whithersoever the river cometh," occurs to the missionary traveler in Oman with redoubled force. For Oman is a land of sterile rocks, bare as a bone, and stony, unproductive valleys; in very truth a "land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof." However, there are exceptions to this. Here and there wells or natural springs furnish the life-giving water, and forthwith the "desert blossoms like a rose." Vigorous palm trees and luxuriant fodder furnish a sample of what the country would be were it supplied with an abundance of water. It is not so much the country itself, however, as the inhabitants that demand the attention of the touring missionary. Therefore, instead of giving a chronological report of a recent trip into the interior, we will mention a few of the more prominent experiences common to all missionary touring in Oman.

First we wish to call attention to two institutions, the one the social center, and the second the social pledge, both of which come into great prominence for the traveler in Oman. The first of these, the social center, is the "majlis." The literal meaning of this word is "a place for sitting." Usually it consists of a large hut. The roof of palm-branches is supported on pillars, and the floor is spread with mats or clean sand and pebbles. Usually there is also a hearth for making coffee.

In Oman true friendship is rare, and the interchange of visits between friends is not common. Moreover, most people are poor and cannot afford a special guest room, while besides all this, religion forbids anyone but the very nearest relatives seeing the faces of the women of the house. Hence it is impossible for most to entertain

visitors at their homes. The place of this is supplied by the public *majlis*. It is here that the men of the village find the social life which they miss at home. Here news is exchanged and the petty politics of the village are discussed from every conceivable standpoint. Thither the traveler repairs upon his arrival to be entertained during his stay as the common guest of the village at the expense of the sheikh.

The second institution, the social pledge, is coffee. For among the Arabs of Arabia, and especially those of Oman, its use has come to have a significance that can hardly be appreciated by anyone from the West. No matter how good and plentiful the food supplied, if coffee is not served to him, the visitor considers himself badly used and complains of niggardly treatment. While, on the other hand, if coffee be served often and abundantly, the guest considers himself greatly honored, no matter how poor the food provided.

The missionary on his tours has continual experience with both these institutions. Upon his arrival he at once betakes himself to the *majlis*. The sheikh is as a rule close at hand, but if not, there are always some willing messengers ready to inform him of the arrival. The donkeys are now unloaded and the saddle bags deposited along the side of the *majlis* near the travelers. But the arrival of guests is a sign to all to gather and see who has come, and soon the guests are surrounded by a ring of interested and inquisitive Arabs. As each arrives, no matter what his condition, it is incumbent upon the visitor to arise and shake hands, a process that is liable to prove rather tiring to the way-weary traveler, the more so because he must rise, not from a chair, but from the ground.

As a rule the sheikh at once gives orders to prepare coffee, in fact, generally comes prepared with a handful of green coffee for that very purpose. The coffee utensils are generally close at hand. A fire is made on the rude hearth; while an old brew of coffee is brought to a boil, the green coffee is roasted, and ere long the delicious aroma of roasting coffee arouses pleasing anticipations in the tired "son of the way" as the Koran calls the traveler. In Oman they have the singular and unvarying custom of serving something sweet before coffee, and as a rule a platter of dates is passed around. After this preliminary part has been disposed of, coffee is at once served, strong and black, in small cups. Generally each one drinks thrice, though as a mark of special favor, a sheikh may urge you to take a fourth cup. Sometimes coffee is served as frequently as three times within an hour after the visitor's arrival.

After coffee has been served and the news of the day has been exchanged, the way has been prepared for the work of the colporteur, who now seizes the opportunity by opening his saddle-bags of edu-

educational books and Scriptures while the crowd of onlookers is still at hand. Much depends upon the attitude the village-schoolmaster and mullah will take. If they refuse to buy and shake their heads in dubious warning, the sales are sure to be small. If on the other hand they buy themselves and show no prejudice against the Christian Scriptures, the chances are that the reverse will be the case. Many of those who desire to show off their wisdom by calling for every conceivable book finally buy very little, while others who are more quiet are liable to be the best buyers. Often the sheikh pretends to buy several books in the beginning just to encourage others to buy, though finally his purchases amount to very little. The sale of educational books naturally leads to the sale of Scriptures. It is not to be expected that many shall buy out of real interest in our Bible. The Mohammedan belief that our Scriptures are not the original ones but have been corrupted is very common among Moslems. Many buy the Gospels because they are relatively cheap, and comparatively few because they are thoroughly interested.

What becomes of all the Scriptures sold. This is a hard question to answer. No doubt some of them are destroyed by unfriendly and fanatic mullahs after the colporteur has left. Others are no doubt read, though some do not understand what they read, owing to their preconceived ideas as to what religion consists of. Still just as the Holy Spirit must apply the Word to the heart of the reader if he is to understand spiritual truth, so we also trust that the same Spirit of God will cause those who buy to read the Bible. God's Word shall not return unto Him void. "Everything shall live whithersoever the river cometh." We know that many of the converts from Islam were converted by the reading of the Bible; and we hope and trust that the good seed sown by these means in all our fields will in its own time bring forth abundant fruit.

G. J. PENNINGS.



A Note on Ojeir.

On Monday, October 2nd, 1911, Habib Eshoo, Dr. Mylrea's assistant at the hospital, and I left for Ojeir with books and medicines, hoping to get inland to Hassa, but we failed. It would be a long story to tell of Turkish duplicity, and how once and again we were disappointed because we were not allowed to start with the caravan inland. The rumors of the war in Tripoli and special instructions recently received, so we were told, prohibiting the entrance of all foreigners into the province of Hassa, closed the door in our

faces; and so our hopes of entering Hassa for the third time and of being able on this third visit to keep the door ajar, failed. We have not given up, but hope to try again during the year; meanwhile may we not ask for united prayer that this closed door may soon be opened. Ojeir is the only gateway, except Katif, from Bahrein into Hassa. The photographs are the first ever taken of this part of Arabia.

The distance from Menamah to Ojeir by native boat is about twenty hours, although sometimes the journey is made in twelve. One is in sight of land the whole way, for as soon as Jebel Dukhan disappears, the custom house at Ojeir can be seen. I have made three visits to this port, but there have been no improvements whatever in building or facilities for landing cargo for the last twenty years. The wharf or jetty is built out to a distance of about fifty feet, south-southeast from Ojeir, and native boats are able to come close alongside the wharf, which is built of stone filled in with rubbish.

The only building of any importance is the custom warehouse. It is a rectangle about 100 x 200 yards, surrounded by go-downs, one-half of which are in bad repair. The building occupied by the Mudir stands at the entrance of the enclosure in the middle of the southwest wall of the custom house. It has four rooms below and two above, all in bad condition and hardly fit for residence. About 600 yards to the northwest of the custom warehouse stands a small mud fort called Raka, and southwest from that another fort called Abu Zahmool. Each of these forts is circular, with a parapet, without guns and in bad repair. Between them and closer to the Raka fort is a well of fresh water which supplies Ojeir. The water is fairly good, although slightly brackish. The plain around these forts is



THE LANDING PLACE, OJEIR