

rapids in the river, so that merchandise has to be transhipped by mules and carts, to a place two or three miles farther up, from whence steamers carry the freight another hundred miles into the interior.

It is nearly four years since the Anglo-American Oil Co. struck oil at Mesjid Solomon, in the foot-hills back of Ahwaz. Since that time, oil has been piped a distance of nearly one hundred miles to the banks of the Shat el Arab. Ahwaz is the center of the field management, and is consequently rapidly developing into a busy place. One sees here two or three automobiles, and small mule tram cars, working overtime on the company's business. As over a million pounds sterling have been put into this project, there is no doubt that the prosperity of this part of Arabistan has come to stay.

As yet there are no missionaries or colporteurs working in all this territory. The people who came to visit us at the Sheikh's house, were persistent in their demand for a dispensary and a school. The Sheikh treated us very kindly during our stay, so that we managed, not only to treat a good many patients but also to sell many Bibles, in his own house. He invited us to come there to open up work, promising us his help and favor.

In all we were in Ahwaz less than a week, but we sold over 150 portions of Scriptures, mostly Gospels. We were obliged to return at the beginning of the Moslem Fast of Ramadhan. But for that we would have stayed until all our books had been sold, and all our medical supplies exhausted. At another time we hope to go prepared for a longer stay, and we trust that we can occupy the town with a Bible shop before many years have passed.

ARTHUR K. BENNETT.



Moslem Women's Meetings in Bahrein.

In Bahrein there are two great leading sects among the Moslems, viz., Sunnis and Shiah. The Sunnis are greater in number and influence. The Chief or Ruler of the island is a Sunni.

A very antagonistic party spirit exists between these two sects, and just as we read "The Jews had no dealing with the Samaritans" it is practically the same here between Sunni and Shiah. They do not pray in the same Mosques nor intermarry, nor allow their children to attend the same school. The Shiah observe or keep a ten days mourning every year which the Sunnis utterly ignore and ridicule. In many minor details they differ. The Shiah do not wash their hands the same way as the Sunnis before they pray. In a fu-

neral procession the Sunni women do not join or follow in the funeral procession but remain at home and weep until the relatives return. The Shiah women on the contrary follow and make great lamentation on the way to the grave, and if the corpse is a female the women lower the body into the grave, the men then return (after the women have departed) and fill in the grave.

Sometime ago I attended two different meetings, one among the Sunnis and one among the Shiahs. Perhaps you would like to hear a description of these two meetings.

The Sunni women do not hold many meetings with the exception of Ramadhan. I do not think they amount to four in the year.

The Sunnis celebrate the birthday of Mohammed, and at one of these gatherings I was present.

The first thing that strikes one on entering are the bright colored



PHOENICIAN (?) TOMBS AT BAHREIN.

dresses of the women and children. Various shades are mixed together, bright purple, orange, green, majenta and numerous other tints, which we cannot say blend well. Every one has on a new dress in honor of the occasion. All the jewelry they possess is worn, necklaces, ear-rings, nose rings and fingers adorned, and ornaments dangling from the braids of their hair, also jasmine and bunches of sweet smelling greens hang on the braids of their hair. Not content with finger rings they dye their hands and decorate them with a yellow and black stain, which they think is very becoming. When you sit down (but not on chairs) you have time to study the whole group.

READERS. In a prominent place, sitting against the wall are the readers, perhaps ten. Each reader takes part in turn, and reads in a high pitched key. I could not say that any of the audience paid any attention to what she was reading. Visitors were coming in all

the time and saluting one another as they took their places. The women would say "How is your condition?" "How is your evening?" "How are your children?" and many more of the same inquiries, and this was often repeated three times over. The reader never stopped, but went on reading as if the whole audience was hanging on her words.

I did my best to listen to what she was reading, but could gather nothing of exhortation, edification or comfort from what she read. It was a mass of endless repetitions and jingling rhymes. At stated times the whole assembly would respond, and that was rather harmonious; but if we repeated God's name the numberless times like they did it would sound anything but reverent. Over and over again they would respond "O God!" and nothing else.

Then came a very interesting part of the meeting (to the women), various slaves dressed in handsome silk dresses passed around with refreshments.

REFRESHMENTS. The coffee pots were held in the left hands and the handleless cups in the right. The coffee cups are always presented by the right hand, and the coffee pot held and poured out by the left hand. The reader never paused, but continued her reading while the refreshments were being partaken of.

Can you imagine a meeting in your own land like this one? The reader reading aloud, people coming in and going out as they choose, children making a noise, women scolding them, and refreshments passed around at the same time.

This is a faint pen picture of a Sunni Moslem's afternoon gathering or reading.

SHIAH MEETING.

The Shiahs on the contrary have many meetings in the year. Some of them have readings every Thursday and Friday afternoons. Some of these reading halls or rooms are attached to the houses of the wealthier class.

SHIAH HALL. Last week a Shiah lady asked me into the reading hall of her house. It was a good thing she favoured me, because many would have put me out, but it was her property and she had great influence. I took a very back seat (on the floor) so that I would not defile any of the ladies present. I kept my face as solemn as a judge, but it was hard work when I heard some of their remarks. Said one, "What is she doing here?" "What does she want?" Ans. "Oh, she will not do any harm." "Shall I put her out?" Ans. "No, let her stay." I let them fight it out between themselves, and kept perfectly quiet.

PIPES. In a corner of the room, very close to the readers, a

woman was seated getting the pipes ready. Some one has given these pipes a very good name, "Hubble bubble." They are earthen jars, and hold about a pint of water. A small receptacle of hot charcoal and tobacco is placed in the top of the jar, a long hollow bamboo handle is placed into a hole in the side of the jar, the other end of the stick is placed in the mouth. As the woman draws through this hollow bamboo a strange gurgling sound is made, something like the sound of a child making soap bubbles.

Ninety-nine out of a hundred women smoke these pipes. I have never seen a Sunni woman smoke one of these pipes, neither have I seen a Shiah house without one.

The women were dilatory in assembling, so one of the women went close to an opening and gave a peculiar call, which cannot be produced on paper, it would have to be recorded on a gramophone.

They do not present the bright appearance of the Sunni women. They are wrapped up in a large dark blue shawl, which covers the head and drapes the whole body.

When the meeting commenced there were only two readers present, but before the meeting closed I counted twelve.

When the reader began I thought "what a small meeting," but just at the close over fifty had assembled and more were coming after the meeting had dispersed.

The first reader was very short sighted, her nose almost touched the page. She read very fast and in a high pitched tone and very nasal, the more nasal the tone the more effective the reading. Such a jingle and mixing of things—the chief topic and responses were all about Hosain (Mohammed's grandson), who was slain on the plains of Kerbela. The Shiahs look upon him as a martyr, an intercessor and Saviour. I was rather startled to hear the reader bringing in Jesus the Son of Mary, who had something to do with Kerbela. In one of their responses they plaintively wailed "O Ali father of Hosain we have none but thee to help us."

Some of the women wept from the beginning of the meeting to the finish. At times the women would beat their breasts, and swaying their bodies backwards and forwards and calling out "Hosain, Hosain" over and over again.

In the midst of all this wailing and reading the pipes were placed in front of these women, and through the cries were intermingled these gurgling sounds of the pipes, all over the room. Women kept on coming in, greetings were exchanged. Some were shouting to the unruly children in angry tones, "Go out you wild beasts." "Stop your noise you devilish ones," and many curses, etc. Through it all the

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