

No. 3.


Algiers Mission Band
Journal

1921




Day Yaama El Biar. Jan. 14. 1921.


The best news of the New Year so far is that Lala Fatouma + Luizette have come together + unchaperoned to stay a week or more. Such a contrast they are - Luizette dark + sparkling - Lala Fatouma's a beautiful calm Madonna face, with a depth of sorrow in the eyes that the new life may illumine but will hardly obliterate on earth. Their souls are athirst, + just drink in the long reading times with Kathleen Butler + Mary Watling, + the atmosphere of our evening prayer-time with the dear hymns of the French Salvation Army. Our main point with them has been that we have a Saviour who saves His people from their sins - not just from their consequences: + it is good to see their consciences getting sensitised as to where evil lurks. "I used to love the Ziaras," said Luizette, + the dressing up for them: I know I'm rather ugly, + I never felt sure if pretty clothes made me look better or worse, + I used to try one colour after another. But these things have all gone from me now: they have lost their pleasantness. Lala Fatouma's world lies, as she knows full well, in more subtle ambitions: May the God of all grace set her free.

 There is something full of visions in the thought that the world commerce is hanging just now on the coal supply - in other words on the bringing to the surface of the buried lives of tree + plant of ages far back. May it not be that just as unlooked results in ages to come, may spring from souls that "lay in dust life's glory dead" + have before them "a better resurrection" in power transmuted in undreamt of ways, undimmed by centuries of burial.


Sometimes I wonder whether some such story lies behind the persistent welling up of light + heat in Tozeur. For our Tozeur brothers here, Ali + Amar, tell us that there were Christians there long ago - in Roman days I suppose - + that the double crosses thus $\#$ with which numbers there are tattooed, come from those days, as also the marking with a saffron cross on chest + back, of the boys at their circumcision feast - a strange perpetuation, it would seem, of the signing with the sign of the cross in baptism? It may be that the pent up prayers of the past down there, are ready to break

into flame now. Woe be to us if we fail, through carelessness or prayerlessness, to fan the sparks.

 The new little Mission-room up here, for which Kacête asked, was opened a week ago, + men - almost all Kabyles - have come in small groups whenever collected in the evenings by Mons. Cook + Mr. Buckenham. Kacête looks very shadowy still, + goes flat again between every bit of exertion. He needs a fresh renewal of the life given back to him, before he can do any steady work.

 A sudden breach has come to us in Algiers by Madge Farmer having broken down so seriously that there was nothing for it but to get her straight back to England under Nellie Jones' good care. Mr. Buckenham + Yamina have gone forward into the gap in Beit Slaama classes as best they can, + Mrs. Walker helps with the playhours there + at Rue du Croissant - a new + vivid attraction in both places. She is such a child with the children, + they feel the joyous elasticity of her own sharing, all unaware that she is training them the whole time in observation + unselfishness + obedience. Meantime she is a fairy godmother to us all round, replenishing our wardrobes - crocheting caps of native wool by the dozen for cradle roll babies, + making garments by the score for Miliana refugee children. There is no saying what will come next, or at what an American ratio.

The advance point among the Rue du Croissant Children this winter has arisen from a heart-yearning of Alice M. Troys over a big neglected district of the town lying between us + the sea-front - "The gate of the River" by name. There, in the main, she has been collecting a girls class 4 times a week, that is steadily growing in numbers. Mary Taylor helps her till she (M.T.) goes off to reinforce Blida when Violet Wood leaves for Tebessa + Tazeur.

 Si Boualem + Chrira have been here again these last days. He shews no sign yet of stepping out to victory. I wonder if he is doing his "forty years" so to speak, of desert wandering - years when of old God led His people "about" instead of "on" as His chastisement on their fear of going forward, + yet by His wonderful grace He was with them + they lacked nothing.

Further developments have been going on over our pair from Tozeur: They both want Christian wives! By God's goodness these can gladly be given by the Cherchelle Mission station (V.A.M.) + Ali's future is settled + his betrothal over. The weight of family cares was on his bright boyish face today, for his bride's family require among sundry preliminary gifts, 3 brocaded head-handkerchiefs - straw coloured, green + mauve, "Yes, it is a very expensive thing for an Arab to get married, said Amar in a fatherly way. he went through the experience some years ago, + his heart yearns over his 5 year old son; his wife was divorced from him by his mother's will, not his own, + married to another.

Of course Aïssa follows suit in wanting to start family life. We hold this off as Alamiya is still hardly past her childhood: all we can give him for the time being is the hope of the third room in the same vine-covered Arab court at the back of the house, where the brothers are beginning to build their nests.

I went down to them tonight to tell them that I am off in a fortnight to Tozeur. "You must never shut that door again," said Amar gravely, "now that the house is yours: the little boys will want to come + come - + the older ones should not be left to hear once a year for a few weeks - you must not shut that door when once you open it... another thing - you must get a cemetery: you would not need a very large one, but you must have a place where you can put us when we die - the Moslems would kick us out like dogs."

A swift turn west, beginning with Relizane. The walls of the children's room are gay as a spring garden under Mr. Walker's care. May Ridley has seen the little ones turn round + give a quiet kiss to the nearest picture in the pauses of the toll call.



The skyline of the Marabouts wall.

Sirat

Yesterday was a matter of 13 or 14 hours out villageing - 4 or 5 of them in one of the lumbering motor-busses, + the rest spent in 12 happy visits, each of them meaning a congregation of 10 or 12 on an average, exclusive of small children. It happened

to be the turn for Sirat - the Marabout village that I wrote of a year ago. I wonder if any have prayed for it? for

it was as I have said, a good time again, + the second visit in these centres finds usually a very doubtful welcome. The curiosity of that first reception had quieted now into only a steady desire to hear: the strong-featured, intelligent women bent heart + mind to understanding, + the men hardly breathed a word about the old faith, even in the Marabouts precincts. At the last house we had to turn sadly away from the mat spread down at its door with a joyful "There they are", for we had barely time for getting across the one autobus that would get us back.



(a little bright
mauve stock
that covers
the face of the
ground)

This is a Sirat homestead - they are 12 feet high + form one great room inside. The thatch goes in a single sweep of long reeds from roof-pole to earth, so that the clusters of them look in the distance like groups of brooding hens.



Thence we took two nights in Mostaganem, Helen Freeman + I. It looks as if the hour of release for Chirra, (the Relizane convert. woman who lives there now, is coming near - her father, who forced her into re-marriage with a tyrannical, good for nothing husband, is now pushing through her divorce from him. These years have told on the handsome face, + the lines of her mouth have taken on a patient droop that is very touching. We hope that when really free she will be able to start regular visiting with M^{rs} Gayral in Tijibit, the great crescent sweep of native suburb that half encircles the European town.



Back in Relizane en route east again - the last night's magic lantern closed with a picture whose blessing still abides. It was one of the Lord on the Cross - a subject that we do not shew unless there seems to be a spiritual atmosphere that can make it "o savour of life." In the dim light the Cross was obliterated, + only the outstretched arms could be seen. Is it not thus that our ministry should be if we follow His steps - nothing visible of the Cross - only the love + the welcome.

Time has failed for Miliana - the days are so few before Tözeur & yet Miliana is the chief battle field, I think, among our stations this winter. Our outposters there are waging an exhausting warfare in every sense against an inrush of intense need. The starving, half-naked women and children from the famine districts march, come by troops to the Government camp, & notwithstanding all that can be done to supplement the food allowance, many die daily from their vitality having sunk too low. When the survivors have to be sent off to make room for more they only drift back again for the most part, & herd together in caves near the town, living - or dying - on wild herbs. Typhus has come to add to the tide of misery. Through it all our little household there is giving itself & all it has or can collect to stay it. They have "done valiantly all these months, & the end is not yet in sight.

One ray of light is that they are beginning to get off some of the stranded children to the Orphan Homes of the American Mission, housing them as best they can themselves while enquiries & official formalities are got through.


Another is that they are allowed free access, spiritually as well as temporally, even to those sheltered in the Mosque precincts, - speaking & singing sometimes to go or go at once.

And lastly, the doors in all the country-side will be thrown open hereafter, from having seen love manifested in a way they can understand. So it will be well worth the winter's hard tension in the end.

We left Tunis at dawn today, Mr Walker & I, together with Miss Truff, a Swiss friend of Mons. Cooks, who is going to be a great asset in practical matters. Midday brought us to the lagoons that frame the Monastir peninsula. -



- the dark line of the horizon stands for a sea of deep sapphire, beyond the white sand-bar-meers, the pale blue of the shallow water, with the palms doubled in it... then the crenellated walls & horse shoe gates & chestnut-brown clab inhabitants, bear to our hearts in spite of their exclusiveness & opposition.

 Gently the atmosphere of the place seem changing through the comings & goings of one + another. I think each helps to bring in the flow. We are content to advance slowly as yet with Him to Whom a thousand years are but a day. We shall see yet, before we have done, that a day can be with Him also as a thousand years; for we are "The children of Eternity."


Back views




all men + boys are clothed in bright brown wool embroidered with cream coloured braid




Monastir -


 The embargo is off our door, apparently, + "we may come to rest?" is echoed all around by the boys. They only began by degrees to venture up our steep gold + black tiled staircase, making sure that the street door was left open behind them. Slow by the end, the numbers have to be thinned out rather than encouraged. A group of elder lads has come several times, headed by a tall leader, straight as a dart, with a fair, proud face, scornful before the others, softening into wistfulness when one could get him a moment alone.


We are off again tomorrow: it was only a call en route.

 Today, the 33rd anniversary of our landing, comes the heavenly gift of a - waking in this beloved Tozeur house, with the sense that it is ours at last. It is a dilapidated collection of courts + rooms - some of them mere hovels. Yet of all the houses that God has given out here, none goes to one's heart like this one with joy + thankfulness. Every bit as we measure + plan it out for repairs, gives evidence of having been planned out for us already in heaven with a marvellous fitting to the needs of the work + it was only to be carried to completion.

 A great gladness has come today - foretaste of God surprises waiting in the world to come. Si Saduc, elder brother of our two at Dar Slaama, came to

fetch Alma Krebs + me to dinner. His great household + its allied cousinhood, headed by the old mother, floods out women + girls to meet us in dusky indigo + red relieved by flashes of pea green, or orange or silver or ornament - all full of loving questions about the two in our care... and then it came out before we left, that they were of the same clan as two reading men who seemed in our first tenting days to come over the line to Christ. We never saw them again, + the prayers for them brought no visible result. And now after a quarter of a century their fruition is coming in the family that has yielded the first-fruits of Tozeur to Christ, though they themselves never ventured out on His side. Our pair at Dar Naama are nephews of the one, cousins of the other. Both have passed away now.

 There is a sense of welcome about the town, rebuking our fears that our having taken possession of one of their houses + two of their sons might close it pro. tem. As usual most of the hearers + readers are young students from the Moslem college - a keen-witted set. Among the newcomers, two stand out specially - one of them spotlessly robed, with a lean wistful face: Alma Krebs calls him St. Augustine from his likeness to that saint in the making, in Fry Schaeffer's picture. The other we call "The Wolf" from his dark eyes + gleaming teeth. He is one of the shabby sort, all fire + flame: he can hardly speak for eagerness in putting his side of things before us, + then he wriggles + fobs himself up, so to speak, in a delightfully frank way when the argument on the other side, or the statement from God's word, cuts the ground from under his feet. Others are the small boys of the past, shooting up now into man's estate, + new little lads are coming on in their place, as keen-witted as their predecessors. Our numbers run to 20 or 30 visitors a day on an average, + we are thankful for Miss Ruff's good help as well as Violet Wood's in household matters. They were a problem in the past, even without this year's addition of house repairs.

 Among the seniors of this year there is one outstanding figure round whom prayer sh.


centre. Some may remember a village where Alma Krebs + I stayed a few days two winters ago, + one of its head men who came afterwards to see us + remained 4 hours in close talk "the 4 hours man" we




A corner of his village.


have called him ever since. He has been back more than once these days. He is a tall man with a thoughtful gentle face, + a musical tongue that races away in purest Arabic. He explains all to the others, when he comes to read, with a wonderful spiritual under-

standing - shielding himself under "this is what they say". But today, before a ring of young students, he suddenly said "I am a Christian". What he meant by it we cannot tell yet: anyway it means for us that prayer must focus on him. He has in him the making of a leader, + leaders the land sorely needs.


 Algiers news is good + bad. The good is that Aissa has been making a firm stand at the cost of loss of work at a native baker's that promised well for him, holding to his colours through much badgering + some ill-treatment: The bad news on the other hand is that Chirra of Mostaganem has suddenly disappeared, just as all was clearing for her coming off to Dar Slaama: it is feared that an aunt, well to do + of strong influence has carried her off to force her into a fresh marriage. Kacete has vanished from our midst, having resolved to take up school work again.... Slice Kemp has arrived once more, to our joy, for the spring months, + her sympathy + prayer-help is such a stay to them all. Away up in Scotland too, those dear Govans + their Faith Mission students are fighting our battles step by step alongside, God bless them!

 Mabel Crautoff's letters too, full of lights + shadows. The first (March) says "My family has grown since last week to twelve". Then follow the hopes for getting various ones off to the Homes in Algiers, Constantine + Tunis. At night we go down to tuck up the babes on the débarras floor - the little mother of 17 is then lively, + her baby cooing + clapping hands, + tumbling over her mother like any wee kitten... baby Khabibiak must creep into our arms.

"Others come round for their evening hymn, + we have $\frac{1}{2}$ an hour's play + sing before each one is rolled up in her blanket + placed on her mat".... The last letter says "The suffering is still great - Fathers of families come in despair saying "take 1-2-3 of my children - they are dying of want" + they bring little skeleton folk with diseased heads, rags + dirt. These little bundles of dirt are soon washed, + then there are little clean bundles of misery, sick with enteric, dysentery + from privation - the one cry "I am cold - I am hungry." Then after a few days they revive, talk, smile - then eventually run, play, + shriek with laughter: many are dying still.

 The tide of visitors has run out these days: for one thing it is increasingly difficult to hear or make ourselves heard, as the workmen clatter draws nearer the reading room: behind that lies doubtless the undertow of the counter current that always sets in sooner or later here: back of that again (we feel it in the sense of oppression in the spiritual atmosphere) lies brooding the displeasure of the nether world over every bit of the repairing that asserts that in the name of our God we have set up our banners here. It would be a bad omen if it went unchallenged.

By slow degrees + much prodding, that repairing goes on, notwithstanding the exceeding difficulty of getting the men to finish any one job, + the amount of time wasted by all their friends coming in to admire their work. Bit by bit the bishevelled looking walls are getting plastered + whitewashed + their ceilings replanked + the broken floors laid with white cement tiles, to the wonder of the beholders + the joy of our own hearts, for it has hitherto been impossible to keep any room clean. Our friend Mr Leadbetter has seconded us all along with materials from Sfax. Tozeur can supply little but palm logs + sundried bricks + pounded gypsum.

 The "4 hours man" has been in for 5 hours today - being Sunday there was peace from workmen + their donkeys. At first he came with a friend + stayed 3 hours in deep talk. Again + again a look of pain + perplexity almost amounting to anguish swept over his face. As they rose to go he said "I have accepted.. I have received.. I believe" - then in an undertone "I may come again." And in an hour he was back + stayed till dusk. Peace was on his face

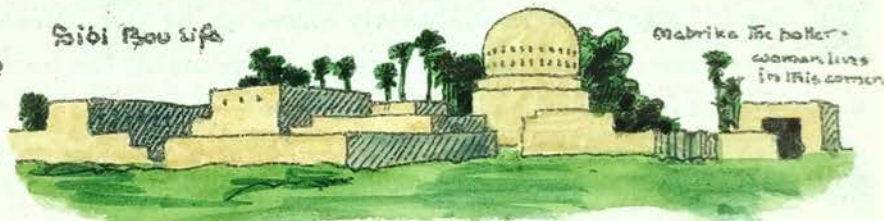
now, + he came simply into the position, not of an enquirer, but of one who has passed from death into life, + wants to know more fully what that new life means. O that God will keep him true in the storm that must break! We think he hears its mutterings already.

The other soul here that seems working its way out into light this year is our house-boy Hamida - a curious little sad-spirited lonely fellow, restless + indepenoant. This year he has clung to us in a new way, + Mrs Walker's bright sympathy has helped him - + one day last week he broke out "I want to be a Christian" - He belongs to the same Zaouia family as Amar + Ali.

Amar's fiancailles are completed, so Alger letters tell, with another Cherchelle girl - younger still than Ali's future bride. Mary Watling thinks, + I believe she is right, that his rugged nature needs young things around him.


18 Mons. Cook, who was in Tunis on Boy-scout business, has come for a few days, + his warm brotherliness is felt althwart the lack of a mutual tongue. El Aid + Joseph are the only ones who can understand any French + they + he have drawn together. Poor Joseph, fear masters him still: it was pathetic to see the careful way in which he opened the street door today, looking this way + that, + then making a sudden dart out + away. El Aid is earnest in his listening this year as far as his not very deep nature goes - not yet at any point of decision.

20 This afternoon brought a good bye visit to Bou Sifa, the village of the old pattern-woman whose word "I shall always be looking for this door to be open again" brought us such cheer on that sad day of leaving in 1916. It is the 3rd visit in these six weeks to this village, + though it is under the shadow of a strine each visit has met with a welcome that proves that a footing is won. One woman, Ourida - i.e. "little Rose" stands out in my memories in her eagerness.





it was touching to see her rack her memory for a few words from the hymns she had only heard once or twice, so as to listen to them once more. Oh these poor crumbs... + we have such a feast outspread!

The time for the women is coming - the houses are opening for visiting as never before, + when our own is completed they will have an entrance to themselves at the back, + a big room of their own with a play court for the children opening out of it. All we need now is the helpers - above all a married pair, that the bookshop may be opened + the brunt taken of the men's work, leaving Alma Krebs free to follow up the side of the women + girls.

 Meantime, to shew that God is a God of resources, a sudden light has come on the summer's path here. It has come in a letter from Mr Olley, the New Zealand schoolmaster who landed in Algiers 18 months ago, with the call to the Moslems strong in his heart: He feels the time has come for following his vision of burying himself among the natives for language study, + asks if he can come here for the months that we are away.

It is a beautiful solution. Amar's plea "do not shut that door again" gets its answer, + the lads + men can find a brother at hand, + the banner of Christ can be kept up. A joyful welcome goes back.

 Yes Mr Olley is here + intensely happy at the fact. Already links are forging, for Si Saduc + the 4-hour man have been in; + it will give him lessons: + he will lift two burdens by giving employment to little Hamida, + by superintending the workmen in their final labours. We feel God's touch all through it + so, does he.

 And today with great peace + thankfulness we have packed off, + have watched the mass of palm forest slip back behind us, + then the heavenly blue + white bars of the salt marsh, + the last sight as the train plunged north into the sand-hills, was the dim pathway across that Chott, to the unreach'd lands on its further shore.

Will those who pray for Tozeur pray that it may be a beginning only for the great desert lands around that lie without

a messenger — that it may become a starting-point, not a goal — for "an end + an expectation" is God's wont in the thoughts that He thinks towards us. We have brought down, this time, the best of our long stored tents + camping material in faith for the "beyond".

Back in Alger today with the new moon that calls to the Ramadhan fast — Aissa is being sorely tested on the very ground




The "beyond" from the last of the Tazout villages.


where he got the victory of his baptism, over his fear of losing Alamiya. Her brother threatens to take her away unless they both keep it, + Moslem law would back him. Aissa is plunged in the deepest dejection, + says he must yield. For Ali + Fir, at the test will come on Sunday, when to take part in the Whitsunlike communion in fasting hours defies Ramadhan openly.


They are busy feathering their nests, those two, + spend all their spare time, together with much paint + whitewash, in renovating their court + the bits of furniture that we have lent them. And racing everywhere, with no shadow of Ramadhan yet across his 10 year old sky, is Sascha Perkin's dear Moussa. He is one of the mountain children who made their home with us for a time some years ago. He dropped himself down again this winter + was installed as shepherd-boy; now a thirst for learning has seized him + he goes to school.

Amar + Ali have got through today's bit of witness-bearing + Belaid with them. Poor Aissa almost put out his hand for the elements at the last moment, for fear of discouraging the others: there is a real vein of altruism about him. He is miserable in body + soul. We can only hold on in prayer.

Joyful news once more from Mostaganem. After long hunting for Chira, M^{lle} Gayral discovered that her husband, on the very point of divorce had got hold of her again but that she was trying to escape back to her mother. The last letter tells that she has succeeded, + that the divorce is carried through + that her people seem to welcome the thought of giving her over into the care of Helen Freeman.

 Miliana's news is glad too. The blind Hadj is breaking the fast at the risk of being left stranded by all the Moslem friends on whose help he depends. Mimoun holds free with what courage he can muster: a fresh convert-girl came deliberately one of the first days with a friend, still an outsider, to break it in Mabel Crautoff's presence. Then the elder sister of the first convert-girl there, who has been long opposed, is steadily softening, & at the end of a magic lantern meeting another girl asked them to pray with her, there & then. These things in stubborn, fanatical Miliana, are to the glory of God's grace.

 Down at Blida for the week-end. Millicent Troche has just given me two child-stories that must be passed on. One was on Easter Sunday. They had been praying that an atmosphere of Easter joy might reign in the house. So definitely was the prayer answered, that a sensitive little soul exclaimed as she came in "What has happened? - has Jesus come?"... The second was during a lesson on the draught of fishes. Millicent was describing the long weary night, & how the disciples were so tired that when the Lord told Peter to let down the net, he thought there was not much use trying. The remark of one of the children may well be laid to heart by each one of us, when the depression of failure comes over us.. "I suppose he didn't know Jesus"!

 On for 10 days breathing time with Helen Freeman at Bou Hanefia - whence comes



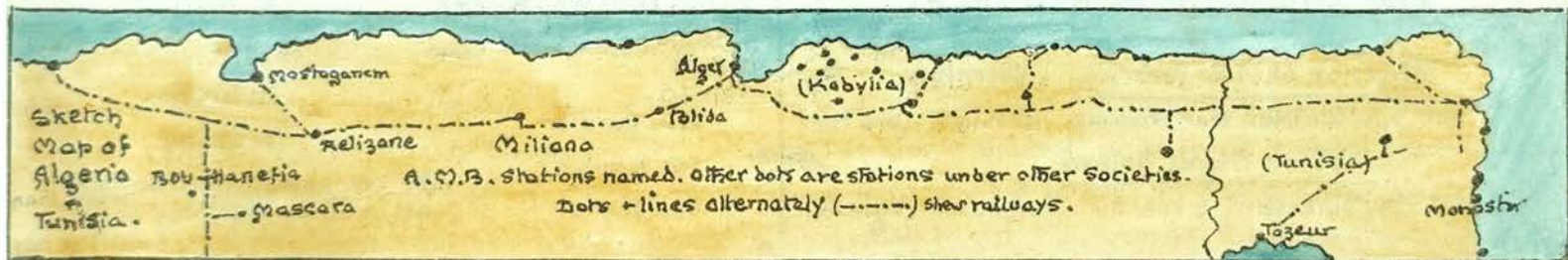
the chance for getting this journal ready for the printer before the busy week of our double wedding, which awaits the close of Ramadhan for the Cherchelle brides to be brought over by their people.

The above scrap gives an idea of the practical aspect of the place - the big farmstead, more like a fort than a farm, that supports for the most part, two of Helen Freeman's stations, but only colour could give its charm - The rosy purple of the hills & the creamy stretches of corn, & the river bed crowded with oleanders in full blossom. It is an ideal rest place.

20 We have with us the new member of the Mascara household - the dearest of Arab baby girls, aged 2½. She was found nestled to her dead mother, who had perished with hunger by the roadside. It is hard to believe when one hears her gurgling laugh + sees the radiance of love + happiness on her chubby face, that she can have been a starveling two months ago.

30 One more note of praise to end with. "He strengtheneth the spoiled against the strong, so that the spoiled shall come against the fortress." Aissa had dreams for 3 nights running - (the last two nearly identical) - that have brought him to the point of taking the risks. He has broken the fast + given Alamiya leave to do the same (she is staying up here these days). He is pressed down with new trouble by a letter from his uncles, threatening to cut off his inheritance unless he renounces his errors. The following up of his victory over his fears is that he has written back openly, protesting, but saying that they cannot turn him from the way that is Light + Truth - that he has been baptised + has yielded all to Jesus, + that there is no salvation in any other. So another bridge is down behind him, for he thinks the letter will probably be read publicly.... Hold on in prayer for him + Alamiya - for already her brother is trying to get hold of her again.

And pray that next month's marriages may bring a heavenly wedding of the four. Brides + bridegrooms have not been allowed to meet, + the risks are great on the human side. We launch afresh on the "possible with God".



Algiers Mission Band.

Advisory Councils - England + America.

Rev S. + Mrs Howe
 St Luke's Vicarage. Finchley. London. N.
 Sir H. + Lady Proctor
 Waxe Hill. Great Anwell. Herts.
 Mr + Mrs Stuart Trotter
 Broomfield Lodge. Chelmsford. Essex.

Mrs J. W. Kinnear
 1112 N. Regley Av. Pittsburgh. U.S.A.
 Mr Paul Warren.
 Three Oaks. Michigan. U.S.A.
 Mr Fred. A. Wells
 2306 Orrington Av. Evanston. U.S.A.

Algerian W.M.B. America. - Secretary

Mr J.A. Walker. Dar Naama. El Biar. (pro tem)
Secy for Prayer Helpers
 Mr J.H. Smeeton. 2 rue du Croissant Algiers.

Location of Workers. Spring. 1921.

Dar Naama. El Biar	Miliana.
1. L. Trotter	M. D. Grautoff
S. Perkin	I. Nash
M. Watling	A. Butticaz
Mons. Pierre Nicoub	Relizane
Mr + Mrs Buckenham.	M. Ridley
2 Rue du Croissant. Algiers	K. Butler
A. M. Troy	Mascara
Mr Smeeton	F. H. Freeman
F. Brittle. (short term)	Senor + Sen. Soler
Best Naama. Algiers	F. Hammon. (Mission Helper)
M. Farmer. (on sick leave)	Mostaganem
Saint Eugene. Algiers	A. Cayrat.
Mons + Mrs Cook	Tozeur
Blido.	A. Krebs.
F. K. Currie	Y. Wood.
M. Roche	
M. Taylor	

(For the positions of Stations see map on preceding page.)