

reader went on, never stopping for a second, not even raising her eyes from the book.

Just before the close of the meeting coffee was passed around, one said to me, "You don't drink coffee," I replied "you will not offer me any," she said again "Oh you don't drink it" I answered "try me and see." At once she offered the cup, and I drank it to the astonishment of those sitting around me. My great comfort was the coffee was hot, so I need not be afraid of germs, for the cup was not very clean, and had been used by many before it came to me.

I sat the meeting out to the finish, and I thought what is it that brings these women together every week? It is the same reading, it never varies. In a manner they do not listen and do not receive a crumb of comfort or anything to help them along their dark and cheerless journey. I could not help thinking the chief attractions are the pipes and coffee and any little bits of gossip they hear at these meetings. In all their readings week after week and year after year, not a word is ever mentioned about sin, or how to live pleasing in "God's sight," nothing to lead or show them we are debtors and One has paid our debt and atoned for our sins. Their whole theme is about a very sinful man, who died many years ago in battle on the plains of Kerbela. This is the one they extol and weep about, a dead man.

APPEAL. Oh, sisters, you who live in Christian lands and listen to soul stirring addresses, and enjoy Bible Readings and Conferences, pray for these poor women. They have nothing to help them along the path of life, no comfort through the "Dark valley". They repeat God's name numberless times in the day, but know not and understand not His wondrous love in sending a sinless One, a Saviour Who died that they might live.

FANNY LUTTON.



A Short History of the Persian Gulf.

Those accustomed to correspond with missionaries of the Arabian Mission, are aware that the address to which they usually send their letters is not "Arabia" but "The Persian Gulf". This is due to the fact that our work is as yet confined to the eastern littoral of Arabia, most of which is washed by the waters of the Persian Gulf. The address Persian Gulf is thus more exact than Arabia, which refers to the whole peninsula. And however unfamiliar the name of this Gulf may appear to some, he who has a light knowledge of general history and of geography as related to it, is aware that these waters

have occupied a very important place in the history of the world, a place far out of proportion to their size and volume. A short outline of this history may therefore be of interest. We have gathered the following from a small volume, entitled, "Cornelis Cornelisz Roobacker's Scheeps Journal, Gamron, Busrah, (1645)," this being the log of the first Dutch ship that came up to Busrah.

Even in the days of hoary antiquity, when Babylon and Assyria were the powerful nations of the earth, this Gulf was one of their highways of commerce. In fact some scholars are of the opinion that long before this even, the Phoenicians (later the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon) occupied Bahrein and the adjacent coast of Katif, and believe that their migration to their later home was caused by earthquakes or attacks of enemies. The existence of a large number of ancient burial mounds in Bahrein is adduced as a proof of this contention.

The conquests of Alexander the Great also brought him into relation with this Gulf. He sent thither his commodore Nearchus with a fleet of some two thousand vessels, though only some twenty galleys and a few transportships reached their destination.

In fact all the ancient nations of Asia Minor were either directly or indirectly concerned with this Gulf, for it formed the natural highway between these countries and India and the distant island of the East Indies.

The significance of this Gulf rose greatly soon after the death of Mohammed, when the forces of Islam had finally subjugated the tribes of Arabia. Between the years 641-1507 the Gulf became the chief highway between the East and the West. The trade at this time was entirely in the hands of the Arabs, who did not confine themselves to the Persian Gulf, but penetrated as far as India, Java and even China. In turn, the Chinese traded here in larger ships than the Arabs had, and in such large numbers that this Gulf was called for a time "The Chinese Sea."

The Arabs did not limit themselves to their wares but made use of their many trading opportunities to spread their religion. This process might have continued an indefinite time had not the Occidental nations begun to penetrate the Orient, especially after the discovery of the Cape of Good Hope. After a cruel war which lasted some nine years the domination of the Gulf passed into the hands of the Portuguese who managed to retain control for about 150 years. This power was broken in 1622 by the Shah of Persia assisted by an English Fleet; however they remained in control of Maskat till 1650. A few old castles at the entrance of Maskat harbor date from the time of their occupation.

The period of Portuguese influence was followed by that of the two East India Companies (The Dutch and the English), of which two the Dutch was by far the stronger till shortly before the time the company left the Gulf.

The English gained the balance of power by the suppression of piracy (1808-1865), which has finally ended in a state of affairs strongly resembling a protectorate.

During the last year the affairs of the Gulf have been the subject much political discussion, seeing Russia is supposed at times to cast a longing eye towards the Gulf of Persia. On the other hand, the English would hardly be expected to welcome such a rival here owing to the proximity of India. Indeed should any other foreign power attempt to take forcible control of any place in the Gulf, the result would most likely be a war.

The Gulf is growing in importance these days because of the Baghdad Railway which promises to become a reality at last. The railroad which has been the subject of talk for so many years is at last to be built. The importation of railway material from this side has begun, so that we can expect the completion of this road in the relatively near future. The significance of the Persian Gulf will then be still further increased, for it is possible that it will then again become what it once was, a highway for a vast volume of traffic between the East and the West.

G. J. PENNINGS.



The Pearl Divers.

BY DR. PAUL W. HARRISON.

A sort of odor of romance, the faint perfume of The Arabian Nights, clings to the idea of pearl diving, but, like many other things in this sordid world, closer acquaintance dispels the romance and the odor that is left is not so inviting. Poets have written about it, but it is to be feared that they never saw the real process.

It is really astonishing to see how many of our fellow human beings earn their livelihood in thus ministering to the vanities of their more fortunate brothers. Kuwait is a city of perhaps fifty thousand inhabitants. Nearly the whole population is supported by pearl diving. No one has any statistics of the exact number of divers leaving Kuwait each year for the pearl banks, but the British Consul estimates it at twenty thousand. A larger number than that, possibly twice as many, make the Bahrein Islands their home. And when is