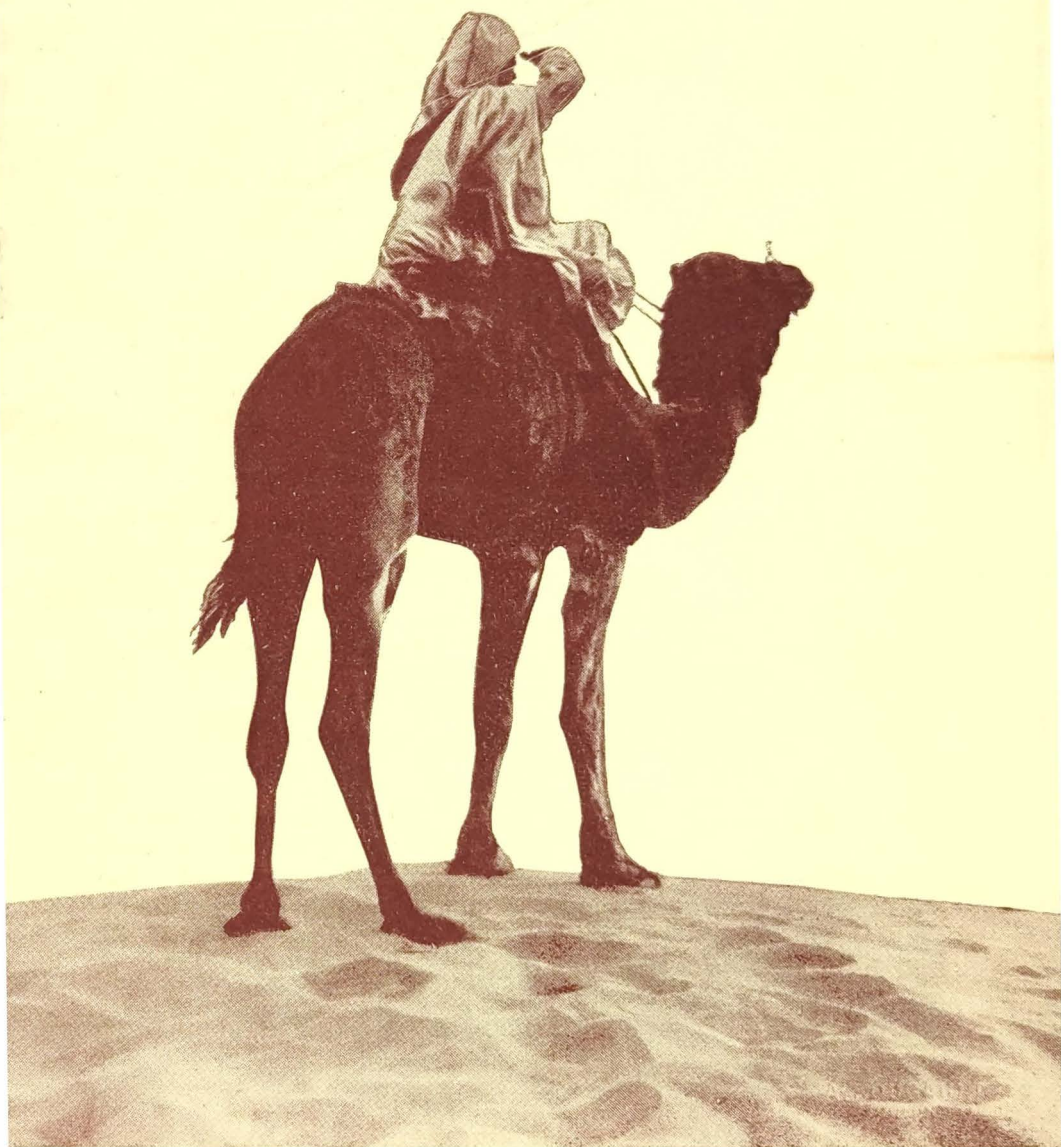


A Thirsty Land



Algiers Mission Band

No. 119.

SEPTEMBER, 1957.

ALGIERS MISSION BAND

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Founded in 1888 by Miss I. Lilius Trotter

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A THIRSTY LAND

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No. 119

SEPTEMBER, 1957.

AN AFTERNOON'S VISITING

"He led them on safely, so that they feared not." (Psalm 78: 53).

"Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass." (Psalm 37: 5).

WHILE busy with household duties I found my thoughts and prayers travelling in a direction in which I had not been able to visit for at least two years, though I had formerly had many openings and good opportunities there.

So, Mrs. Longley accompanying me, we passed by houses on the outskirts which had been visited more recently, where our message has always been gladly received, and pressed on.

The first house at which we called was inhabited by a woman I did not know, who shut the door in our faces, refusing to be interested in our message. Then, in attempting to get to a house where an old Blida woman lived, a street or two further on our way was blocked by soldiers. Feeling a bit discouraged, I said to Mrs. Longley, "I must be mistaken," though I had felt sure that God was leading us to these houses. Then, approaching a native woman standing near, we began speaking to her about the Saviour; she seemed interested, but presently left us, as did also two young men, similarly interested.

Going along to a new lot of houses built on the hill-top where, before they were all occupied, I had had a good contact with a European family, we climbed a long flight of stairs. Half-way up, we came to a flat piece of ground where a group of eight or nine elderly men were gathered. Having passed my "three score years and ten," and having white hair, it was not "aib" (that is wrong) for me to greet them; whereupon they all greeted us. Then, after some homely remarks about my difficulty in climbing, and a polite question as to my age having been asked and answered, I explained that we had "the Words of God" with us. We found that none of them could read in Arabic, so I proposed sitting on the steps to read to them, whereupon the youngest man rose from the only chair, saying, "Oh no, come and sit here." Gladly accepting his offer, I sat down, and Mrs. Longley sat on the ground at my feet. I read to them from John 3, about the necessity of the new birth. God gave real liberty in so doing, and all seemed interested, listening well. Then, when our talk was nearly finished, two soldiers came up and asked what we were doing. Explaining who and what we were, they too were interested, and on leaving said, "Well, we hope

you will convert them—they need it.” Finally, as we left the group to proceed on our way, the younger man who had given me his chair said, “These words are good, and you are a good woman; it only remains that you witness to our prophet!”

Arriving at the top of the hill, the two soldiers who had spoken to us came out of their quarters and wanted to hear our message; so we were able to speak to them and others who had joined them, in French; and they too were very much touched.

Then, coming to the houses, and seeing a woman outside lighting a fire, we greeted her and said we would like to read to her from God’s Word. After listening herself, she went and called her neighbours, who then surrounded us also listening to our message.

At the next row of houses crowds of women were waiting to hear what we had to say; but by the time we had finished there, our throats and voices were very husky—Arabic being a greater strain on the throat than English. Then, going up still more steps, other women were waiting to hear. But it was getting late, and we had a very long up-hill walk in front of us, so we had to promise a return visit the following week.

We kept our word, but although we had quite an interesting time, most of the others did not come out to listen. We have often found it thus, but it does not stop us praising God for the privilege of speaking in the name of Jesus, and for His enabling. The power of the enemy is great, so please pray with us for all who wish to hear, and that others may become willing in this prolonged day of His Grace. And remember that the foregoing is but one example of our visiting; for in many houses the various families come together eagerly, and sit around, and in spite of many distractions, reveal the yearning of many hearts to be great.

ANNIE BUCKENHAM.

NORTH AFRICA IN FRANCE

I KNEW there were many North Africans in Paris, but nevertheless I was astonished at the numbers I met every time I went out.” So wrote Mme. Lull on her recent visit to Paris. She told us that in one part of the great city people speak of it as the “Casbah of Paris,” so much do the narrow streets crowded with Arabs and Kabyles remind them of the Casbah in Algiers.

For years now men who did not find work in Algeria have been crossing the Mediterranean to seek it in France. And, after a time, if they have been successful they send for their wives and



Mme. Lull (2nd right back row) with group of her schoolgirls.

families to come and join them. Sometimes they have a hard struggle, and find the life strange and the difficulty of getting a dwelling for the family, great. The separation from their own land is hard too, and they are often lonely and home sick.

This summer it has been possible for some of our A.M.B. workers to spend some time in France visiting some of the North Africans they have known already in Algeria. Mme. Lull made several visits to Tolga folk now in France, when she visited Paris, and hopes for more opportunities later. We can imagine the joy it was to them to have a visit from their missionary friend. Some of them said, "It is as if our mother had come to see us." In another house the family would not let her leave until she had prayed with them. They had learned to value

Christian prayer before they left Tolga. It is good to think how these visits would revive memories of all they had learned in the mission house and school at Tolga, and the talks together would help those who began to love the sound of the Gospel to understand more, and realise more of the love of Jesus by seeing its reflection in His servant's loving thought for them.

In another part of France—Alsace—Mlle. Butticzaz and Mlle. Chollet are now travelling about in their own car, seeking out some of the North Africans whom they have known and loved in Bousaada or Setif. They have quite a number to visit, and hope also to make contact with others to whom they can give tracts or books, and with whom they can talk of things that matter. One dear young woman they especially want to see. But alas, the letter they wrote to say they were coming was returned with "gone away, left no address." They are praying that, in spite of this, some way may be found to reach this child of theirs in the faith. She is one of those whose husband went to work in France not long after they were married. After a time he sent for her to join him. She might well have been afraid of the journey—alone, and to a strange land. But I well remember the night she spent at Dar Naama before leaving for France. We read and prayed with her, and sang her favourite hymns together, and spoke of the life before her. She seemed so bravely determined to do the best she could with it, and said, with a happy certainty in her tones, that the Lord Jesus would be with her, just as much in the strange land as He had already been in the home where she had learned to love and trust Him.

V. WOOD.



Mlle. Butticzaz and Mlle. Chollet.

MORE ABOUT ABASSIA

CHRISTMAS, 1955, was approaching and it was crushingly evident that Abassia would never see another. Visiting her on that Christmas morn we spoke together of the afternoon service. Her eyes were aglow with their old fire as she softly but resolutely said, "Draw them to Jesus—draw them to Jesus." Her heart ever bled for those without Jesus, and her spiritual perception re-echoed that deep concern, so potently expressed by another—"I am not afraid so much that my children will go into open vice, or that they should become drunkards, as I am afraid they will get into that formal state which speaks about religion, professes it, amuses themselves with something connected with it—and yet *remain destitute of it.*"

But who was to take her traditional place at the Christmas service? For this time Abassia would be confined to her room. The highly intelligent Arab girl who would be taking her place had been brought out of Muslim bondage and into Christian liberty, by Abassia. Years before, when the news of the death of Abassia's husband spread through the town, K. was only a little girl brought to the mission twice weekly by her mother. She belonged to a "shereefian" family, claiming direct descent from Muhammad by both parents. Her father was a much respected Taleb, who taught the Quran daily at the mosque. During the last two years of his life he was blind and it fell to K. to accompany him daily to the mosque for the mid-day prayer. Her father—a good man—ever sought to give truth its rightful place, and consequently would not oppose the Gospel as most of his fellow Muslims were wont to do. Instead he recommended attentive observation of all that was taught at the mission to his wife and daughter. Though K. was sometimes influenced by other Arab children to join in denouncing the missionaries as "heretics"—it was always her father's sane influence which brought her back to her senses again. Up to the age of fourteen, although she knew by heart quantities of hymns, Bible stories and verses, the meaning of the Gospel remained obscure. Then one day, from the midst of the women who met at the mission, Abassia arose—transformed by a power not of this world—and began to speak of the great breath-taking fact that JESUS IS ALIVE, that He is not the great "I was," He is the great "I am." The mysterious "something" or "Someone" which indwelt and permeated that life and shone through it amazed K. and brought her face to face with an urgent question demanding an answer: "Is what she says true? If not, it doesn't matter; but if it is true, then nothing else matters." Under Abassia's graphic teaching and by the power of God's Spirit, K. saw for the first time the burden of her sin and felt it as crushingly as Mr. Graceless in *Pilgrim's Progress*. She saw it was her own sins which hindered her penetrating the "low gate" and following the "narrow way." The climax came unexpectedly one day when Abassia threw out this challenge before the assembled women, "I stand alone amongst you—a Christian whose sins are washed in the Blood of Jesus—is there another who will this day take her stand with me for Christ?" Quick as a flash, her face flushed with the tremen-

dous import of the moment, K. leapt to her feet, shot out her arm and said, "I will." At that instant the burden of her sins rolled away, and the deathly hush that had fallen upon all witnessing that sacred moment, was lost in a new pulsation of LIFE as K., now a new creature in Christ, took her stand boldly under the banner of the Cross. The divine life of God's Spirit seemed instantly at work within her, and she grew rapidly in the experimental knowledge of Christ. She and Abassia became the closest of friends and in spite of the disparity in their ages they were true sisters in Christ, who shared with each other their joys and their sorrows. It was K. who travelled with her and witnessed alongside her, when Abassia had unique opportunities of announcing the Saviour to large gatherings of Arab women. It was K. who entered deepest into the Sanctuary with her, there together to uncover the blessed joys of communion and prayer in the Spirit. Now on that Christmas afternoon with Abassia unable to be with us, it was K. who whole-heartedly stood in the breach, and preached Abassia's Saviour—now her own. To Abassia had been entrusted the hidden work of intercession. To join the happy company throbbing with excitement at the mission, as in bygone years, was to be hers no more. But well she knew that "the highest office a soul can fill, is that of taking hold of God, through the Grace of Jesus, for the things He has promised to mankind," and Abassia prayed. Meanwhile K. stood before that large class—an uncanny authority attended her words—uncanny in its replica of Abassia's own powerful preaching. "Thou shalt call His name JESUS: SON OF GOD: EMMANUEL." The women listened as they had listened to Abassia. At the end, Abassia's words were ringing in our ears, "Draw them to Jesus—draw them to Jesus." K.'s own sister-in-law was the first to step out openly for Jesus as the invitation was given, and thereafter she bore the unmistakable hallmark of a soul reconciled to God through the blood of Christ. How Abassia rejoiced with us over further conquests by the rejected "Galilean"—her supreme Christmas joy was solely to see the Christmas tidings still bring souls to the One Who once lay in Bethlehem's manger.

"Hail, the Heaven-born Prince of Peace . . .
Born that man no more may die,
Born to raise the sons of earth,
Born to give them second birth."

The inexorable demands of Islam are revealed to the "faithful" in the "inspired" Quran. Thus it emphatically declares "The month of Ramadan shall ye fast, in which the Quran was sent down from heaven, a direction unto men."

A brief sentence, and, during one month in every twelve, the daily routine of countless millions is distorted. Day becomes an exhausting struggle against thirst, hunger and weakness. Night, which should bring relief to weary bodies, is of necessity punctuated with eating and drinking, if life is to be maintained. For those who freely choose to continue in the "Way of Muhammad," they but reap the fruit of their choice. For others, born into Muslim homes, saturated in Islamism, ruled by the Quran, who yet find no responding desire within them for such man-

conjured religion, might they be free to choose another "way"? *Never*, for great and many are the woes that betide the meanest defaulter, who would break the fast of Ramadan.

Each succeeding year, missionaries stir the sympathies of Christians in the homelands, when they present the peculiar stress of living through the dark month of Ramadan. If painful to the Christian missionary, the Fast, with its accompanying threats, is an acid test of Christian profession amongst the Arabs. Some may maintain a testimony during eleven months of the year, few indeed can brave the rigours of the twelfth—Ramadan.

If the undertone of Abassia's life was *courage*, the wellspring lay in her abounding faith in Christ. The sharpness of the threats for breaking the fast were felt as keenly by her as any other. Only too well she knew the brutal inhumanity of her fellow-Arabs when stirred to religious fanaticism. Yet like the true "Father of the Faithful"—Abraham, she also, "with undaunted faith, looked at the facts—her own impotence . . . yet she refused to allow any distrust of a definite pronouncement of God to make her waver. She drew strength from her faith, and while giving the glory to God, remained absolutely convinced that God was able to implement His own promise."

Hear Abassia, for she, being dead, yet speaketh through the letters she has penned. "Dear Friends, pray that the work of Jesus may continue. You must persevere in prayer with us each evening at 9 p.m., because to-day Ramadan begins. This means difficulties, but I have confidence in the Lord, and I leave everything in His hands, and He will direct all things as He desires. I ask you to greet Christian friends in your homeland, and may the peace and joy of the Lord be theirs. I thank our Saviour that I am able to pray for them, and they for us. I know that Jesus will answer our prayer, for He continues faithful to those who remain faithful to Him. I constantly reassure our Christians here, that Jesus never changes, He ever lives to intercede for us and to answer the prayers of those who love Him. He is ever the FAITHFUL, the TRUE, the SUPREME FRIEND, Who will never forget one of those who count solely upon Him. He will ever be our Good Shepherd, and will soon return to take us with Him in His glory, for His promises are certain—Hallelujah! We must persist in telling these truths of the Lord to our Arab Christians. Being alone, I appreciate just how much the Lord helps me in every detail."

Later she writes—"This month of Ramadan passed without difficulty in my family—but you will laugh when I tell you that K. (the Arab Christian girl) came daily at noon to join me in a meal. We ate bread and cheese, for as you know, I could do no cooking in the circumstances. Now the Lord kept and strengthened us. I must tell you this story. You know the lovely big house facing ours, well, these people sent their daughter aged fourteen to ask me if I'd make them sugar icing to decorate their cakes (for their meal during the night). I replied, "Gladly, bring what is necessary and I will prepare it in front of you, and like that you can learn to do it yourself." In actual fact they are a well educated family, but I suggested doing it before the girl, for I

knew it would give me an opportunity for testimony. And so it turned out. After having made the sugar icing, I said to the girl, "I will now taste it, and make sure that it is sweet enough." Thereupon she screeched, "You eat, you . . . do not keep the fast like us?" I replied, "No, I am an Arab woman, but a Christian, and more, I'm baptised." She never replied one word, and so I said to her, "if you have anything else I can do for you, I am ready to help." Later I was called to her house, and I went, and in this lovely home, where there was only the mother and the daughter, I gave my testimony. Dear brother and sister in Christ, how happy I am, that I had this opportunity of entering this home to speak of our Saviour. Pray for me, I leave all in His blessed, powerful hands . . . by the blood of Jesus we are more than conquerors, Hallelujah!"

Abassia's brother, a gendarme, was at times a great source of anxiety to her mother and herself. One day, when off duty, he came to the house the worse for drink. He ferociously attacked his sister, kicking her till she was black and blue, and in a towering rage forbade her to return to the mission. Abassia came nevertheless, not to disobey, but to pray with us for her brother. A definite change came over him, and he became increasingly affectionate towards Abassia, and was deeply and visibly moved as he saw her sink daily, and suffer more and more from paroxysms of pain—terrible to behold. Five months before her death Abassia wrote to us, "I could not reply to your letter, as I have been very ill—as usual, the heart. My family thought I was going, but no, Jesus lives, and He upholds me always and keeps me for Himself. Mother sent a telegram to my brother and he came and passed a week with us. Before he left I said to him, 'I'm not dying just yet, Jesus still wishes to keep me here.' He began to laugh, then replied, 'Since you have such confidence in Jesus, may God bless you.' I am proud of his words and I pray the Lord to strengthen me continually—Amen. Join me in prayer from 9 to 10 in the morning each Friday and Sunday—thank you. I await your return with impatience."

One of the most striking outcomes of Abassia's consistent Christian life was the telling fruit it bore in her own home among her own family. Her uncle who lived with them and had caused Abassia much misery in the early days of her conversion, and sought more than once to arrange a Muslim marriage for her, now became docile and respectful towards her. When finally she was completely bedridden, he came and sat beside her nightly and spoke with her of the things nearest her heart, and of the One she loved with such fervour. A few days before her last Christmas, she was thrilled to tell us that her uncle had asked for a Scripture calendar with a commentary each day. After she was gone this calendar hung silently before his writing table, a daily witness of the truth he had seen lived in the home.

"Yea, even joy in dying, be it so,
If other lives spring forth from our poor grave.
Our buried hopes may yet a harvest grow,
And by our losing, others we may save."

A. PORTEOUS.

THE HAJJ—OR PILGRIMAGE TO MECCA

THIS pilgrimage was ordained by the Prophet of Islam as one of the five "obligatory" duties of every true Muslim (not even women being exempt from its performance) at least once in his or her life, where at all possible. It is one of the "PILLARS of RELIGION" and to have fulfilled this duty is generally looked upon as ensuring an easy entrance to the joys of the Hereafter, as pictured by Muslims, and earns a certain standing among his co-religionists for the "Hajji." That men and women should be exalted in the esteem of their fellows by the fact that they have made a long and difficult journey to a distant city, there to go through a series of ritualistic ceremonies which seem valueless as regards any moral or spiritual benefit to be obtained from them—this is indeed strange. But none the less, it is a fact, as is shown by the importance given to the welcome home of the returning pilgrims.

"Perform the pilgrimage of Mecca" is the plain order of the Quran on which the custom of this yearly pilgrimage rests. And those who consider the history of its origin, and of the people to whom it was first addressed, may perhaps find evidence in this order that the Prophet of Islam had a better understanding of human nature and how to lead men than many learned students of psychology in our times. Already in his days, Mecca was looked upon with reverence by the Arabs: its traditional connection with Abraham (the father of their race, through his son Ishmael) whose footprint was believed to be indelibly imprinted on a stone within the sacred precincts of the Caaba, would alone make it a place to be visited with interest and respect. But traditions go even farther back, and tell of Adam having had a holy house (or Caaba) in Mecca, of which the model was sent down from heaven: some say that it was drawn up to heaven at the time of the Flood, and that later, the Caaba built by Abraham and Ishmael was placed on the same spot, and made on the same model as the original. With such an amazing and sacred tradition already surrounding the City of Mecca, Muhammad may well have seen that to command a solemn pilgrimage to "the holy temple of Mecca, which we have appointed for a place of worship unto all men," would meet with ready acceptance, while the decree that all true believers must turn their eyes towards that sacred spot whenever and wherever they were worshipping as being the centre of the worship of THE ONE GOD would also help to withhold them from the return to their former idolatrous adoration of images of gods who are no gods. The unifying effect of this mass movement (as we may call it) in pilgrimage has been said by some one to be probably the "chief moral effect of the great annual pilgrimage to Mecca." The same writer says, that by it "countless individuals are drawn within the mystic spell of a profound class consciousness which is essentially religious."

The Quran advice to pilgrims runs "make provision for your journey, but the best provision is piety." Whatever may be the exact meaning of *piety* here, it is evident that piety as we understand it is often not a strong point with pilgrims. Indeed an intelligent, thoughtful Muslim woman who had made the pilgrimage gave it as her opinion that all who went must come back morally the worse for their experi-

ence. Perhaps the permission of another Quranic verse has been harmful? It runs, "It shall be no crime in you, if you seek an increase from your Lord, by trading during the pilgrimage." This may have opened a door for dishonesty and cheating, and other tricks of the trade among pilgrims; and love of gain has overcome the spirit of reverence and the desire to serve God in many.

"Proclaim unto the people a solemn pilgrimage; let them come unto thee on foot and on every lean (fleet?) camel, arriving from every distant road; that they may be witnesses of the advantages which accrue to them from visiting this holy place." On foot, or on camel, how painfully long and toilsome the journey must have seemed in the early days; now it is by train, and steamer, and motor car; and even this year, by aeroplanes, that the way is made swift and easy for many.

A remarkable incident in the course of a pilgrim's stay in Mecca is the kissing of the Black Stone. This may be an aerolite; but according to tradition Muhammad said of it, "The Black Stone came down from Paradise. It was whiter than milk, but the sins of the children of Adam have made it black." It was probably revered before Muhammad's day, but is another instance of his adapting the ancient superstitions to the uses of his own religion. The pilgrim who kisses this stone must say, "O God, I do this in Thy belief and in the verification of Thy book and in pursuance of Thy prophet's example. May God bless and preserve him. O accept my supplication, diminish my obstacles, pity my humiliation, and graciously grant me Thy pardon." As we read of the really violent and unseemly struggle which sometimes accompanies the pilgrims' endeavours to get near enough to the Stone to kiss it, we have some understanding of the feelings of a Muslim, the second successor to Muhammad, who is supposed to have said, when kissing the Stone, "Verily, I know that thou art a stone; thou dost no good nor harm in the world; and if it were not that I saw the Prophet kiss thee, I would not kiss thee."

This "solemn pilgrimage," commanded many hundred years ago, and based on the beliefs and traditions of even longer ago, still continues to be faithfully observed. But the whole question of the why and wherefore of the ceremonies involved, and the motives of those who undertake it is perhaps not more clear to the minds of many than the reason for kissing a stone was to Omar, even though he was a successor of Muhammad.

Some years ago, I happened to be visiting a southern town on the day when a well-known native of the town was expected to return from his pilgrimage to Mecca. What excitement there was in the usually quiet enough little desert town, what crowding of the streets when the moment of the pilgrim's arrival came! How all pressed around him eager to see, to hear, to touch him! "What was he like?" a little girl asked a friend who had been out with the crowd. "Just an ordinary man," was the reply. "And what did you do?" "I picked up the end of his cloak and kissed it." "But *why* did you?" "Oh, I do not know—every one was doing it." How strong and how unreasonable sometimes is this motive for action; "Others do it; it is the custom."

V. WOOD.

ANNUAL MEETING

AT

BRIDEWELL HALL, Eccleston Street
(NEAR VICTORIA STATION)

On THURSDAY, 19th SEPTEMBER, 1957

AT 3 AND 7 P.M.

MISSIONARY SPEAKERS:

Afternoon and Evening

Rev. & Mrs. Ronald J. Waine, of Algiers

GUEST SPEAKERS:

Afternoon

Rev. A. C. Robinson, of Seaford

Evening

Rev. Geoffrey R. King, of Croydon

The latest Kodachrome Slides from Algeria will be shown between the meetings from 5.45 to 6.45, and TEA will be served at the Hall from 5 to 6.30 at a nominal charge.

Further particulars can be obtained from
THE SECRETARY, ALGIERS MISSION BAND, 76 Marylebone High
Street, London, W.1.

STATIONS AND WORKERS

ALGIERS (DAR NAAMA, EL BIAR)

1920 Mr. & Mrs. H. W. Buckenham
1949 Rev. and Mrs. R. J. Waine
1920 Miss V. Wood
1956 Mr. & Mrs. P. G. Longley
1948 Mlle. Y. Félix

BLIDA

1929 Miss P. M. Russell
1948 Mlle. J. Guibé

MILIANA

1907 Miss M. D. Grautoff
1956 Miss E. Collins.

RELIZANE

1947 Miss E. Clark
1951 Miss A. E. Powell

TLEMCEN

1948 Mr. and Mrs. A. Porteous

TOLGA

1937 Madame Lull

TOUGGOURT

1930 Miss I. K. Nash

AIN-ARNAT

1919 Mlle. A. Buttica
1946 Mlle. G. Chollet