



The mother sings and croons to her baby in a very pretty way. Whether it is a boy or girl, she loves it and cuddles it like mothers the world over. She sits on the floor, and while swaying the child on her lap from one side to the other, or up and down, she sings a song, making it up as she goes along. It may be about the woman pounding coffee or making bread, but she keeps time with her swaying.

These babies seem to have a marvellous capacity for sleeping. He will sleep on his mother's lap while she is gossiping with her neighbors, and all the while she is talking in a high-pitched, ear-splitting voice. It is evidently necessary for these Arab women to talk very loudly, for otherwise, since every one else is talking at the same time, they would not be able to make themselves heard.

Many and wonderful are the ways in which the Evil One works his will on these little innocent babies, and equally wonderful and wily are the methods by which the mothers ward him off. A blue-eyed person, by looking too intently at a child can make him sick. If the teeth delay in making their appearance they know there is a jinn in the back part of the throat, so the wise one puts in some filthy concoction to exorcise him. This method, however, is not generally used. The better and more efficient treatment is to rub on the head a mixture composed of the juice of a certain fragrant herb and water and vinegar. This, if rubbed when cold on the head, causes the teeth to appear after three days at the latest. If a child does not talk at the time deemed proper or the mother wants her child to talk early, it is given strong black coffee to drink.

The Arabs love their children, especially the boys, and bring them up according to the light given them. If their ideas are wrong it behooves those wiser than they to correct them. They think our ways of treating the children and caring for the babies just as absurd as we think theirs are. And perhaps a great many things are different because we are all standing on different elevations.

## Public Schools in Bahrein

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Some missions are criticised for entering too much into educational work. A passing look at the school systems of Bahrein will convince one, however, that education can justly be emphasized. And this, not only as a means toward evangelization, but even as an end in itself. That the intellectual side of the Arab needs development is all too evident. My purpose here is to give the reader some idea of the native schools so that the need of mission schools may become more evident.

First, as to location. The native school finds itself between other houses. Some are found in the bazaar, amidst the noise and bustle of Eastern trading. The smell of fish, locusts, and rotten fruit, in addition to the dunghill nearby, make the smallest whiff of fresh air impossible for the children inside. The building is generally a small, low, dark, date-stick hut, without windows to let in the light. The dim light inside comes only through a small hole used for the

door. How these young eyes can stand it is a mystery. The scholars sit on the ground along the wall, with their date-leaf mats beneath them. Here they sit and study from sunrise to sunset, six days a week, interrupted only by the noon hour, a few prayer calls during the day, the Moslem Sabbath on Friday and an occasional feast day. No time is set apart for play, as recreation is considered unnecessary. Thus the play instinct is suppressed, instead of developed. Arabs entertain little hope for the boy who spends time at play rather than at work.

The number of Bahrein school children is difficult to estimate. There is no roll kept of pupils in attendance, and so the only way of getting an estimate is by observing the size of the different schools. The lowest estimate made by Arabs is eight hundred boys and four hundred girls. The average number in a boys' school is twenty-



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five. The man in charge does not seem able to manage more. We seldom find more than one teacher in each school. The teacher knows his flock well, for he is generally held in high esteem by the family of the boys. Co-education does not seem quite proper to Arab custom and the boys and girls are generally far apart. Most of the boys in these schools come from well-to-do families. The boys of the poorer class are compelled to go out with the parents to help to make a living. The wealthier people have a certain dignity to maintain and they do so by sending their children to school, even though they do not value education as such. Under these conditions education does not remove the line of demarkation between the rich and poor as it does in many another country.

The teachers of these schools are bigoted mullas or mutawwas (i.e., he who compels to obey). They dress rather poorly and have a characteristic pale complexion as an indication of their piety. They are considered religious. They have a stern expression, especially in the presence of their pupils. The expression is emphasized when a Christian bends down to look in through the little door! These mullas know the Koran perfectly and are fairly well versed in Arabic religious literature. They are fully convinced that this knowledge is sufficient for them and those under their charge. One said to me, "There is no sin in studying other things, but what is the benefit?" In debate with Christians these teachers advance all the old arguments against the Bible and Christianity which they have learned from the more learned Moslems in India and Egypt. It is clear that they have not thought



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out the arguments for themselves, for they are readily forced into a corner.

It is needless to say that schools with such instructors teach only the Koran. That is the only text-book, although the older boys are taught the traditions privately. The beginner is started with a small book containing the Arabic alphabet and small words until it runs into the First Sura of the Koran. This sura is taught so persistently and thoroughly that most boys can recite it from memory. No other sura is entered upon until this opening chapter is mastered. The boys are taught to respect the book to the extent that it must never rest on the ground. So small stands are used to hold it. To underscore or in any way mark the Koran is considered highly disrespectful, if not sinful. All other books not in absolute accord with this infallible

text-book are despised and considered injurious to the ignorant and the young. This instruction inculcates a feeling of contempt towards Jews, Christians and people of other faiths. One may find school boys more fanatic than their fathers or their elder brothers. Hard and fast rules are laid down rather than principles. Every boy knows that it is forbidden to eat pork and to drink wine at any time and to eat or drink anything during the days of Ramadhan, but true character building is not undertaken.

The method of teaching used in Bahrein is that of endless repetition. All the pupils read aloud in a singsong tone, bending their bodies back and forth. This is interesting to see but not very pleasant to hear. Under this method it takes some boys years before they can read the Koran, while others never learn, although they can quote passages. Some are able to read the Koran but not a newspaper, even when printed in the easiest Arabic. The result is that the memory is cultivated but the other faculties are left undeveloped. This is probably one reason why the Arab does not follow the logic of the western mind.

Over against these native schools you find one mission school, far inferior as to number of pupils, but superior in all other respects. There is no need of mentioning all the points of superiority, but a few must be noted. The mission school is in a stone building, away from the filth of the bazaar. Light and fresh air can enter from all sides. The school admits all classes. Rich and poor, Jew, Christian and Moslem, all recite the same lessons together. The aim of the school is an all-round development of body, mind and soul. Instead of teaching a boy to read only one book, we teach him to read English and Arabic, whether in the Koran or not. Instead of laying down hard rules of conduct, we teach honesty, uprightness and self-reliance. Instead of endless repetition, we make a boy think out his own problems. Instead of cultivating memory exclusively, our methods develop the will, reason and affections as well. Instead of holding the Prophet of the Desert up as the infallible guide, we impress the teachings of the lowly Nazarene upon the pupil, and make Him known as the Saviour of the world.

## Sketches of Women's Medical Work in Arabia, I.

Busrah, 1895—1914

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Before 1895 Dr. Eustice, Dr. Riggs, and Dr. Wyckoff all must have done some medical work among women in Busrah, as all three of these were there as physicians under the Arabian Mission, but their terms of service were very short and not enough is known by the writer of this article to give any idea of how much or how little was done for Moslem women in connection with their work. However, judging by the difficulties encountered in some of our mission stations by even medical women perhaps the work was of slow growth at that time.