



## In Memoriam.

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DR. SHARON J. THOMS



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On January 16th by cable there reached the Board of Foreign Missions the sad intelligence of the sudden death at Maskat, Arabia, of Dr. Sharon J. Thoms. His death seems to have been due to an accident, the exact nature of which only the slower medium of the mails will reveal. This sudden and most unexpected closing on earth of a most useful life will bring grievous sorrow not only to those especially interested in the work of the Arabian Mission, but to the wide circle of those who came in contact with Dr. Thoms and felt his sincere zeal for his work, when he was recently at home on his furlough. Dr. Thoms was one of the increasing number of graduates of the University of Michigan who are doing such admirable work in the mission field of Arabia. By order of seniority, he was second on the list of our doctors in the land of Ishmael, his service dating from 1898, and dur-

ing these nearly fifteen years has labored in Busrah, Bahrein and Matrah. In Bahrein he was our pioneer medical man, and through long years built up the work that is today carried on in connection with the Mason Memorial Hospital. He had to contend with prejudice, with hatred, with opposition and with ignorance, but emerged successful from the fight. He began his surgical work under the most unfavorable conditions, operating in the open air, amidst the dirt and the dust, with only a kitchen table and a few necessary instruments as his entire apparatus, but before many years had passed the Lord moved the hearts of people at home to make it possible for him to do his work under more modern conditions. When he commenced to treat the sick at Bahrein he was not only not trusted but was even held responsible for the spread of plague and cholera; when he left he was beloved by many and trusted and respected by all. What more can a physician ask? Curiously enough, the writer's first surgical case in Arabia was the treatment of Dr. Thoms for a somewhat serious scalp wound, the result of an accident in connection with some repairing work that was being done on the hospital windmill, but later on he was able to heap coals of fire on my head, for, when I lay ill for weeks during the late summer of 1907, Dr. Thoms never wearied in his attention and laid me under lifelong obligations to him. In 1909 the Mission saw fit to send him to Matrah. This was an upheaval for him. It meant leaving work which he knew through and through, if only for the fact that it was his own, to go through for the second time the process of laying the foundations of medical work in an Arab town. Nothing daunted, he set to work in Matrah, that little town which is the gateway to inland Oman, so near to Maskat and yet so far, separated as it is from Maskat by a steep mountain pass, or, as an alternative, several miles by sea in a canoe. In the hot weather, if the sea is rough, Matrah is practically isolated, for that mountain pass in midsummer is more than flesh and blood can stand. Dr. Thoms was ever a lover of things mechanical and from the first he sought to link up Matrah and Maskat by telephone. For a long time the Sultan of Maskat was unwilling to give permission for wires to be strung between the two towns and Dr. Thoms was forced to consider

the possibility of a wireless telephone and had even imported some wireless apparatus, the gift of a friend at home, when the Sultan relented and permission was granted for the stringing of telephone wires on the Sultan's own telephone poles. It is more than probable that in superintending this installation he sustained the accident which caused his death. As at Bahrein so at Matrah he made his way into the hearts of the people and was rapidly building up a work which would carry the influence of the gospel of Jesus Christ far into the interior of Oman. There is additional pathos in the fact that he was planning to erect a hospital, the funds for which had been supplied, and thus to put the Matrah medical work upon a solid base just as he had done in years gone by in Bahrein. Thus is the Arabian Mission called upon to mourn the loss of the sixth of its members, who, in the short period of less than a quarter of a century, have died in active service. In the beautiful little natural cemetery of Maskat, which lies facing the rising sun, in a rocky cove almost inaccessible save by sea, Dr. Thoms will await "that last great day." He will not be alone, for side by side with him are George E. Stone, of our Mission, and Thomas Valpy French, that great bishop of the Church Missionary Society, who, at the age of 66, left his see in India to preach Christ to the Arab. Our hearts go out to his devoted wife and his three children, who have won the affection of all in the Mission, and it is needless to ask the prayers of all our readers for them in this their time of sore affliction. We need also to pray that the gap in our ranks may soon be filled so that the work which its founder loved so well may be checked only temporarily. "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou *shalt* know hereafter." Under this great blow we bow in submission, not in the spirit of Mohammedan fatalism but in the spirit of Christian confidence, knowing that "God is working His purpose out."

C. STANLEY G. MYLREA.