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No. 221
Autumn, 1950

The Arabian Mission

OF THE

REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA

156 Fifth Ave., New York 10, N. Y.

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ARABIA CALLING

Missionary News and Letters
Published Quarterly

FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION AMONG THE FRIENDS OF
THE ARABIAN MISSION

A Day in the Life of a Teacher

Rachel Jackson



HOW easy it is for me to realize that I live next door to school by the noise of the girls at play who begin to arrive an hour ahead of opening time for school! The playground has always been a great attraction with its see-saws, swings and giant strides. Those who can't find room on the see-saws may be playing hopscotch or tag. Then there may be some who are doing last minute study, walking up and down and reading out loud.

At 8:30 the bell rings and the girls form in lines and march into the large central hall where we have our morning exercises. Many of their songs are Arabic hymns to familiar tunes, others unfamiliar eastern tunes and patriotic songs about their young king and country. A Bible passage is recited in unison also the Lord's Prayer followed by the roll call. Looking at the girls one is surprised to find them all dressed in western style or approximating it. Their faces are bright and alert and they sing with great gusto if not always with sweetness. Most of the girls have brown or black hair, but a few are quite fair. The roll call is interesting with the unfamiliar names of Khairia, Khadijah, Iftikhar, Menal, Bushra and with an occasional familiar one as Miriam and Leila.

After assembly the group (around 75) breaks up into classes, the older ones having Bible with M. Zahoora, our faithful teacher for twenty-seven years; Miss Kellien has second grade for their Bible study and one section of the first grade has Arabic reading with Khalida. The rest of the girls have more singing or gymnastics. I have a free period and get ready flannelgraph material which enlivens the Bible lesson for my next class and makes the story real to them. School

has to follow the course of study as set by the Department of Education and more and more difficulties are being put in our way limiting what we foreigners can do. A foreigner must not teach the Arabic language or grammar to third or fourth grade students. There is even difficulty about having our Christian head teacher take classes in History as it is preferred that it should be taught by a Moslem who would stress the religious aspect of it. There is no objection to our teaching religion, arithmetic and handwork and we do have reading classes with the smaller girls. The handwork classes with the little tots keep me busy preparing new material for them to use. Our school session lasts from 8:30 to 1:30 and the little ones go home at noon while the older girls stay for sewing and knitting.

One group is busy with S. Zahoor and Miss Kellien learning to do fine sewing and embroidering, also crocheting. My group is knitting sweaters, bonnets, baby booties, socks for children and adults, also mittens and gloves so that there will be a lot of their work on display at our next exhibit. When they have knit something for the poor I give them yarn to knit something for themselves. The rest of the girls are with the two young teachers and are learning to do plain sewing and embroidery.

Before school breaks up for the day I would like you to get a close-up view of some of our girls. Nuria, fifteen years old, was late in beginning formal school work, but had studied the Koran with a woman teacher of the Koran and had also become one herself. She is a brilliant scholar and has lapped up school work. Her work in sewing and embroidery is the best in the school. Next fall she leaves our primary school to continue her education in the government school and she will always be a credit to her start with us.

Selwa is a fair skinned, rosy cheeked girl with light brown, curly hair. She is a quick student, eager in her lessons, full of mischief and apt to be in trouble. She was unusual in doing her first grade in one year and has breezed through the second year too. She needs to be in a large class where she will have competition and have to work harder and in doing so she will have less time to think up mischief. Suham is an Arab youngster from the village on the outskirts of Basrah whose dwellers are all spoken of as thieves and they comprise the coolie class. Her mother was one of the coolies who helped in the building of our school. The daughter is a bright girl and made fine progress in her first year.

Lest you think all of the girls are smart let me introduce you to Miriam and Zakkeya who have been in school two years and do not seem to have learned anything and are quite happy in their ignorance. Then too, we have Lebiba in the fourth class who has been with us six years and is only getting through because unimportant subjects bring up her work to a passing average. The majority of our girls belong to this group of plodders and it is a great joy and inspiration when we find a few grains of gold among the baser metal. It is 1:30 and school is dismissed and soon a quiet settles down on the compound.

After an hour's interval club girls begin to arrive and at 2:30 I

bring them into the "mejlis" in the house for their meeting. This "mejlis" has its own entrance and is thus separate from the rest of the house. It is furnished with a long mattress across one side of the room and part way down another. Then there is a bench and chairs so our guests can sit as they please. We also begin with songs and then a Bible lesson with the girls reading from the Gospel of Matthew. Afterwards they take out their work and get busy at their knitting or embroidery. Sometimes my head is in a whirl trying to teach one girl how to turn a heel, another one to cast on or off stitches and a third some intricate pattern simultaneously. The girls are very clever at learning new patterns and those who can read have me write out the directions in Arabic for them to follow when they are at home and can not get help from me. Others will have to learn their new stitch making a small pattern until they have mastered it. There is great profit in their learning to knit as we do have a short but very cold winter and they can knit for themselves when they could not afford to buy a ready made garment. Some earn quite a bit of pin money by knitting for pay. Ten of the fifteen girls in the class have been pupils in school for a long or short time and it is one of the ways of keeping in touch with them.

Club hour is a happy time for them as they have a chance to visit with one another since they do not have the privilege of visiting each other freely in their own homes. Many of them live far away from each other and this is their only point of contact. About 4:15 they hear the sounds in the next room, getting the cups out of the cupboard for tea and it is with reluctance that they fold up their work and get ready to go.

A quiet interval follows when Miss Kellien and I have tea together and talk over the events of the day or letters from home or from one of the other stations. Our day might be rounded off by going to Ashar to the other mission compound and having dinner and a station meeting with our colleagues. We end up our evening together with the reading of the Bible and prayer and then go home feeling refreshed in spirit and ready after a night's rest to begin another day. We hope that by our steady work and life among these people that they might come to know and love our Lord Jesus Christ whose we are and whom we serve.

(Miss Rachel Jackson went out to Arabia in 1921. From the very beginning she was connected with the Basrah Girls' School where she and Miss Kellien labor with the many different types of girls who attend the school. Besides teaching there are the clubs to be supervised and the many social activities connected with the developing of a well-rounded life for the girls who come.)

A Day in an Evangelist's Diary

Ruth S. Luidens



HURRY, Donnie, the children from the House of Happiness are arriving in Daddy's study for morning prayers. See, there come Aylie, Daood, Saeed, Sally, Madeena, Um Miriam, Ruthie... Yes, they are all coming.

The day has begun. The children from the orphanage, the matron of the orphanage, Miss Ruth Jackson and the Luidens family gather for an Arabic hymn, the reading of the Bible in Arabic and prayer. Each day we begin together in this manner. Following the prayer it is inspection time. The children are *looked over* to see that their clothing is neat, their shoes shined and their faces and hands clean. The girls trot off to the Mission's Girls'

School while the boys go on to the government school. The Mission has no boys' school in Bahrain.

After prayers Um Miriam, the matron of the orphanage, has something to discuss. Khaleel has a fever and needs quinine. The rice is all gone and more is needed for the noonday meal. Fadheela, the baby, needs some cod liver oil for she is suffering from colds this winter.

It is soon time to hurry to the Women's Hospital of the Mission, where clinic prayers are conducted. It is always a challenging experience to be with these poor women who need help. There tiny children with high fevers are cuddled by worried mothers. There, too, women suffering from malaria, dysentery, sore eyes and other physical ailments wait for treatment. Their bodies are ill and their hearts are heavy with sadness. They need the love of the Great Physician and Comforter. So they listen attentively to the Good News of Him.

The inpatients come next. How they beg for a story, a reading or a hymn. The children, whose mothers are ill, crowd around as they learn eagerly "Jesus Loves Me." The baby ward always has a special fascination and the new mothers (like mothers the world over) love to display their new babies lying in the cribs at their bed sides. The mothers, too, express appreciation for a hymn or Bible story.

Back to the *mejlis* (meeting room) we must hurry to lead a group

of women who have come to hear about Jesus. From behind their black masks comes a hearty welcome greeting. The message of the love of Christ means much to these women whose lives are full of sorrow and sadness. They love to repeat the twenty-third Psalm and take real pride in learning John 3:16. They enjoy singing "What A Friend we Have in Jesus" and similar comforting hymns. Madeena, one of the group, is always ready and willing to speak boldly and proudly for her Master. She is an inspiration at all times as she witnesses before these women.

After candy and coffee are served it is time to say goodbye. There are always a few who linger to ask for help. "Khaton, my daughter just had a baby and she has no clothing for it. Her husband divorced her recently and left her penniless. I, too, am without money. Please help us." The wonderful Guild boxes again come to the rescue and a happy woman hastens home to dress her new grandchild.

Perhaps there is a sad face which shows unspeakable sorrow. This woman's little boy died last week from a case of smallpox. Of the eight children whom she has brought into the world this poor child was the only one to reach the age of eight. And now he is gone! Oh, how much she needs comfort and the word of strength.

Now it is time to go home and bathe Carol, our own baby. So farewells are finally made and home responsibilities come next. The morning has flown by. Donnie, our son, comes in chattering and expressing his eagerness for lunch.

After lunch the singing class of the Girls' School is on the schedule. The girls love to sing and enjoy learning new hymns and songs. They feel very proud for they have learned to sing "Into My Heart" in English. The various classes practice especially hard as they prepare for the Friday chapel service. Each class takes its turn in singing something special for that day. They have a long list of hymns which they love and certain ones that are repeated for each class period.

The latter part of the afternoon is spent on a visit at the home of one of the women living in a nearby village. After the usual inquiries concerning the health of our respective families and the various missionaries, an opportunity to tell a Bible story and sing some hymns makes the visit worthwhile. Her special request hymn, "In the Sweet By and By," makes tears come to her eyes as she thinks of meeting her Father in heaven. A picture of the Good Shepherd left in the hands of the grandchild brings smiles of appreciation. We bid farewell to the women at the big doorway of their house and find our way home down the narrow alley.

Again family duties call. Following supper and bedtime songs and prayers with Donnie, we hasten to the regular church prayer meeting. It is held in the home of one of our converts. We are happy that a house guest from the nearby American oil company can join our little circle of Christian Arabs, Indians and Americans as we worship our common Savior. A helpful message given in both Arabic and English, the hymn and the Scripture reading in the two languages

make the evening message about Christ seem more completely universal—for all people everywhere.

It is with heavy eyes and tired bodies, but with a happy feeling within our hearts that we retire at night for it has been a day full of blessings and opportunities to serve our Master.

(Mrs. Luidens went to the field in 1944. After language study she and her husband settled in Bahrain where they both carry on evangelistic work. She is especially interested in the children of the House of Happiness and the women who come to the hospital.)



A Morning in the Life of a Mission Doctor

Maurice M. Heusinkveld, M.D.



IT is 5:30 a. m. Each day as this time arrives during the summer I am reminded that if I don't arise and get to the hospital soon, there will be such a crowd of people that much confusion will result throughout the entire clinic time. As I dress I can hear the music of the Military group as they march the trainees out for their daily field duty. At six rounds are started. It is rare that a patient is still asleep at this hour. They arise very early for their morning prayers. I often wish that one of the assistants were around to help with explaining things to patients. The colloquial Arabic of the Swamp Arabs is hard to understand, and they certainly think the same of the Arabic that we use. However, by repeating things

several times and using different words each time, it is possible to evaluate their complaints and to explain to them what needs to be done.

To a doctor and nurse who were trained in America rounds are always a trying experience. The order and cleanliness that are so promi-

ment in hospitals at home are not appreciated here by the patients. The screen door that is intended to keep flies out has been propped open with a brick. Each patient has a fine collection of flies about him. The beds have been moved and tables are not where they belong. The help arrive soon and after much talking and less action some order is restored. Mohammed complains that his stomach is still heavy. He has hookworm disease and although he has been treated once he will probably have to be re-treated. Since the drugs used are very toxic, he must wait a few days. This does not appeal to him. He would much rather just have one injection that in some miraculous manner would cure everything. We regret that we cannot always treat in such a manner.

After seeing the men inpatients, the women are seen. As the chart board is picked up two or three patients are noticed who have come this early to be the first ones to be seen in clinic. They will have to wait at least another hour. Two inpatients bring particular pleasure to us. Both of them had operations on their eyelids for turned in hairs resulting from trachoma. I still remember the day that the daughter came into the office. She could not open either eye and needed some one to lead her. Now she can open both eyes well and is so happy that she can see again. Her mother, Fatima, is as happy as she. Both of them will be leaving the hospital today.

As I returned to the house to eat breakfast a most amazing sight met my eyes. A walking breakfast was seen on the head of one of the local people who had come to bring food to an inpatient. First on the woman's head was a reed basket. Sitting on this was a metal container in which was glowing charcoal. On top of the charcoal were a tea pot, milk and bread. Steam was coming from the tea pot as the person walked. We may call it naive but let any one of us try to duplicate it.

At 6:30 we have breakfast together as a family. Mrs. Heusinkveld has arranged the running of the house for the day, and the children are ready to start playing. As we eat, the children talk half Arabic and half English. In a few minutes the bell rings, and we know that the Rev. Mr. Pennings is ready for chapel. We all gather in the church for a song, scripture reading, a short meditation, and prayer before we begin the work of the day. How much we need this quiet time. It is a sort of spiritual feeding for the day. Some of the patients who have come early join us.

As chapel is finished everyone rushes to get ahead of everyone else. Each patient wishes to be the first to get the clinic card. Jebbarah is nearly overcome in her cage as twenty women insist they should be first. Talking does little good. No one wishes to allow the other to precede her. I get into the office as soon as possible for I know Turshi will have some men folks ready for me to see.

Trachoma, hookworm, amoebic dysentery, measles, whooping cough, pneumonia, chicken pox, feeding problems and everything else are seen each morning. Because of the interesting cases the morning seems to pass quickly. At 10:00 a. m. one of the boys brings in a

glass of cold water. Mrs. Heusinkveld and Miss Wood see most of the return cases. I try to see all of the new ones and all of the men. With such an arrangement it is surprising how many people can be seen in a morning. Of course we have a staff of eleven, many of whom have considerable ability. Without them we could never do the work we do. It is they who understand the native mind and know how to deal with the patients. We are more than grateful for them.

During the morning while I have clinic, Mr. Pennings comes over and gives a Bible talk to the men. Opportunity also exists for some evangelistic work in clinic. During the course of the morning a Sabean and Sayed Shia happen to come into the office at the same time. This I thought was a good opportunity for a study of comparative religion. So we stopped and talked a few minutes. They each expressed how they feel about certain things, and I then had opportunity to tell them what we believe. They seemed to enjoy the discussion. I learned from them and trust that they might have been drawn a little closer to the truth. With Ramadhan drawing closer, the question of fasting often comes up. I am always glad to tell them that we fast too. But our fast is for twelve months and not for just one month. They fast from food; we fast from sin through Christ.

A Bible talk is given to the women during the morning. One of the workers and a convert take turns at giving these. Such work is not easy. Our patients come from such different levels of life that what one may understand may not be understood by another. Many other problems exist in the work. The Lord never seems to leave us without these. We try to accept them with thanksgiving as we are instructed in His Holy Word, but we all admit that human patience and intelligence are tried at times.

Since it is Monday our work is heavier than usual. At about 11:45 clinic is finished. As we look over the statistics, we see that 223 women and seventy-three men have been seen. Our contacts with them have been short. We pray that they may have seen something of the Lord in us and our work. We are indeed sorry that we can not give more to these people in the way of service. For years it has been the hope and prayer of the members of the Arabian Mission that some young doctor at home may feel called to the work here. Local laws require the presence of two doctors at most surgery. Because we do not have enough mission doctors to make such staffing possible here, we are prevented from serving the people in this capacity.

(Dr. Heusinkveld went to Arabia in 1946. He and his wife, who is a trained nurse, were connected with the Knox Memorial Hospital in Matrah for some time. At present they are working in the Lansing Memorial Hospital in Amarah on the Tigris River, the northernmost station in the Arabian Mission.)

A Day in the Life of a Language Student

Eunice M. Post



THESE warm summer days have changed our mode of living somewhat but they have not lessened our activity—yet. The language student, realizing the impending examination in October, counts these weeks of last opportunity for redeeming himself because of initial laxity and adjustment. Perhaps there is more formal study than ever before, but it is the informal situations of learning to know the Arab people and their land that the student cherishes most.

How memorable still is our voyage across the Atlantic on the *Roebiah*, where developed our love for the water and the life of a sailor. Those days are renewed with every launch ride and visits to boats carrying

missionaries passing through. Unforgettable, also, is the plane trip over the oil wells followed later by a picnic at the flares with a stop-over at the derricks. Those first enhancing moments in the "suq" (bazaar) continue their delight as ever new articles are imported and scattered in every store. We have to laugh at ourselves that shortly before we wrote our mothers to send those very articles from the States.

Even the teas and the Arab dinners have retained their former charm with the acquaintance of new faces and the strengthening of old friendships. Yet, in all of these there is a growing appreciation, understanding and enjoyment as we make use of our beginning knowledge of Arabic. What a satisfaction we have in meeting someone like Umm Azeza in the bazaar, being invited to her home for morning tea, chatting with her mother and daughters, examining each other's purchases of cloth, and being begged to stay for lunch. We refuse because it is only nine o'clock with three valuable hours for language study before noon, but we do promise to return at the close of Ramadhan. We hope then to take a couple of pictures of the courtyard to add to our collection of interesting scenes.

How valuable to us are those slides of a rich and colorful sunrise, of the flares, of the man bringing goatskins of water to the *dhobi*, (laundryman) and of the graceful sailing vessels. We had desired to add to these the sight of a large camel caravan being cleaned and

scrubbed in the Gulf but the heavy and dusty air prevented such a shot. However, we rebuke ourselves for having no camel scenes after a half-year stay in Arabia!

As a lover of nature, I have been interested in the occasional cloud formations. Never in Iowa have I observed such a large, flat, overhanging mass with billowy forefront. It reminded me of a new wool batting with its ends tufted and the whole suspended in nothingness. To watch its rapidity of approach with its simultaneous calm suggested a resemblance to our Iowa tornadoes. First descended thick dust making visibility virtually zero followed by a heavy downpour. After this half-hour siege in which much rain fell and winds reached eighty-five miles an hour, all became peaceful again. As the sun broke through, prior to setting, it revealed the beautiful tan of the buildings, the freshness of our limited foliage and the deepest green of the Gulf. God reminded us that we could see Him in the strongest wind as well as in the stillest calm.

Not all of our experiences with nature have been as enjoyable, however. Ants came in large numbers to share our food and water, lizards visited our sleeping quarters and laid their eggs in the cupboard. Myriads of locusts descended on us to the great delight of the children who busied themselves catching them. If it had not been for a south wind driving them into the Gulf, a greater plague might have resulted. Soon, thereafter, I chanced to turn to Proverbs 30:24f:

"There are four things which are little upon the earth, But they are exceeding wise: The ants are a people not strong, Yet they provide their food in the summer; . . . The locusts have no king, Yet they go forth all of them by bands; The lizard taketh hold with her hands, Yet is she in kings' palaces."

This excerpt is only one of the many texts captivating our hearts in this, our first year in Bible land. Mrs. De Jong also has contributed to our understanding of Bible customs with her explanations of such meaningful words as are found in John 2 where is told the story of Jesus performing His first miracle. The "ruler of the feast" is rendered "mutika" meaning butler or steward of the table-beds on which the guests reclined as they ate. The measure "firkin" of John 2:6 is translated thus because it equals the amount of water carried in a goatskin, that is eight and one third gallons. In the Arabic we read "mutrain" or two water skins with two or three full skins being the acceptable donkey load. Such bits of enlightenment brighten our day and help us to value this time as a preparation for a greater work that we must do.

(Miss Eunice Post left the United States in 1949 to begin her life work among the Arabs. Still in the first impression stage, she is studying the language in Kuwait.)

