

Arabia Calling



The Lake at Kodai

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ARABIA CALLING

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THE ARABIAN MISSION

The Refreshment of Being Still

CHRISTINE VOSS

I like to think of last summer's vacation, most of which was spent at Dhour-el-Choueir, Lebanon. There were many good things about it and as I think of it all, the thing that stands out in my mind is the Christian fellowship we had with missionaries from other places. The annual meeting of the Presbyterian Mission, U.S.A. was held at the Conference Center too, and it was a rich experience to exchange thoughts with that group. Being a language student and not in the work full time, I could not fully appreciate the problems that were discussed. However, I liked hearing others discuss various topics and value the conversations I had with some of the older missionaries. For example, one gray-haired missionary told of things she had learned through her years of experience with the Moslems, one of which was concerning the use of the title, "Son of God." She had learned that the phrase was often frowned upon if she did not especially point out to her listeners that it must be taken in a spiritual sense.

There is real value, I believe, in meeting missionaries from other boards, not only because we can learn from them and exchange ideas with them, but also because it can give us a fresh perspective. We are only *drips* (as one man put it) in the bucket, but still we *are* drips, and one gains from associating with others in the same work. It helps us to see that we are but a small group serving the Lord in a corner of his universe, but still we are part of His plan, and on each of us rests a responsibility.

The Sunday evening hymn sings at Choueir were times of inspiration, and I have not forgotten, either, some of the quiet talks walking up the mountain side at sunset, or those overlooking the villages below when evening had come. Such fellowship is precious and its benefits are eternal, for they draw us closer to our God.

May we have a right sense of values so that even while we are busy with our daily work and are faced with many problems, we may *be still* and have quiet times with those of our own group, and alone with Him who is ever ready to hear us.

From the Mountain Top

ELINOR HEUSINKVELD

Our summer vacation spent at Choueir is one we will always recall with fond memories. The Lebanon is easily accessible from any of our mission stations. Direct plane service is available between Basrah and Beirut requiring about three hours. Choueir is a forty-five minute ride by taxi up into the Lebanese mountains from Beirut.

During our stay at the Conference Center a series of lectures on "The Impact of Christianity on the Middle East" was given by Dr. Jurji, an Arab now teaching at Princeton Theological Seminary. These lectures impressed us a great deal. We also enjoyed being able to attend the Arab evangelical church in the village as well as meeting some of the local ministers. We had many opportunities to visit with fellow guests at the Center—missionaries in Egypt, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan. The first week in September the American Presbyterian Mission in Syria and the Lebanon held its annual meeting at the Center. The members of this group were most kind to their fellow missionaries and invited us to join in their devotional services and other meetings of particular interest. We were able to discuss at length with them any common question or problem concerning our work.

We were inspired by the quietness and beauty looking down the mountain side from *Inspiration Point* where we met early each morning for a period of meditation. Leisurely or strenuous walks in the mountains were enjoyed. Occasional trips to the modern metropolis of Beirut were pleasant. Tennis, picnics, reading of good books from the American University of Beirut and the Near East School of Theology, as well as studying Arabic, were also in our activities.

Looking back on the period spent at Choueir, we felt it was a profitable and inspirational vacation. Our minds and bodies were refreshed and strengthened in preparation for our work on the field during the next year and a half.

The Miracle of People

DONALD R. MACNEILL

As the aircraft on which we were passengers took off through London rains last September, little did we expect that within a very short interval of time, we would feel such a oneness with the new land and new surroundings for which we were bound. We looked forward, cynically, I fear, to long periods of adjustment and loneliness for the relative comfort of parish life. Little did we guess that within a few days after our arrival at the steaming and busy airport at Bahrain, we would experience that feeling of having come home to the place where God had called us. Within those days another of God's miracles took place—the miracle of people—as we entered into the family,

Christ's community in Bahrain. The word miracle sounds like such a theological term, but this miracle of people unfolded as we beheld the Word being made flesh in a living community, channeled by men and women, seeking, searching and succeeding in walking in the steps of our Lord.

We were confronted by a wonderful sense of continuity as we disembarked early that September evening. For on that same night Dr. Nykerk boarded an aircraft to return home for medical treatment. To bid him farewell were a score of Arab well-wishers, friends and co-workers. We newcomers could but stand to one side and marvel at the expression of community shown as Dr. Nykerk moved slowly down the line, receiving that tribute which only a true friend can receive. There were tears in many eyes, tears that were mirrored in our own eyes too, as we saw the enforced departure of one who had been so great an influence in so many lives. It was as if our entry into community came at the very point of deepest meaning to community, when one who was so closely identified, who was such a friend, departed.

As we entered into the bonds of that community, we came to feel the power of Christian love even deeper. Our first Sunday as we shared the service of Divine worship in the church, we felt again the powerful sense of oneness in the community. True, there was a strong language barrier, but somehow the feeling and spontaneity of the service overcame that, and we truly shared in worship. That service has remained deeply imprinted in our minds, with all of its joyful attitude of thanksgiving and praise, its happy singing and total participation in a living worship. It was led by one of the national Christians, and although we knew not one word of the language, we could truly sense that God was in the church working His purposes through people.

As most parents do, we feared the moments of transition for the children, not trusting new climates and environments. But what had been immense in our minds became but as trifling. Susan's first moments of hesitation were quickly overcome by the presence of other children with whom she found immediate fellowship. Even less did the changes in food and climate seem to affect Lisbeth. It was not long before Susan was calling Beit Sayeed, the mission orphanage, literally *the House of Happiness*, her second home, and begging to spend the bulk of each day with the children there. It is amazing how readily with children you adopt new members into the family, for we had become used to having young guests in the house at all hours. With children there seems to be no language barrier at all. Truly they must have some universal language. It was not too long before Susan came home singing, "Jesus Loves Me," in Arabic, and wanting parental participation in Arab games she had learned, much to our embarrassment.

We have long since grown accustomed to the noise of the gate opening and children appearing on the veranda to play with Susan and Lisbeth. We have learned to understand the chorus of giggles that meets our attempts at simple Arabic and the shy yet awe-filled faces watching the children's toys and dolls.

The Arab family life, however, stands in sharp contrast to family life at home. For Ev, especially, as she has entered into homes and spoken with women, the discovery of the difference has underlined the importance of Christian family. The veiled figures of the women in the streets fail to reveal any of the complex insecurity of the home. Behind the veils there is personality waiting to be expressed. There are women who are desperately lonely and unhappy and who long for the open sharing and equality of the Christian family. The frequent visit of the woman evangelist or some of the women from the mission is like a ray of light into dark and drab lives, spent within the confines of homes. How joyously they share in conversation, speaking of the common things of tending house and of the unusual experiences that fill a day. How much warmth can come into cold lives when through the Christ-Presence they find resolution for their insecurities and joy for somber days.



These Arabs paused for a moment to have their pictures taken. Perhaps the women unveiled for the occasion.

So many times we have heard from people the reply upon learning that we have daughters, "If God wills, maybe next time you will be blessed and have a son." As if daughters were not also blessings from God! There is much affection for children within the Arab home, oftentimes indiscriminate as in so many American homes. The son, as in most Middle East and East countries, is the prize, and he soon takes his place by his father's side. When as a family, you visit in an Arab home, the women and the young children all share in one room their conversation, while the men with their young sons by their sides, congregate in a separate place.

On many afternoons Don has gone with some of those from the Mission to a small village on the outskirts of Manama, the port city of Bahrain. The village is right on the Gulf and most of the men folk find their only livelihood in fishing. One afternoon a week about a dozen or so of these men gather in a small room in one of their homes to talk with the Mission evangelist. As you walk there, followed by the customary crowds of inquisitive children, gradually the streets of the village narrow until, finally, turning a corner, you find the small gate in the mud-baked walls, and enter into the windowless room, lain with mats and rugs. After salaams are said the conversation turns about things of interest in the day. While you talk, the men carry on with their afternoon chores of mending nets and such like. Needless to say, they are interested in the stranger who speaks little Arabic, and they all take upon themselves, as it were, the role of teacher. A simple Bible story is told, generally arising out of the conversation of the group, followed by interested discussion. Soon the host brings in the unique coffee pots, and discussion abates while you share in drinking strong coffee, thoughtfully served in small doses. Custom has it that if you do not care for more, you shake the cup slightly in your hand. Before this custom had taken hold of us, however, we found that we were consuming endless quantities. Soon farewells are said and we depart for home, they to their mosque service.

One cannot help but think how closely this must parallel the way of teaching of our Lord. A group of fishermen mending nets, and a storyteller. Men being told stories in the picture language of the day, illustrating vividly their experiences and drawing a moral. It has been heartening to see, here on the Persian Gulf, the eager reception of the Mission and the Gospel in so many of the villages. They see something different in the Christian way of life and they want to know more of it. They may disagree; they may not be persuaded; they may walk out. BUT they come back again and again to discover for themselves the motive for Christian living.

Whether in the villages, or in the Bible shop, or even in the wards of the hospitals, we have noticed the relevancy of the parables of our Lord to every-day life. How real and how challenging these parables sound as we watch people listening to them for perhaps the first time. They listen avidly, fascinated by the stories that we so often take for granted. Especially have we noticed this in the telling of parables like the Good Samaritan or the Prodigal Son. To see eyes light up at the plush splendor of the father's house, to listen to the murmurs of discontent as the priest and the levite pass by on the other side of the road, to see the excitement build up expectantly as the son determines to return home to his father's house, to hear the clamor to answer the question, "Who then was friend and neighbor to this man?"—these things illustrate clearly the reality and challenge of the teaching of our Lord. We have said that they do not see the point, the moral, but when they see these parables being lived out in the hospital through the lives of doctors, nurses and attendants, when they see the Word being made flesh in the lives of people living in their community now, I dare say, it means something.

Our first impressions were based on people living in this land of transition, from varied backgrounds, some poor, some rich, but constantly confronted by the life of Christ being lived out by Christians within the community. Needless to say, the average person in Bahrain today, however, faces many other challenges other than that of Christianity. Western import with its machines, tinned foods, oil and money has intruded considerably upon the Arab existence, bringing with it countless temptations and challenges. One can readily see how the new wealth of the area has raised living standards but lowered moral standards. Bahrain is in transition. Probably even the donkey, the common beast of burden in Bahrain, must feel this with the advent of the Buicks and Rolls Royces, sounding their horns flamboyantly before them as they hurtle through the streets. This new prosperity has created overnight changes here, bringing many good things, but also creating many new dilemmas which are difficult to overcome.

These six months have been different, even in the sensations one encounters in a day's passage. Accustomed as we were to the sound of the rooster's crowing, heralding the new day, we were astonished to hear continual crowing throughout the night. The blare of automobile horns competes continually with the braying of the donkey. Traffic is disrupted while flocks of sheep are driven to market. Nothing could compare with the variety of sensations one experiences in the native bazaar, with imported tins and native foods side by side; with narrow streets meant to be traversed by foot, intruded upon by car and truck; with the smell of burning oil from engines, raised above the tempting odors of Indian and Arab delicacies; with Westerner and national sharing sidewalks. This is Bahrain, where the war is being waged between Middle East customs and Western import, and the decisive battle has yet to be fought.

Yet through all these differences, the miracle of people has imprinted itself upon our minds. In the little second-story sanctuary in the hospital compound, with strange faces, strange dress and stranger language, we shared in community, the community of Christ's, and knew that because Christ was there, His fellowship and love would be experienced. The measure of community is never in things, always in people; never in quantity, always in quality; never in abstract theology, always in people making the eternal request, "We would see Jesus." Within this minute community of Christians in Bahrain, we saw people seeking to show Christ in their lives, truly living in Him.

It has warmed our hearts. That which was born within us in devotion has deepened in contact. Impression, no, but assurance that God has truly called us into family, into His community here on the Persian Gulf.



The Summer that is Coming will be fun

ETHEL S. THOMS

*"Tomorrow, back to work, in plain or city;
But first we thank Thee, Lord,
And offer praise
With grateful hearts for holidays and hours
Of peace and quiet here, in Kodaikanal."*

—A Litany of the Palni Hills

Kodaikanal is one of the world's beauty spots. It is an emerald set in the red gold of the plains about it, and it is *lovely Kodai* to everyone who has been there. Among regular visitors to Kodai are members of the Arabian Mission who meet there people from such distant places as Burma, Ceylon or Assam.

Wherein lies the drawing power of Kodai? In the first place it is the place where our children go to school; in the second place rich Christian fellowship is to be found there; and in the third place the climate and natural beauty of the Palni Hills provide physical refreshment and restore health.

How did Kodai come to be the summer station for missionaries? To reach it from most places one travels to Madras, South India, by ship, train or plane. From Madras one proceeds by train for eight hours, disembarking at Kodai Road Station. There you board a bus which carries you through India's teeming populace for twenty miles and climbs a mountain road for thirty-two more miles.

Just over a century ago Kodai was a native village such as dot the Palni Hills. They are clusters of brown huts in the midst of bright green terraced cultivation. It was at that time that American missionaries in Madura lifted eyes to the hills, seventy-five miles away to find help in the way of respite from the long and severe heat of a South Indian summer. They explored the Palni Hills, searching for a suitable site for a summer station. They made the journey on foot through jungles, following coolie paths, and eventually settled at Kodai. Later, the Arcot Mission joined the Madura people at Kodai and these two missions were granted by government many acres of what is now the most desirable land for building sites. Gradually others learned of Kodai—people of other denominations and nationalities. British, Australians, Canadians, Danes, Swedes and Germans all contributed to a fine Christian fellowship.

In those early days the journey to Kodai was always an adventure. We traveled in the heat of summer. Besides the heat there were thirst, being eaten alive by wild animals called *bed bugs* and always the hazard of highway robbers. Thirst and wild animals were part of the train trip. We had to carry all our drinking water in porous red earthen *kujas*. If our water ran out we had to drink luke warm soda water; there was no safe drinking water at the stations or in the train. D.D.T. had not been discovered in those days so the B flats feasted

unchecked. The human interest of the train trip, however, was a delight to every child. Vendors ran up and down the station platform calling their wares. Natives dressed in their brightest best poured in and out of compartments, seemingly unchecked. Engines whistled and chugged upgrade and down hill and the scenes from the window changed continuously.



Dr. and Mrs. Thoms live in this brick house in Matrah.

At Kodai Road station we disembarked and got into transits for a thirty mile ride to where the path up the hill began. It took nine hours in an Indian covered wagon, from five p.m. until two in the morning. Since there were only two people in each bullock cart, we could sleep, but precious little sleeping was done; for older people the wagon floor was too hard for comfort; and the wooden wheels had no shock absorbers as they bumped along on the rutted dirt road. For children, the excitement was too great. The transits went in convoy of several together for protection against highway robbers. Each driver sat on the tongue of his cart behind the two bullocks which drew the transit. He goaded his animals with his stick or poked them with his big toe. Then he would burst into song. He would sing his wavering, plaintive village chanties and punctuate with a loud smacking noise as he twisted the bullock's tail. Half way through the journey we came to the drivers' village and there the bullocks were changed for fresh ones. This was done with a great deal of noise and haggling and then we set off again.

At the tope bungalow at 2:00 a.m. we piled out, dazed and tousled. Here we left the carts and started the climb to Kodai. Some of us rode ponies, some walked, some sat in canvass stretchers and were carried up twelve miles to an altitude of seven thousand feet by four coolies. These coolies had an antiphonal chant which was delightful to us; sometimes they improvised. Once Dr. John Wyckoff who

weighed over two hundred pounds was the subject of such a song. The coolies did not realize that they were carrying one fluent with their tongue. They chanted:

“What, Oh Friends, do we carry here?”
and the reply:
“A large elephant Oh ho.”

Dr. Wyckoff held his peace till the journey was over and his coolies asked for *bakhsheesh*. “But no,” he said, “an elephant doesn’t give bakhsheesh.” Those who went to Kodai in the old days were a fraternity of pioneers who set the tone and character of the station. Today with its easy access Kodai seems overcrowded, but it is warm and friendly still.



Children of missionaries at the Kodaikanal School attend the service of dedication in the Margaret Eddy Memorial Chapel, May, 1951.

The heart of the community is Kodai School. It is described as an American school for missionaries' children. Here our children go at the age of seven as boarders. The school was started fifty years ago with an enrollment of thirteen children with their mothers as teachers. The school grew rapidly as families learned that they need not leave

their little ones in the states for a grade school education. Take for example my family. Father and mother were due to return to the field after furlough for a seven year term. They had three boys between the ages of seven and ten and were face to face with the problem of their education. Should Father resign temporarily from mission work and stay in America? Should Mother stay home and let Father go out alone? Or was there a family who would take three little boys? At this point a letter arrived with wonderful news—"Bring the boys back; we have started a school in Kodai." Subsequently Mother took her turn being principal of the school. There are now two hundred children in the school which is its full capacity. There is a staff of twenty-six teachers and house mothers under the able principalship of Carl Phelps, an M.I.T. graduate. Grades one through twelve are offered with a good college preparatory course. A majority of children take piano or other instrumental music as part of the regular school schedule. The religious education curriculum is well organized. The school church is a unique organization, the business being carried on by a church committee of deacons elected from staff and high school body. A pastor is chosen from a nearby mission station; he conducts communion services and receives candidates into membership. The young people conduct their own services, each high school class taking its turn. Guest speakers are invited for the Sunday morning preaching service. There is a reverence, a simplicity and beauty in the service which is altogether lovely.

The gym and outdoor playing field are used for many athletic contests such as baseball, basketball, track and tennis. The school encourages Saturday hikes and organizes a Fall and Spring camping trip each year for the entire student body.

Adjoining the school property is a substantial building called the Missionary Union. Here is a center for organized fellowship. Sunday morning Bible class is conducted here during the summer season of May and June, Sunday evening sings also. Wednesday afternoon community teas, at which different missions take turns being host, are given here. Here, too, is a library and conference rooms. Just outside are tennis courts where everyone plays tennis from the eight-year-old wielding his first racket to the "seventy-year-young" enthusiasts.

Below the school lies Kodai Lake, a "Little Galilee," mirroring the skies and wrapped about by cottage-studded hills. Here, rowing is a popular pastime or leisurely punting, now under overhanging trees, now out on the sparkling water.

In the beauty of those hills there is friendliness. You do not find the grandure of the snow-capped Himalayas which suggest the thought, "What is man that thou art mindful of him?" Within a few minutes walk from the center of Kodai you can stand on Coaker's Walk above a sheer drop to the plains before you, spread out to the horizon in a patchwork quilt-like panorama. On a dark night villages sparkle like jeweled pendants on a necklace against the velvety black. The prospect is exhilarating as you stand on top of the world, the very top with everything below your feet. The answer comes, "Thou

hast made him a little lower than the angels. Thou hast made him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands. Thou hast put all things under his feet."

"Of all the glories of the Palni Hills
For these and more than these we thank Thee, Lord;
And for the friends with whom we shared them all.

"And so in faith, and hope and charity,
Rooted and grounded in the love of Christ,
We make fresh surrender of our selves—
Our souls and bodies to His service singing—

Tomorrow back to work in plain and city."

—A Litany of the Palni Hills

A Summer Holiday

HARVEY STAAL

The summer of 1951 is one that will live in the memory of the Staal family. Of course it is quite natural for a missionary couple to remember their first summer vacation. This one was made memorable to us by a wonderful opportunity to visit Jerusalem and the surrounding places of Biblical interest, made famous by the presence of the Son of God while He was here on this earth. But that is getting a little ahead of the story.

We left Bahrain by boat on the 30th of May, taking with us a car belonging to a friend of ours who wanted it delivered to Beirut. We were more than happy to do this as it gave us a splendid opportunity to make the overland trip from Basrah to Beirut. It proved to be a blessing for we could go where we wanted to go, when we desired and with the least expense.

We spent a few hours with the Mission at Kuwait while the boat was in harbor there. At Basrah we spent three very pleasant days seeing this station for the first time. When we had seen the car through customs, we were on our way up the Shatt-el-Arab River to Amarah. This was a most interesting trip as it was made in the time of barley harvest. We saw the various steps of this procedure as described in the Old Testament.

Amarah was another *first* for us. We concluded a short day and a half visit there and continued our journey to Baghdad. Here we made rather a longer stay than we had planned. All of us were sick at one time or another and Harvey spent much of the time trying to get visas for the remainder of the trip. He was able to get to Babylon to see the remains of that ancient city.

Our longest drive was from Baghdad to Ajloun in Jordan. Leaving Baghdad at 4:00 p.m. one day we arrived at Ajloun about 1:00 p.m. the next day. Most of this trip was across the desert, all by ourselves. Fortunately, all went well and we arrived safely at Ajloun, after having lost our way on a mountain road.

At Ajloun we visited with Dr. and Mrs. Lorne Brown, missionaries from the Southern Baptist Church, who had spent a year in Bahrain studying Arabic. We were much impressed with the work being carried on there, especially from the medical point of view. They had an efficient, clean, modern hospital, with local help who were well trained. We pray for the day that we too may have the Christian young men and women to train for this work. Started by "free lance" missionaries, the work was being turned over to the Southern Baptist Mission at the time we were there.

We might add just one more comment about our visit in Ajloun. While there, we heard a missionary address the local community. Although he had been there for fourteen years, he could not talk to them in their own language and had to speak through an interpreter. We were convinced that our Board was absolutely right in making it necessary for a missionary to spend two full years in language study before he begins to do any work. How necessary it is for us to tell the message of salvation to these people in their own language and in a way that they can understand.

The road from there lead to Jerusalem. Time and space would fail to tell of the joy we had in visiting there. We enjoyed the hospitality of the hostel at St. George's Church, listening to the stories of some of those who had been there for thirty or forty years. It was in nearby Bethlehem that we first met Nellie, a fine Christian young woman who has just recently become the wife of Abood, one of our Christian young men in Bahrain. It was our privilege to place the engagement ring on her finger. We took several trips outside of Jerusalem to places like Samaria, Bethany, Jericho and the Dead Sea. It was naturally a very hurried visit, lasting only six days. We hope that it may be possible for us to return there for a longer stay at a later time.

From there we went on to Damascus, and after a short stay went on to Beirut, stopping finally in the conference center at Dhour-el-Choueir. This center is conducted by the Presbyterian Church, and we spent several happy, profitable weeks there. We were fairly high in the mountains and it was lovely and cool. We spent much of our time in language study, but some of it also in conference with other Christian workers from that part of the Arab world.

One of the most important benefits we received from being there was the assurance that we are not alone in this great work of preaching the Gospel to the Arabs. It was a real thrill to be in meeting with many young people singing the Christian hymns in Arabic. Sometimes we have the feeling that we are pretty much alone but here was the assurance that there are others, most of them Arabs, preaching the Cross in the land of the Crescent.

The problems of education and Sunday school material were quite apparent. It is a great field and there is much work to be done in it. It would be well if we were more in contact with the people there and in the work they are doing, especially in the Bible Lands Union for Christian Education. The problem of suitable visual aids for people of this part of the world also came to the fore. Progress is being made in the production of slides and films for these people. It does mean

greater expense, but surely we cannot afford to spare any expense in this day and age in the task of presenting the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the Arab people.

As we look back over this summer, we feel that our time was very well spent. Our experiences have given us a much better conception of the country in which Jesus lived while He was on the earth. We know, too, that there are others working with us to make the Gospel known in the Arab world. We returned to Bahrain refreshed and determined to do all we can, by the help of the Holy Spirit, to bring the Kingdom of God to this little part of the Arab world.

Amarah, Iraq
March, 1952

Dear Nancy:

It does not seem so long ago that you and I sat together on the couch at home, reading the *Arabian Nights*. I think our favorite story was "The Magic Carpet," in which a colorful carpet could miraculously transport anyone seated upon it wherever he desired to be. Remember in the story how the carpet had the power to sweep the individual over hill and dale, oceans and mountains, to an exotic, romantic and unfamiliar world?

About six months ago the imaginary trips you and I took became reality and we were off for Iraq. I could not believe it then, and even now once in a while I blink and rub my eyes and expect to find myself back in our living room with Mom and Dad, the boys and you. When our *carpet* (20th century style, Pan American) set us down in Basrah, Iraq, the feelings we had must have been carbon copies of those felt by the riders of the magic carpets of days gone by: expectation, excitement, curiosity, not quite knowing what was coming next, so many mixed feelings, yet still a certainty that this is where we belong.

Of course Don, David, Paul, Bonnie and I wish you folks could be here with us in our new life, but since our childhood magic carpet is your only means of arriving, perhaps a few impressions of this new venture and the people with whom we come in contact each day will help you visualize this land a little more accurately than we did then. You know of course how many missionary friends from the Arabian Mission we talked to, how many books we read and how many speakers we heard, trying to prepare ourselves for our new experiment. Yet when we arrived it was, and still is, very bewildering. The terrible frustration of not being able to communicate with these people was really a blow to eager greenhorns like ourselves. Of course we knew we would be studying language for two years, but until one has been in a situation where it is impossible to convey one's thoughts, one just cannot understand it.

Among our first impressions is one that everyone who comes from the Western world recognizes, and that is the tremendous contrast between the old and the new. The tents in which the Bedouin or

roaming desert Arabs dwell are the same type as those in which Abraham lived. Farmers are seen using the same sort of plows as did the people of Old Testament times. The fishermen of today could easily be placed on the shores of the Sea of Galilee and work side by side with Peter and Andrew. Their methods and equipment are the same. Yet, in the midst of the very old, some of the advancements of the rest of the world have been recognized and have been superimposed upon these people, such as shiny cars, radios, moving pictures and some educational methods. This part of the world, however, seems to resist change and progress.



An Arab merchant entertains a mission group on tour in Arabia. Note the objects from East and West in this mejlis, or receiving room.

One reason for the standstill is that the people eke out a living which takes all their time and energy, leaving little for attempts to improve their ways of living. Really, Nancy, you cannot imagine the poverty here; it is heart rending. To these people each day has the sameness as the day before; their lives are so empty. Because of their poverty, low wages and poor use of money, the entire health of the nation is at a very low ebb. Islam, their religion, is another factor to be considered when asking why there is so little progress. Mohammedanism discourages advancement and progress and keeps its followers in darkness and ignorance, even filling their minds with erroneous ideas of Christianity. The individual personality is not given the consideration that Christ teaches.

Another striking factor is the frequency with which the Bible comes to life before our very eyes. Shepherds *calling* their sheep and *leading* them over stony paths and uncertain ways, will always have a rich meaning to us. The way the curious people gather about us when-

ever we go to the bazaar, gives us a very slight comprehension of how Jesus felt, never able to get away from the crowds. We have seen the winds driving the chaff away, after the simple procedure of throwing handfuls of grain into the air. The parable of the sower takes on a deeper meaning when one can see this drama in real life. From our roof every day we can see the fishermen throwing out their nets as our Lord commanded Peter to do two thousand years ago.

You asked me to tell you something about the people. I only wish you could come to know them too. In our missionary years we will always seek to know the Arab mind and try to understand the personality. We all rejoice in the way we are received by these warm friendly people. Our missionary predecessors have laid a firm foundation which is evidenced by the fact that the Arabs possess a healthy and cooperative attitude toward the missionaries. We had not been here long before we discovered that these good people are noted for their generosity and hospitality. Even the poorest person will share the last of his tea, sugar and biscuits with any guest who arrives. Among the many admirable qualities possessed by our Arab friends, is the warmth of friendship offered to "strangers within their gates."

In our association with the poor and even with the wealthier women, we sense a loneliness in their hearts and lives, a desire for companionship. The women have virtually the sole responsibility in raising the children and need guidance in this field. Before some of the other voices bidding for recognition are heeded, we must teach them The Way, The Truth and The Life. We feel the compulsion to fill these empty lives by introducing our Friend and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

I could go on and on telling more of these impressions and more of the land and its very real problems. It is not until one has been set down among the people that one realizes how different are our desires, backgrounds, cultures, interests and education. We come as such imperfect vessels of our Lord, that we wonder how these people can learn of Him through us. Yet, we do know that in spite of our differences and weaknesses, we can be one in Christ, and through His spirit join together in fellowship.

With love,
Eloise (Bosch)



Our New Home

WILBUR G. DEKKER

Winging swiftly across France and the Mediterranean, we could not help but reflect upon the difference in the mode of travel between that of today and the days of the pioneers who founded the Arabian Mission. A few short hours before we had disembarked from one of the greatest ocean liners in the world, the *Queen Mary*, and now we were comfortably traveling at an average of 230 miles per hour drawing swiftly closer to our new type of life. Contrast this with the long, uncomfortable journey which our predecessors made by freighter!

As we flew across the desert of Saudi Arabia, we found that we had to revise the conception which we had received from our geography books. We had always pictured the desert as a vast expanse of shifting sand, broken only by an occasional camel track and a number of sand dunes. While this is true in some places, we found to our surprise that there are actually deep gullies and canyons formed by erosion. Some of that area was really rugged and we hoped that a forced landing would not be necessary; we could not see a place large enough for our big, four-motored plane to land in the event of an emergency.

It was a mere twenty hours after we boarded our plane at the London airport that we landed at Bahrain, some 3,427 miles distant. We arrived at our destination after dark so that we had to wait until morning before we could make any definite observations as to our surroundings. We were immediately conscious of one thing, however; although it was the latter part of September, the perspiration had no difficulty in making its way through our clothing. Several members of the *mission family* were on hand to greet us and we immediately felt that we were among friends.

Our first night resembled camping out in some respects because we slept, of all places, on the roof of one of the mission houses. It is much more comfortable up there because it becomes rather stuffy indoors. The beds are placed under a sort of thatched roof, called an *areesh*, which is necessary to keep the condensation off the sleeper.

We had never before seen so many stars, not even in Texas, and they kept winking at us and often one of them would streak earthward. However, we were too tired to spend much time looking at the stars that night and dropped off to sleep, only to be awakened periodically by the crowing of the local roosters. These roosters do not act as an alarm clock by crowing at half past five in the morning as they do in America; they seem to delight in crowing all through the night. One crows nearby and an answer comes from a distance. We wondered if the Arab fowl ever does sleep, and after six months out here we are still wondering the same thing.

Our hosts had informed us that we might sleep as long as we desired on that first morning. No alarm clock was necessary for promptly

at six o'clock the flies arrived en masse. From then on it was a case of attempting to continue our sleep with the sheet over our heads or go downstairs to our room. We went downstairs.

Our first visit to the bazaar was an experience in itself and we still find that it is a new experience every time we go there. Rev. Harvey Staal took us to the bazaar in his car and we wondered how long it would take us to become accustomed to driving on the left side of the street. Whenever an American or European drives on the right side, a policeman is likely to tell him to "drive on the wrong side."

The streets of the bazaar are narrow and are crowded with people who are walking or riding on donkeys and with coolies pulling two wheeled carts piled high with all sorts of items from small parcels to very large shipping crates.



One method of transportation along the Persian Gulf. With several Arabs paddling, these long, slender canoe-like boats glide swiftly through the water.

One of the strange aspects of the bazaar is the mixture of Western culture and the native element. Most of the larger stores are quite modern in appearance and have fixed prices which are slightly higher than those of the smaller shops. The proprietor of the small shop is quite likely to fix the price in accordance with what he thinks the purchaser will pay and, due to the presence of the oil company employees, Europeans and Americans are thought of as having an enormous amount of money. Many of the Arabs feel that they owe a debt to the mission hospital and they are kindly disposed toward us and adjust their prices accordingly. It was only recently that we were trying out our Arabic on one of the aged national Christians and she was telling us of the days when Dr. Zwemer would go from shop to shop in an attempt to purchase bread. The shopkeepers would hurl abuse at him and tell him, "You are an unbeliever; we have no bread for you. Go!"

Of special interest is the meat bazaar. Here, gathered under one roof, are found all the butchers. There is no such thing as a refrigerated showcase and the meat hangs from the ceiling of the unscreened

room. When one desires to purchase meat, he receives the cut of meat which comes under the butcher's knife as the carcass is trimmed down. Thus, if one desires a certain cut of meat, he must go to the butcher who is ready to cut that particular portion of meat. There is seldom such a thing as a boneless cut of meat, but our cook is able to do wonders with the materials at hand.

The vegetable market is strictly open air and a wide variety of fruits and vegetables may be had in season. This market presents a very colorful scene and is always the site of much activity and spirited bargaining.

One of the most primitive sights is the blacksmith shop. Here, under one roof again, are gathered a large number of men engaged in the same trade. The smiths stand in pits and pound out the metal by hand, the work being on the ground at waist level. The metal is heated in a charcoal fire, the air being supplied by means of bellows which are operated by another person who does nothing but pump all day long. In many cases the operator of the bellows is a blind man or boy. The blacksmiths turn out a variety of items but the workmanship is crude as compared to machine methods.

A little farther along we find another interesting sight, a Koran school. Here a number of small boys are seated on the ground before small racks holding copies of the Koran. They read from their books in a sing-song chant. This school is situated right in the street and is presided over by a bearded man whose creased face has seen many years. The routine of the school seems to be undisturbed by the confusion of passing traffic.

We language students are encouraged to accompany the evangelists as they visit the different villages with the Gospel message in order that we may hear the language as it is spoken by the nationals. These visits give us an opportunity to observe life among the poorer classes of people. The houses of these villages are made of stone or of thatched palm branches and are very simple as far as furnishings are concerned. There is no electricity available in these outlying areas. Cooking is done over small, portable kerosene stoves or over open fires.

Fire is a very dreaded menace to those who dwell in the thatched houses. They ignite easily and fire spreads with amazing rapidity through whole sections. As in America, everyone runs after the fire engine and a fire is cause for great excitement. People throng into the streets and go up on their roofs to obtain a better view.

The well-to-do people live in fine, large houses which are characterized by a local form of air conditioning. Towers, designed to catch the breeze from any direction and funnel it down into the room beneath, are constructed on the roofs of these houses. It is said that this method is very effective—but only when there is a breeze.

Many of the people depend upon their own cattle for milk but there is very little, if any, pasturage available to them so it is not at all

uncommon to see men carrying bales of alfalfa down the street and into their homes. Yes, most of the people here keep a cow right within the walls of their homes. We became acutely aware of this fact shortly after we moved into our present quarters. We had often heard the lowing of a cow coming from the house next door to us and it was not until they were putting a new roof on the stable that we were able to look in and then we found, to our surprise, that there was not one cow there but seven!

We were surprised by the large number of automobiles to be found on Bahrain, but still the major form of transportation seems to be that of the faithful donkey. These animals are very picturesque and very often have sleigh bells hanging around their necks so that it is reminiscent of Christmas all the year around.

We had been expecting to see the women wearing veils to cover their faces so we were not surprised to have the women hide their faces at the approach of a man. It is, on the other hand, a surprise to meet a woman who does not have her face veiled.

The lot of the Moslem woman is indeed a sorry one. She is sometimes treated as dust under the feet of her husband and is often beaten upon the slightest provocation. She has no choice as to who her husband will be since the marriages are arranged between the families of the bride and groom. Since the women are veiled in public and are not supposed to be seen by men when the latter go calling, the question arises as to how it is known whether or not a woman has the beauty which is desired by most men. The answer is that the word concerning a woman's qualifications does get around by means of the *grapevine*, and a man usually knows what kind of a girl he is to marry and has a general idea as to her attractiveness or lack of it, as the case may be.

We are often amazed at the primitive methods which are used by the nationals. We constantly think in terms of Western methods which are often so superior to those used here, but there is sometimes a reason for these actions. Recently our landlord had occasion to put a new covering on the roof of our house and this operation required a rather large quantity of water to be carried up to the top of the second floor. This was accomplished by a coolie who, using a yoke and two four-gallon kerosene cans, walked up and down all those stairs for two days straight! I asked our cook why the man did not attach a garden hose to our water faucet and run the hose up to the roof. The cook replied, "He get paid double wages because he do hard work and he get paid by day. It take him longer if he carry water and so he get paid more." We shall have to be here a long time in order to understand fully the Arab mind.

We found the Mission very much as we expected it to be, both in appearance and in methods of operation. We were surprised, however, at the modern equipment which is in use in the mission hospitals. I had expected, for example, to see the hospital laboratory using out-dated methods and equipment and was pleased to find that the more

important equipment is practically identical with that with which I am familiar.

We have been here only a few short months but it did not take us long to see one great need which is taken for granted at home, a very vital one here—the need for more people to come out and work for our Lord in this area. The opportunity is here and there are many contacts to be made, but there are not enough volunteers to come out and work for Christ in this vineyard.

Personalia

Miss Jennie Lou Holler arrived on June 15, 1952 to gladden the hearts of her parents, Rev. and Mrs. G. Jacob Holler, Jr.

Arrivals—**Miss Hazel Wood** arrived on May 21, having completed her short term assignment in the Arabian Mission. . . . **Dr. and Mrs. Maurice Heusinkveld** arrived (with their children) on May 27. They will both be studying new developments in medicine as well as the latest techniques and trends. They will be residing in one of the missionary residences in New Brunswick. . . . **Dr. and Mrs. Dirk Dykstra** arrived on May 21 and are at home near Holland, Mich., where they will retire after their year's furlough. . . . **Rev. and Mrs. Bernard Hakken** arrived on July 8. . . . **Mr. John De Vries** completed his short term assignment this summer, arriving in the United States July 13, 1952. He is at home in Allison, Iowa, and expects to attend New Brunswick Theological Seminary in the autumn.

Departures—**Dr. and Mrs. Paul Harrison, Miss Ruth Jackson** and **Miss Cornelia Dalenberg** sailed on August 29 for their posts in Arabia. . . . **Miss Anne De Young**, formerly of China and **Miss Marianne Walvoord**, one of the newest recruits, sailed on August 30 for the Arabian Mission. **Miss Jeannette Veldman**, also formerly of China, **Dr. and Mrs. Lewis R. Scudder** and their children and **Miss Madeline Holmes** sail on September 28. Miss Holmes is a cousin of **Dr. Mary Bruins Allison** and goes out as a short term to assist the doctor and her nurses in Arabia.

Mr. Robert J. Block has worked as a member of a caravan team this summer in Reformed and United Presbyterian churches. Any minister can ask to have a caravan of young people come to his church to take a religious census of the neighborhood, teach in the daily vacation Bible school, lead young people's meetings and otherwise assist the minister in his program. He sails September 17.

Miss Margaret Schuppe, a short term nurse for Arabia, has arrived in Bahrain and has already taken up her work there.

Dr. and Mrs. Harold Storm spent some time in Switzerland with their children, Rob Roy and Janet who have just graduated from the University of Richmond. Rob Roy has been accepted in the University of Richmond Medical School; Janet will spend a year with her parents in Bahrain. This short holiday was necessitated because of the extreme pressure on Dr. Storm since Dr. Nykerk has had to be away.

Mr. Robert Block, Miss Marianna Walvoord, Miss Madeline Holmes, Miss Cornelia Dalenberg and **Dr. Maurice Heusinkveld** attended General Synod in June at Buck Hill Falls.

Mrs. May DeP. Thoms, emeritus missionary of the Arabian Mission, died on July 14, 1952. For some years Mrs. Thoms had been living in Holland, Mich.

A second son, **Daniel**, was born to Mrs. W. D. Brewer, daughter of Mrs. John Van Ess, on June 29.

Dr. F. M. Potter, for many years treasurer of the Board of Foreign Missions and secretary for Arabia, died at his home in Metuchen, N. J., on August 17 after a long illness. Further details will appear in a subsequent issue.