

Algiers Mission Band
Special Prayer Call.

Is it a window?

or is it a door?

February 1923

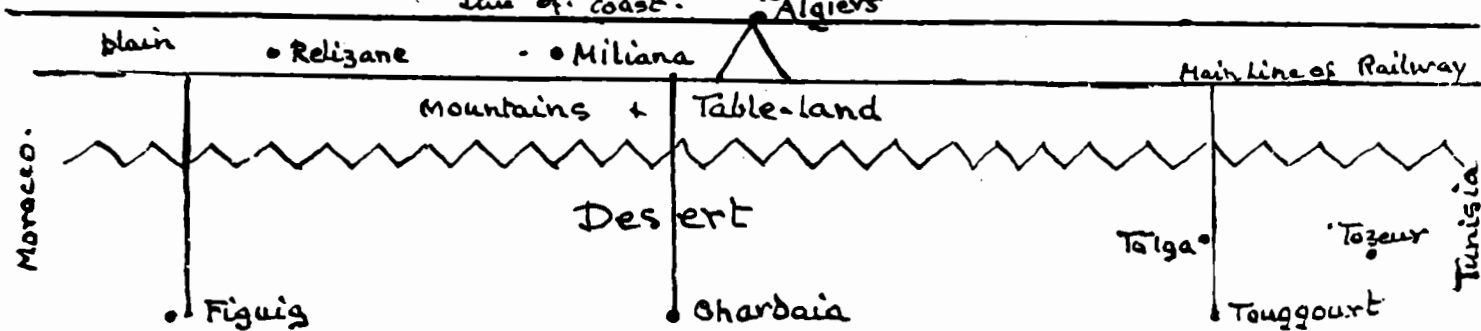
Dar Noama El Biar Algiers.

The first days of the New Year brought us the opening as it were, of a window like that of this title-page - a window bringing into vision the mud walls + the palms of the south land; + we want you to look through it with us... Is it a window to look from, or a door to enter? We believe it is a door, for the bars are down.

Bars there have been in the past, crossing + recrossing every hope of getting down there in any systematic way, but the dream remained. For that south land holds, so far as we can see, the best material for Christ, at any rate among its men. The readers + the leaders, + the mystics groping after God, live there rather than by the coast. And it seems to us that God must have "given" it to us in a special way, for our fellow-workers in other missions are mostly settled in the large towns + the Kabyle villages, + the love + the longing over the people of the oases seems to be our special portion.

And suddenly the word seems to have come afresh "Behold I have set before thee an open door" - + we look up + see that the bars have vanished. Official restrictions + Moslem hostility to our books are withdrawn, + we have at last workers of the needful age + experience. And when we gathered in the first week of the year to outline the spring work + seek God's Face together, we found that simultaneously + without any mutual consultation, the same call had sounded right along our line of little stations, + that we had a pair eager on their own account to go down each of the 3 highways of penetration that link the coast with the principal groups

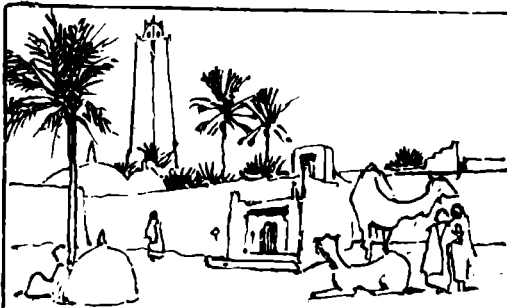
of the Algerian oases. The last seal those days was the incoming of special gifts (the largest from an American giver whose very name was unknown to us) that made the outward move possible on the financial side. - - - This diagram will shew the outline of the journeys.



The lines to Figuig + Touggourt have now railway communication, the central one, to Ghardaia, soon becomes a motor-bus route. In all 3 cases the objectives lie a bit south of Tozeur, + link in many native centres on the way.

woven in with the eastern + western routes lie past stories of hope deferred, making "The desire when it cometh" a veritable "tree of life"

The central route has only been reached by us as far as its half-way town, Saghaut - beyond that, its story is yet to come. Ghardaia is the central city of a group of oases inhabited by a stiff race, + therefore a good aim for Miliana, which has known many a stiff fight. Colporteurs have penetrated there a few times, but no woman -



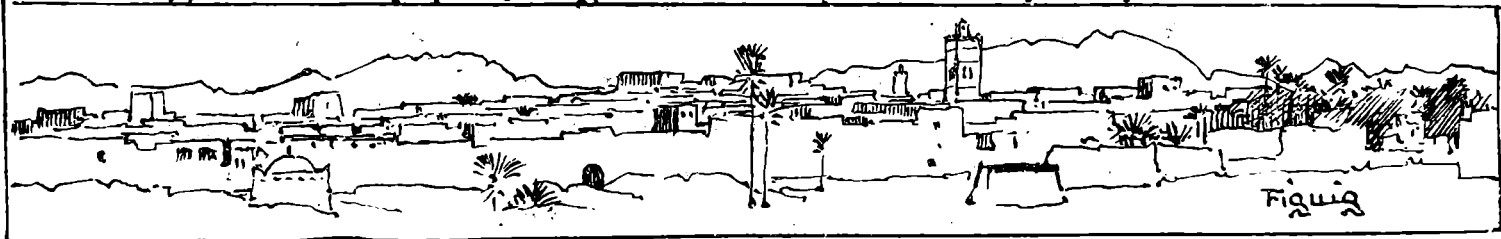
One of the "strong cities" of the Beni Mzab.

Missionary has ever yet got into touch with the women of this Beni Mzab tribe. When their men come to trade (+ they are born traders) they only bring their little sons, leaving their wives + taking other.

I will tell you how, in the two other cases, strands of past hopes weave in with those of the present.

The western line, on the Morocco frontier, was, I think, our very first dream of roadmaking in a spiritual sense, + was vivid within 2 or 3 years of getting out here. In those days it

was only practicable by travelling with one of the native caravans. We got so far as entering into communication with a trader in Tangier who would have acted as go-between in the arrangements: then political difficulties arose on the Moroccan border + stopped the way for foreigners — well for us, it may be, for our experience was



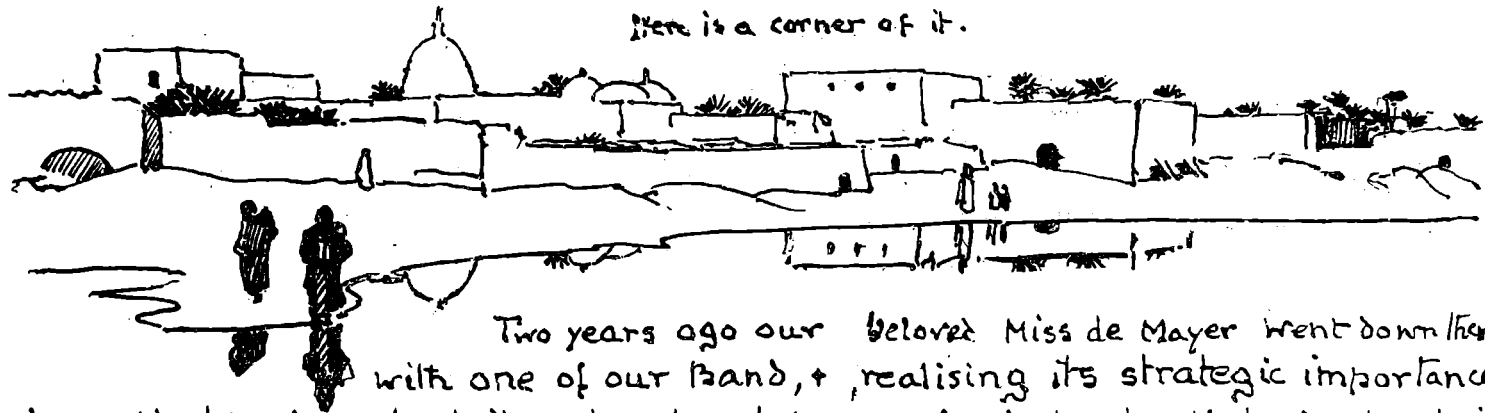
small, + our stock of Arabic extremely limited! — When things had quieted down, ten years later, + the railroad had been made, we sent along two French colporteurs who were then working with us. That is 20 years ago, + in those 20 years the Fez

oases have had at the most but one or two colportage visits, + certainly no woman or girl in that district has ever heard of Christ's salvation. It is Relizane that will have the joy of bearing them their first ray of light. Our pair stationed there hope to start towards the end of this month, + Miliana plans to take the Chardaia route at the beginning of April.

The eastern of the three lines falls to our Algiers portion; + our Algiers pair started last week + are already sending news of open doors + books selling well. They write from Touggourt.

We follow them in eager hope, for Touggourt in each of our 3 previous visits has proved a hard place, + now the gates of brass + bars of iron shew their first signs of yielding.

Here is a corner of it.



Two years ago our beloved Miss de Mayer went down there with one of our Band, +, realising its strategic importance in God's kingdom, took it on her heart to pray for in her loneliest of outposts in central Asia. Prayer has prevailed, + last autumn a band of Touggourt men came up to Tebessa, eager for books + for light. The convert man who

keeps the Depot there has appealed earnestly to us to send ^{them} workers —, saying "in a year you would have a harvest." Pray that they may get on the track of these seekers either in the town itself or among the villages that cluster for miles northward.

They have another objective on their way home, & thereby hangs another tale on the mast. Tolga is the centre of a group of oases not far from Biskra. We visited it first in 1900 & had a good hearing. In 1902 we returned to follow it up, & had a fine of marked access, specially among the brotherhoods of mystics who were frooping through with their banners, day after day, to a shrine beyond, & houses were opening to us in the brown shadowy streets: we even laid plans for a Mission-house.

A Tolga street.




Then came a crash to our hopes. Storms were lowering in the outside world, & orders came from Biskra that we must retire within 3 days & not return - On the second of those heart-aching days, a promise was sent us by a Salvation Army friend in France - "Il y a un avenir." It bore the reference Prov. 23:18, & in the ^{American} R.V. margin came the confirmation, still more strong & beautiful - "Surely

there is a sequel!" We stayed our souls on him who gave it as we set out on the way north, with that dear land closed behind us: & as time went on the way to Tozeur opened, for that being over the Tunisian border, was not forbidden ground.

And now, two years ago, Tolga's "sequel" began to come. Our two took it

on the way to Touggourt, to test its attitude. All difficulty on the side of the authorities had vanished with the establishment of the Entente, but the people were timid + aloof. Then after 3 days they seemed to conclude that all was right, + swung round into a cordial welcome. The last sight of them was dark hands out-stretched for books, even to the windows of the train that took them away.

Our hope for years has been that it might be our next winter station, + of late fresh linkings have come. A girl from the Rue du Croissant-classes has married + settled there - Our native teacher in Alger hails thence, + so does our water-carrier. All these things win confidence in a wonderful way.


We want you with us in praise + prayer along these southern tracks. Our thin pairs go out in conscious insufficiency thrown back on God, trusting in the quenchless power of the incorruptible seed they bear. Any one of the Gospels sold or tracts given may call out a leader - any grain sown may bring forth an hundred-fold.

We need you with us as we go forward, + your prayers may count for more than you know in the answer to that first question - is it indeed a door of entrance, or only a wider window of vision?

The bars are down on the human side, thank God, but the gates of hell would stop the way to the next step beyond these transitory visits. Our ideal for that next step would be, if God opens the path, a string of little winter outposts from east to

west, starting with Tozeur + linking in between that + the Touggourt line, the wonderful oases of the Souf sand-dunes.

That a station for the winter months alone can be used by His Spirit, our dear Tozeur has shown us. Its present history must wait over till the next Journal. It is full of touches of God's power + of counterblasts from the hosts of darkness. So keep it to the front in your prayers for these desert towns. — + remind God of His promise to Christ that "They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before Him, + His enemies shall lick the dust."

Other hopes for the mountains + the plains later in the season, must also wait for that next Journal. There are more visions + ever more, waiting to become footholds.

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"Thou canst go no faster than an entire dependence on God can carry thee" — so wrote William Law long ago. But we have yet to prove how swift might be the carrying power, ~~might be~~ if He brought us to that entire dependence on Him.

Pray that He may sweep away all that hinders, so will He be able to turn all His windows into doors.