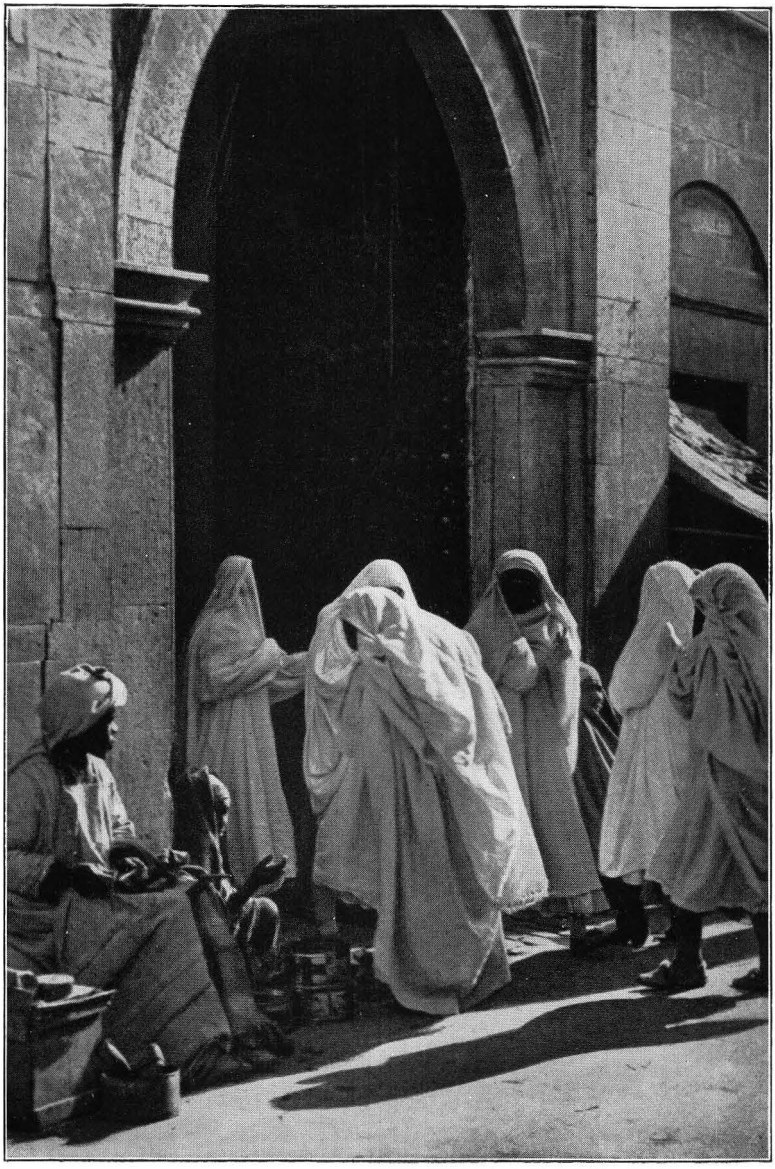

IN THE LAND OF VEILED WOMEN

Photo by E. J. Long

A BUDGET FROM BARBARY

By

CHRISTINE I. TINLING

Author of "Bits of China, "From Japan to Jerusalem," "Memories of the Mission Field," "Hope for the Leper," "Heroes of the Cross" (Series 6), etc., etc.

WITH A FOREWORD BY

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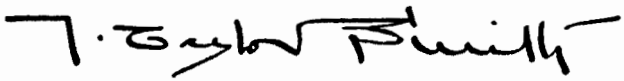
FOREWORD.

I have read "A Budget from Barbary" by Miss Tinling with much pleasure and profit.

Such vivid sketches from the Mission Field cannot but cheer the heart and stimulate the prayers and efforts of all Christian people who seek the extension of Christ's Kingdom in one of the most difficult fields.



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AUTHOR'S NOTE.

I take this opportunity of expressing my indebtedness to Bishop Taylor Smith for his kind interest and support, and my heartfelt thanks to my friend Mr. Ernest J. Long for contributing the cover and the frontispiece for this little book. The former has been specially designed for the purpose and no words of mine are needed to call attention to its beauty and fitness.

I would also gratefully acknowledge the kindness of the missionaries who entertained me during my three months' tour, and more especially of those who read the manuscript and corrected inaccuracies on the spot.

If here and there the reader finds apparent contradictions I would ask him to remember that customs vary with localities. In this slight sketch there has been no attempt to generalize; one could but set down what one saw and heard and then, as a safe-guard, submit each chapter to the criticism of resident workers.

Last, but not least, I would thank those friends who have "helped together by prayer" and would beg them to continue so to do, to the end that this brief record of a brave work may truly be used of God.

CHRISTINE I. TINLING.

Ealing, London.
July, 1933.

CONTENTS.

A BUDGET FROM BARBARY

I.

The Ministry of Medicine

HOPE HOUSE,
TANGIER,
MOROOOO.

March 24.

My dear Lydia,

I wish you could have come with me on this trip and visited the stations of the North Africa Mission, but since this was impossible I must try and let you share my impressions and see things through my eyes. I can't promise to make no mistakes, but I will tell the truth as far as I know how.

First let me ask you to transport yourself by a mental effort from London's rain and fog to this town of Tangier, basking in the sunshine under a blue ethereal sky. The esplanade is planted with palms and gay with scarlet geraniums. The white flat-roofed houses stand out sharply amidst their brilliant green foliage and extend for about a mile along the bluff that overlooks the Bay. In the background is the Mountain of Moses which is one of the Pillars of Hercules. Its twin pillar is the Rock of Gibraltar across the narrow straits.

The Mission property is situated on the plateau called the Marshan and thus commands a glorious view. We can look across to the shores of Spain and see the town of Tarifa and a couple of lighthouses and on a clear day one can even follow the movements of the motor cars.

Hope House itself is a rambling old place but attractive in its very quaintness. It must be a problem to furnish its many rooms because of the odd angles of walls and ceilings but that task does not concern the visitors who can enjoy a delightful holiday here either winter or summer. The slope from the house to the shore is draped with a white mantle of arum lilies, self-sown and growing in wild luxuriance. Half a dozen splendid blooms are upon my table as I write and a few minutes ago I had the curiosity to measure one of them and found it twenty-six inches in circumference!

The Mission seized a fine opportunity when it bought this property back in 1884, securing the house and all for some two thousand pounds. There are vast possibilities in it for the site is such as a millionaire might covet. Besides affording room for the enlarging activities of the mission station, it would make an ideal Conference centre for the whole of North Africa and a resting-place for tired missionaries. If I am not mistaken, you will be hearing more of Hope House in the future.

The work at this station centres round the Tulloch Memorial Hospital which has been in existence for over half a century. It was, in fact, the first hospital of any kind to be opened in this country. We sat in the waiting-room this morning while the little service

was conducted for the out-patients. There were some five-and-twenty of them. The women were voluminously clad in coarse, white garments, with a white shawl or haik over the head, and a handkerchief covering nose and mouth and allowing the brown eyes only to appear. The men wore the fez or the turban and sometimes had the peaked cowl of the jellab drawn up over the head. It is a sign of progress that the sexes can use a common waiting-room.

In spite of interruptions there was good attention as the missionary gave a Gospel address. One who entered in the midst of it was a countryman who had come two and a half days' journey. Asked how he had heard of the hospital he replied that two of his neighbours were here a year ago. They had returned to his village in the Riff country bringing a good report. This stranger was promptly accepted as an in-patient and put to bed.

Another man present had come originally from Palestine where he had been brought up by Roman Catholics and had sought salvation by good works. He says he is beginning to understand now that it is all of grace.

One very bright-faced fellow had come for the Gospel service pure and simple, as he no longer needed medicine. "He was dead," another native told me, "and the doctor brought him to life." In more literal western language, he was given up by the doctors at the French hospital who said he could not stand the necessary operation. The missionary surgeon here, however, removed a stone the size of a large hen's egg and he lives to tell the tale. He is now a believer in the Lord Jesus and freely speaks of his new faith and

reads the Scriptures to his fellow villagers. He has brought his cousin to the hospital and was sitting by his bed when we left this morning.

One old man, his staff in his hand for very age, sat listening attentively to the Gospel story and calling the missionary to his side at the close, he said, "What you tell us is true! We know that it is true! If only we had more liberty to believe!"

* * * * * * *

The wards are charming, so light and airy, with cream-coloured walls, dark red tiles on the floor, iron bedsteads and white quilts. Efficiency is stamped upon everything, but it is not the cold efficiency that requires everybody to conform to rule. It is blended with a tender sympathy. If doctor and nurses needed a testimonial the faces of the patients alone would be sufficient: trust is written so clearly upon them.

The women particularly need that sympathy. It is terrible to see what they suffer, often so unnecessarily, from inefficient native midwifery. One girl lying there has been through five operations and has been cast off by her husband. If she gets well, her people will be marrying her to somebody else. As long as she remains in that hospital bed she is an individual, a soul to be loved and helped. When she leaves she will once more become a chattel and a slave. She is much interested in the Gospel and knows the choruses and hymns by heart and nurse says she is wonderfully sweet and patient.

Another has suffered much agony without a word of complaint and is an example to all in the ward.

In a nearby bed is a girl of twenty who is married to a man of seventy and is in hospital on account of brutal treatment from native midwives. The Moslem women are born to trouble and expect nothing else from life. They have learned to endure silently and I suppose no-one has any idea what they do go through, except the medical missionary and the nurse.

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Some tourists passing through Tangier a while ago came up to the hospital and were thrilled by all they saw. Desirous of showing their appreciation they contributed two operating lamps, which were badly needed. Another visitor made a gift of five pounds which was used to re-tile the kitchen and put in a new sink and the staff were deeply thankful for the chance of getting this done.

But what impresses me is the fact that in mission institutions a little money has to go such a long way, and things which are considered sheer necessaries at home are luxuries in the field. Imagine a kitchen sink being a matter for rejoicing! It is positively painful to see how much a gift like the above can mean and the appreciation it evokes. It suggests with what a narrow margin these devoted workers carry on, and sets one thinking how much might be accomplished with the money we Christians at home are wont to spend on personal gratification.

I can't attempt to tell you all I saw at the hospital though I should like to have given you the story of the little burnt girl and the fascinating baby boy whose father is a beggar on the road. The moving picture

even of a single morning cannot be adequately shown. If the old fig-tree at the gate could speak, what a wonderful tale it would tell of the thousands who have passed in and out during the last half century!

Results are meagre, they say, converts are few and far between, and baptism involves so much that only heroes will face it. But, Lydia, not all the statistics in the world would persuade me that such Christ-like service is without effect. I don't believe one hour of it is lost. "He that goeth forth and weepeth" as likely enough these do, "shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

* * * * * * *

It looks as though my letters would prove to be like those we get from Korea, literally yards long. But never mind! You can read them by instalments and I shall probably pen them so, journalwise. Speaking of the hospital, from the evangelistic point of view, of course the follow-up work is of the utmost importance. Men who become interested are invited to the Sunday meeting at which the few baptized converts are wont to gather. Naturally, there is nothing in the way of numbers to attract anyone, and it requires courage to attend.

Every true Christian has to face persecution. Most are forced out of employment and some are even driven from their homes. In fact, Islam is so bitterly anti-Christian that it is no uncommon thing to attempt to poison the converts. One lad converted in the Raymond Lull Home, where a fine work is being done by independent missionaries, was taken away by his mother

and put to the leather trade. He did not hide his colours and consequently the customers boycotted the proprietor for employing the young "infidel." The boy had to leave and he set up in business for himself, but soon found that he could not buy leather, and but for the help of his missionary friends he would have been without any means of livelihood.

There is a weekly Club for such lads, conducted by the missionary who has acted as my pilot in this town. He lives with his wife and family in a native house, and on Thursday evenings the boys go there for tea and games and a short Bible lesson. I have been sitting there to-night, watching them at play. One, I was told, was driven from home and cursed by his own mother but he persevered and publicly confessed Christ in baptism. The boy who was playing draughts with him took the same step. Two others in that little company have recently asked for the rite.

At home people often say it is hard to be faithful in these days, and one knows it is true. But after all, everything is comparative. I fear these Arab lads who have suffered the loss of all things that they might win Christ would think us rather soft if they knew how little it takes to dismay us. The Cross is real to them : they have faced it once for all and accepted it. If they are only a small group we can scarcely wonder. How many of us would have taken so brave a stand?

* * * * * * *

There is a happy home-school for little girls here on this compound. They make a charming picture arrayed in turkey twill, playing hop-scotch or fox-and-

geese under the big eucalyptus tree. You will probably remark that variety of costume is better than the prettiest uniform and I quite agree, but here again the cost enters into the question. The cheapest way is to buy cotton by the piece and give each of the Robin Redbreasts a bit. They make their own clothes, do their own cooking and their simple laundrywork, and study the three Rs. The New Testament is their text-book. It was sweet to hear them sing in Arabic, "When He cometh, when He cometh, to make up His jewels."

There is good reason to believe that some of them are truly His jewels, though their names are not found on any list of converts, and it will be very hard for them to remain true when once they have left school. Already some of them are facing thorny problems. One Riff girl, a bright little Christian, told her teacher that she must keep the fast of Ramadan or her father would remove her from school. As you know, for an entire month the Moslems abstain from food and drink from sunrise to sunset, not taking so much as a drop of water even in the hottest weather.

This child was allowed to follow her own conscience, and in obedience to her parents she fasted all day and ate cold leavings at night. At home she would have had an appetizing meal at the close of each day's ordeal, but she loved her school too well to stay away from it for the whole month of Ramadan. She was sadly perplexed to know how to decide between duty to her father and faithfulness to the truth, and I mention her as illustrating what problems come to those who are just learning to believe. This child is only eleven years old and she has already done more thinking than many

grown people who take their religion for granted, and consider themselves Christians because they go to church.

Another of these girls quickly became interested in the Gospel, so much so that she went home and told what she had heard. It was but little she knew, for she had only been attending school three months, but she was eagerly learning to read. Seeing her keenness her father thought it was time to put a stop to this sort of thing. He called on the missionary and signified his intention of removing his child, saying, "She can now sew and add and read, and what more does she want?" The lady afterwards humourously remarked that it spoke well for her teaching if a girl could become fully educated in three months! But there is more pathos than humour behind such tales. They illustrate the fact that as soon as young people become really interested in the Gospel, they are apt to be removed from the missionary's influence.

But though they may disappear there is still reason to hope that the worker has not laboured in vain. "Grace keeps the precious germ alive" in some unlikely places. This same lady went one day to visit a pupil who had just been married and found the house full of the neighbour women. It happened to be the time of the Sheep Feast, held in celebration of Abraham's sacrifice of Ishmael, as the Arab version has it. The missionary seized the opportunity of talking to those women about the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. The bride was behind the draperies, sitting in the silence she was supposed to observe for a whole week after marriage. To the surprise of all, the curtains were parted and looking out upon the

crowd of neighbours, the girl said, "So you see, if Jesus is our Lamb, no further sacrifice for sin is necessary." It was a bold confession for a girl of thirteen, in a new environment. She shocked the village community but she could not help it. His word was a fire in her bones and she "could not stay." Yet she is one of those who do not count in mission statistics for she has never been baptized or joined any church.

As a matter of fact, there is no church in the ordinary sense in these parts; no buildings are set aside for Christian worship, no public meetings are held purely for the proclamation of the Gospel. All contacts are made through some social service medium, such as the hospital, the school or the evening class. The work is essentially personal and as such it demands far more labourers than have ever yet been out. One man can preach to a thousand as easily as to ten, and more so for that matter, but to reach people in their homes a very large force is required. Indeed the task is simply overwhelming.

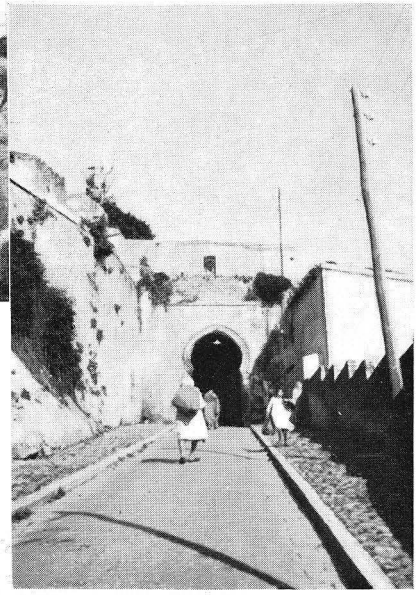
* * * * * * *

One realizes something of its vastness when moving about the city, amid

"The great humanity which beats
Its life upon the stony streets
Like a strong and unsunned river."

Stony they certainly are, and your feet soon know it. Tangier is built on a slope and while the European section is well laid out, the native city, far more interesting, consists of narrow alleys paved with cobbles and broken with numerous steps. If you can't drive your

SHEEP FOR THE
SACRIFICE.



TANGIER :
ENTRANCE TO
KASBAH.

A GATE
IN FEZ.

own pair, you must miss that quarter as wheeled vehicles are out of the question. Its very irregularity invests it with a peculiar charm. Houses are built without any sort of a plan. If you ask a Moorish architect how many windows or doors he intends to have he will say, "God knows : I don't." He means it too : all will turn out as has been foreordained.

The missionary who has played the part of guide took us the other day into the heart of the city. For convenience I will call him my fokeeh or teacher; it is useless to tell you any names as you are not likely to meet the people. A visitor like myself would be utterly at a loss without one such fokeeh in every place, able to give one what no Cook's man could furnish, the inwardness of things as seen from the missionary standpoint.

We scrambled over the rough stones or skidded over the smooth ones, went up and down the steps worn by the feet of ages, and took peeps into the tiny shops whose every inch was packed with goods and where the merchant squatted smiling in the midst. Time would fail me to tell of tailors busily making burnouses, shoe-makers displaying stout foot-wear with soles made of old motor tyres (the name in evidence), Jewish money-changers sitting before their tables, carpenters planing away in some dark cell of a workshop, bakers in their ovens, using dried grass as fuel and knowing every one of the flat cakes of bread and who had brought it.

Donkeys laden with panniers of charcoal encumber the narrow way, women, poor things, are also heavily burdened with bundles of firewood or fodder for sale. We pass numerous cafés where men are drinking tea

or smoking the long pipe, filled with the "keef" which is contraband and highly injurious. Now and again we get a glimpse of a school, where perhaps thirty boys are chanting the Koran as they sit crowded together on the floor of some small, dark room. As we move along, the missionary is accosted in a friendly way by one and another. Everybody seems to recognize him as coming from the hospital. "You are good," says one, and disclaiming the compliment he takes the opportunity of dropping a seed of truth.

Gazing on this teeming mass of humanity, on these faces of infinite variety, interesting, many of them intelligent, we realize with sorrow that in all this multitude, those who know the love of God in Christ might almost certainly be counted on the fingers of one hand.

A party of tourists visited this compound the other day and while glad to have a look around they frankly said they did not believe in missions and thought we ought not to interfere with the religion of the people. I should never bother to argue with such folk. Poor things, they do not understand. If Christ is everything to us, and the knowledge of Him means life, rich and full and satisfying, and we see others dying for lack of it, then share it we must. We have no alternative. But most Christians, alas! have no idea of the need out here; otherwise they would surely come themselves or send reinforcements or at least support the work to the best of their ability.

* * * * * * *

Although it stirs one's soul to see a city full of people who, in spite of much lip religion, are practically

without God in the world, the scattered villages present at least as strong an appeal.

It is in the broad open country that one is brought face to face with the enormity of the missionary task. Probably some six-sevenths of the population are living in the villages and there seems no prospect of reaching them in the near future.

A few of us went the other day to a hamlet not far from here. The doctor and my fokeeh drove us in their cars along the Tetuan road built by the government and lined with eucalyptus trees. Then, leaving our motors we went up into the hills. Donkeys were to meet us, but they failed to appear, the people taking for granted that the east wind, or sharki, would deter us from coming. They evidently thought the women of our party, at any rate, were made of sugar or salt. However, it made no difference to those who could walk, and we enjoyed our little climb though there was no road or even a footpath, but only the dry bed of a stream, filled with loose stones.

They build these villages on the hill-top for greater safety and fence them with prickly pear. Some of the huts are made of mud and others of stones put together without mortar and they are usually thatched with reeds. We were hospitably entertained in one of the homes, consisting of a single room with mud floor and white-washed walls. There was a good wooden ceiling and well-built door but there were no windows whatever. When the Moor has bolted that door for the night and his children are with him in bed it must get pretty stifling.

We all sat cross-legged on the floor which was furnished with neat reed matting and home-made rugs.

A bundle of wool hung on the wall, from which, I imagine, the burnouses will be made. Our host brought an armful of little kids to show us, four of them, while someone began to mix up bread for our welcoming. Happily none of the dear wee things was killed for our benefit, but the whole scene was very suggestive of Bible times, eastern hospitality and ample leisure.

We saw no women at close quarters, but men came dropping in one by one until the hut was full of them. The head man whose hand was respectfully kissed by the others, had a handsome, keen face and presided with dignity. He sat before a brass tray on which stood a tea-pot surrounded by glasses. A kettle was boiled on a bowl of charcoal and then tea was made. One of the men took a large cone of sugar and broke it with a wooden hammer, and pieces as big as one's fist were dropped into the tea-pot. A handful of fresh mint leaves was added and then our glasses were filled. Knowing as you do, Lydia, just how I like my tea, you will realize that I did not look forward with any great anticipation to this Moorish concoction. In fact, I could only resolve to grin and bear it and more especially to grin. For I have no Arabic except "salaam" and one can't always be saying that. Imagine how surprised I was to find this beverage positively agreeable. The bread also was very good. It was of the pancake variety and as short as the best home pastry and we each tore a piece from the central dish without the help of implements of any kind.

You must understand this was a purely Moslem village. Indeed, I am told there is no such thing as a Christian village in the whole country. Herein Morocco presents a striking contrast with Palestine or India,

where you get Christian villages side by side with Mohammedan ones.

The hospitality so generously shown was therefore a surprise to me, and I was even more struck by the attention with which these men listened to the message. A native Christian had accompanied us, one of the helpers in the hospital, whose home was formerly in this village. He read a passage from the Sermon on the Mount and afterwards gave a fine testimony, reminding his friends what a bad character he had been and telling how the Lord Jesus had saved him.

Then my fokeeh talked to them, still sitting on the floor in the midst of the company. He secured their perfect attention: there was no whispering and they did not even fidget. They gave one the impression of being really interested. When I asked him afterwards what he had said, he told me it was a down-right Gospel address: they had frankly admitted they were guilty of all manner of sins and he had assured them that a greater sin than any other was the rejection of the Son of God.

Two of them were strangers from a distant village and had never heard this new doctrine in their lives before. They had come to visit the mosque, which in these little settlements simply means a shed where the Koran is read. They returned home each with a Gospel in his hand.

Before we took our departure the spokesman expressed their appreciation of our coming. "This has been a very blessed day with us," he said, "for the doctor has been in our midst. We won't count this as a real visit, though. Another time you must come early and stay all day, have meals with us and teach us,

and the ladies must see our wives and children. We look upon the hospital as our own hospital and the doctor as our own doctor."

There was only one case of illness in the village just then and the doctor called at the sick man's hut. He found him surrounded with friends and relatives and a few animals thrown in, using up what little oxygen there was. I learned on the way back that but for the presence of the medical man we could not have had that Gospel service. There would have been opposition. It seems that the time is not even yet ripe for the open proclamation of the truth in Moorish villages. But if a young doctor could come out, to assist the senior one, he might devote part of his time to the hospital and part to the villages, proclaiming the Good News of salvation while ministering to physical need.

As you see, it took us the whole afternoon to visit that village though it was not far away. I suppose we sat on the floor for about an hour, waiting for the men to gather. It is difficult for people at home to realize the exceeding slowness of procedure in a field like this. They are accustomed to announcing a meeting for a certain time and finding the audience ready gathered when the hour arrives. Even the slightest experience of village evangelization in the mission field proves that vastly more labourers are needed to reach a given number of people. But instead of more, behold fewer, in fact the merest handful!

Well, of course we can't all go, but perhaps we can help to pray others out. As for me, Lydia, you know if I had had my choice I should long since have joined one of the bands of reapers going far afield. But the Lord

of the Harvest, in His perfect wisdom, appointed me the task of a gleaner instead. And "in His will is our peace." So I have followed the reapers in several fields, gathering my handful day by day and taking it home to share with others. It is a real joy at this time to be able to share it with you.

Ever your friend,

Ruth.

II.

The Message in the Market

CASABLANCA,
MOROCCO,

March 30.

My dear Lydia,

Tell me, had you any idea that there existed in Morocco a cosmopolitan city of nearly 200,000 inhabitants? For my part, I must confess I was not aware of it until now. Such is Casablanca, and it was an eye-opener to me to drive through its broad and brilliantly lighted streets on the night of my arrival. Here are fine government buildings, shops that get their costumes straight from Paris, blocks of flats as much as nine storeys high, and handsome boulevards. "Casa" has had a mushroom growth so you and I need not feel greatly ashamed of our ignorance concerning it: in five years it made a jump of 50,000 in population.

You will be more interested in the spiritual needs of the people than in the Paris fashions, I am sure. There is a strong Evangelical work among the French. But the 14,000 Spaniards and 7,000 Italians have no one to give them the pure truth of the Gospel aside from two of the ladies of the North Africa Mission and their helpers. They have two centres, one being

an attractive Hall which the senior missionary has put up and the other a dwelling-house with a room for meetings. They have Bible Classes for women and Gospel services at which the preaching is done by the Italian evangelist and visiting believers.

There are various other classes for young people, including sewing for the girls and drawing and modelling for the boys, and Christian teaching of course permeates them all. The Roman Catholics have just bought up an entire block right in front of their premises. Here they have put up commodious buildings, and have walled in a large area as a play-ground. They know how to attract the children and their priests will not be slow to play the part of Pied Piper with their cornets and free cinema tickets, as soon as arrangements are complete. Their devices are known of old.

Pray for these workers, Lydia, for theirs is a hard task. The Christian public is not much concerned about work among Europeans ; more interest is felt in the heathen and the Moslems. Yet I can't help thinking there must be gentlewomen at home, speaking French, Italian or Spanish, who have private means and would gladly serve the Lord in this needy sphere. Coming out to Europe in Africa, they might find a most blessed life-work. The labourers are few: those words have been hammered into my soul during this past week. We often quote them at home, but we don't grasp their meaning till we get into the mission field.

* * * * * * *

I might tell you much about this city, but instead of doing so, I want to show you an appalling contrast

with its glamour and its gaiety, right at its very doors. This is Tin Can Town or the Beggars' Village. One has often seen in the East some little hovel of matting or matchwood, housing a ragged wretch, but here are actually sixteen hundred such hovels, close together, containing some six thousand human beings. The inmates are mostly tribespeople who have hitherto lived in tents but are no longer able to do so, partly on account of taxation. The government has allocated them a section of land on a breezy hillside, but they are so fearfully overcrowded that not all the winds of heaven could purify the place, specially as it is quite devoid of sanitation.

Some of these poor people come from far distances, even from the border of the Sahara Desert, where from time immemorial their tribes have lived the free Arab life. Now they are in kennels. A few of the better huts might, indeed, do for stables, but the average accommodation for a family may truly be described as a tiny enclosed space with a kennel attached. This is made of old tin cans smoothed out and occasional scraps of wood. These quarters remind one of that expression in the prophet Micah, "They shall move out of their holes like worms of the earth." Think of it: human beings living in this way! Babies being born there, children growing up there! It is too awful for words.

I visited Tin Can Town with a missionary nurse. The children followed us in crowds, suffering women sought help, men stared, dogs barked as we wended our way along the muddy paths between the huts. Nurse treated only those who were willing to listen to her message. A few at a time were let into one of

those little enclosures and there she tried to give them a glimmer of the Gospel and sang over and over again some simple chorus which they could more or less understand.

We were invited into one of the larger huts and as I watched this worker I thought how little we realize the cost of missionary service. To squat on the floor in a wretched hovel, surrounded by scald-head, dirty bodies, sore eyes, and who knows what horrid contagion besides, to endure smells and sounds that offend your senses and sights that wring your very heart, *that* is missionary work. I felt how little we at home know of self-denial or any actual suffering for Christ. Far from guessing the trend of my thoughts, this missionary turned a radiant face on me and exclaimed, "I love it! I love it! I love it! I could be here all day!" Truly she was illustrating, albeit unconsciously, that word of Paul, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

As we were leaving, someone ran after us and begged us to come and see a sick boy. He lay there in a hut, coughing badly, with nothing between him and the damp floor except an old piece of matting. Close beside him was tethered the sheep for the forthcoming festival. How such paupers can procure one I can't imagine, but I am told they will sell even their blankets to buy it. If only they might know of the full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice that was offered once for all on Calvary!

But how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent? The missionary staff here in Casablanca is utterly inadequate. Would you believe it? It comprises one Arabic-

speaking man and a handful of women. What are they among so many?

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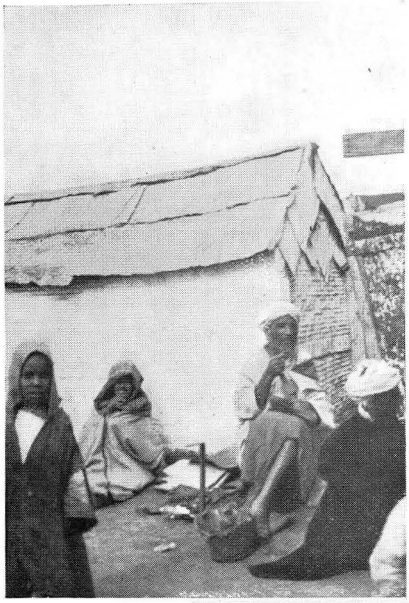
As I said in my last, most people live in the country, there being only about half a dozen cities and a dozen fair-sized towns in Morocco. When you travel, as I did the other day, by a good train and cover two or three hundred miles at a stretch, you get an impression of the difficulty of reaching the scattered villages with the Gospel. But thank God, there is a way of doing it and that is by means of the markets.

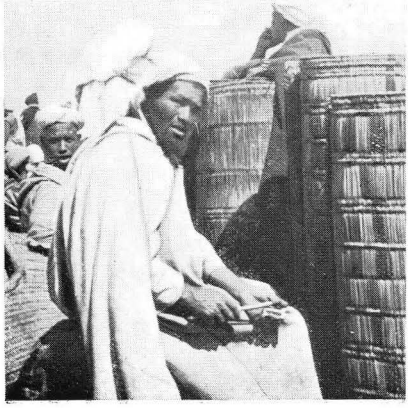
A market is a very different affair from what we understand by that word at home. It is not held in any town or village but at a spot in the open country accessible from many points. Deserted for six days in the week it is crowded on the seventh. The market is intimately related to the life of the tribespeople, that is, the Arabs and Berbers, and it means the place where everybody goes every week to do everything that needs to be done.

First and foremost, of course, it is the centre for buying and selling, for there are very few shops of any kind among the tribes, and from the market they get their supplies for the week. Here are displayed grain, vegetables, green tea, sugar, oil and butter, the last-mentioned being often six months old and all the more tasty for that.

Live cattle occupy a large area and hundreds of cows, donkeys, camels and sheep will change hands in one day. In many markets meat is cooked on the spot. A sheep is brought in, killed and cleaned, and



A HOVEL IN
TIN-CAN-TOWN.



IN THE
OPEN MARKET.

meanwhile a man digs a hole and makes a fire in it, with straw or wood. When the hole is hot the fire is raked out and the sheep popped in, sealed down and left to cook in its own juice. When it comes out it affords an appetizing dinner.

You can buy a variety of cotton goods in the market, not seldom bearing the trade mark of some Manchester firm. Arab women like this decoration and so fashion the dress as to bring it prominently in front. Clothes are made, if desired, while you wait. In one row of tents a man will get a piece of cotton for a shirt, and then will hie him over to another row to have it stitched up. The tailor sits on the ground before his Singer's sewing machine, slaps the wheel and away it goes, at a speed that leaves the British seamstress far behind.

Doctors have their own section of the market. Each flies a red flag (!) as an indication of his presence and often employs an underling to bawl out his claim to miraculous power. His stock usually consists of a few bones, a few feathers, a few shells, native herbs, dirty bottles, old blacking tins and a little sand. It may include a chameleon's hand, a dried lizard or an eagle's wing. The bottles are commonly empty but they serve to make a show. For some ailments this medical man gives the patient a sound punching, but his commonest remedy is a verse of the Koran to be worn as a charm round the neck.

Lawyers also practice at these markets and arrange for marriages and divorces and the transfer of land. The native ruler or his substitute has a tent outside the gate where he passes judgment on evil-doers. Then there are story-tellers, snake charmers and conjurors, each attracting his own crowd, and the water-seller

who wanders round with his kid-skin over his shoulder, ringing his little bell.

Altogether, you will see that it is no great exaggeration to say that "everybody" is there. In the larger markets there may be anything from one hundred to five hundred tents and from one thousand to ten thousand people. So it is clear that if the natives of Morocco are to be evangelized this task will be most effectively accomplished in the six hundred markets scattered over the country. In fact, they offer a most glorious opportunity.

I have just returned from a trip with my Casablanca fokeeh to one of these great gatherings some thirty miles inland. He took with him in the car a portable platform and no sooner had he mounted it than the crowd began to gather. He preached the Gospel without let or hindrance, aside from a few interruptions from individuals in the audience, which did not amount to anything.

When one man threatened to be troublesome, his neighbours promptly told him to be quiet. "Shut up, you don't know anything," they said. This attitude is a decided improvement on that of a few years since, and it is clear that while these Moors are not ready to accept the Message at any rate they are more disposed to listen to it.

When two missionaries are able to go together they can relieve each other and go straight on preaching, for a couple of hours, to the shifting crowd. They sell Gospels and engage in personal conversation and definite conversions have been known to result from the contacts made in the market.

For the most part, of course, they simply sow the

seed and have no means of knowing whether or not it has taken root. One day down in the south country an old man asked permission to examine the books. They were surprised at this for his appearance was not suggestive of education. He bought a Gospel in the colloquial and soon came back and asked for another. After glancing through this he again reappeared and purchased the entire New Testament in the classical Arabic. He said his home was far away across the Atlas Mountains on the border of the Sahara Desert. He had never in his life heard such News as they had just proclaimed and he had now spent all that he had on the Book and was going to take it home and study it for himself. If one might only know the end of that story!

Look at this other picture. The missionaries had left the market and were spending the night in their car, beside a native inn. They were already in bed when they heard sounds just outside, and saw three men on donkeys draw up to the door. They called for supper and while it was preparing they threw down a straw mat and lay upon it in the open. Then they took out a bit of candle and a little book which proved to be the Gospel of John that one of them had just bought in the market. They read it aloud under the stars and talked together of the life of Jesus and the strange doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Nothing is here for printing in a report, nothing definite, nothing tangible, but surely it affords food for thought. Wherever missionaries visit the markets similar scenes are probably enacted, and He who watches over His own Word will bring it to fruition.

But there are only three or four men in all Morocco

who are doing this work. The one I have just mentioned has preached in three hundred of these gatherings, but naturally he has only been once or twice to most of them and he is very much tied by the regular work of his station. There is an urgent need in this North Africa field for young men of fine calibre and linguistic gifts, men who are ready to endure hardness and count all things but loss for the privilege of preaching the Gospel. If but a score of them would come out here, consecrating their manhood to pioneer service for Christ, it would make an untold difference to this country. And what everlasting joy would be upon their heads, if thus they had fellowship with Him in the supreme enterprise of the ages!

Yours in that one Cause,

Ruth.

III.

Among Veiled Women

FEZ,
MOROCCO,

April 7th.

My dear Lydia,

Before I say anything about this wonderful old Moorish capital I must give you a peep into a little country town we visited the other day. I wish you could see how missionary women are winning their way among the Moslems by living the Christ-life among them and serving the mothers and children.

Settat, embowered in olive and pomegranate groves, nestles among the hills some fifty miles inland from Casablanca. It is delightful to drive through the country just now for the waysides and fields are gay with wild flowers. Marigolds are thick along the high-road, irises grow in abundance and in the many-coloured carpet one can also spy the gladiolus, the lupin and the asphodel beloved of the Greeks.

The two lady workers at Settat have a typically Moorish house, built round a small central court paved with tiles and beautified with maidenhair. The gallery running round the upper floor is festooned with ferns and if we climb the winding stair we get from their flat roof a glorious view.

They have a dispensary on the premises and women come from all the country round, roughly from a radius of forty miles, for one of them is a certified midwife whose fame has spread far and wide. Eye trouble is almost universal and in summer time as many as a hundred a day will seek treatment for this alone. Dirt is responsible for much of it, but the blown sand is one cause of irritation and the smoke in the tiny chimney-less huts is yet another.

A short service is always held before the medical help is given and thus the women become acquainted with the Gospel, and though they are Moslems, one and all, they welcome the missionaries into their homes. These two have more openings than they can possibly take advantage of.

When we were over there, some five and twenty little girls came and sang hymns for us and repeated passages of Scripture. It was clear that they knew them thoroughly and one cannot but believe that this teaching must influence their lives and at the very least predispose them toward the Christian faith. I refer to Settat, not because the work there is in any way unusual but because it is typical. The same sort of thing is being done in Tetuan and other towns that I am unable to visit. Women missionaries, two by two, are settled among the Moslems and are recommending the Gospel by quiet, practical service. In Rabat one woman has been labouring alone for many years with self-effacing devotion.

Men workers, as I have already said, are very scarce, and these ladies cannot evangelize the Arab men for they must observe the etiquette of the country in order to retain their women patients and pupils.

In Settat, there is not a single man missionary, so one is again reminded of the need of labourers.

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I am writing this letter from a roof in Fez, looking across the city with its two hundred mosques and shrines to the everlasting hills beyond. The muezzin has just sounded one of the five calls to prayer. He has a rich and resonant voice, but I must confess, when he wakes me at half-past four each morning, I could wish him somewhere else. His recitation lasts a full quarter of an hour and seems to be spoken right into my bedroom, for the mosque is next door and he declaims from the minaret above me.

If only there were more reality behind the much praying, one might feel sympathetic. But you can't be many days in a Moslem land without realizing how hollow is the profession. It is lip religion, without any power behind it or even a worthy example to imitate.

Missionary work here is desperately difficult and terribly slow, the conditions that obtain in Mohammedan countries generally being intensified, as you would expect, in this old, conservative, inland city. The N.A.M. staff consists of a doctor and his wife and two single ladies, one of whom is out of health. It is wonderful that they are able to make any impression at all among the 130,000 inhabitants of Fez.

A quiet, earnest work is carried on in connection with the two dispensaries and the classes for girls and women, while visitation in the homes is one of the most important features. In the dispensary conducted by the ladies, well over a hundred patients are seen twice

a week and all hear a Gospel message. The doctor reports about seven hundred attendances a month in his dispensary and he responds to frequent outside calls. He could easily double the number of patients if he had an assistant to do part of the preaching. As it is, on five days a week he gives an address the first thing in the morning to the assembled crowd, and then treats them individually. Before he has finished, a second group has gathered and the procedure is repeated. It is easy to see that this arrangement involves tiresome waiting on the part of the patients and a heavy strain on the doctor.

I went over the other day and saw the men in one room and the women in another and the medical missionary sitting in the doorway talking to both at once. "Where can we get rest of heart?" he asked in the course of his address. "It is not to be had," said one woman. She was less shy than most, having lived for years in England. Clearly she had not learned in our Christian land the secret of peace with God, and I wondered if anyone had taken the trouble to get hold of her. Doutbtless many visit us and return home again, thinking even less of our religion than they did before. Heart rest is "not to be had"! Such calm despair makes one yearn to spread the message of hope, to pass on the gracious invitation, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

But these devoted missionaries have been passing it on for half a century and have met with but a scant response. Their cry is, "Lord, who hath *believed* our report? A mere handful." Even those who seek the physical help have plenty of arguments for refusing

the spiritual. Of all except a very few it may be said, "Ye will not come that ye might have life." "Go to the Sudan," they urge, "they are heathen there; as for us, we are religious people." Or perhaps, "You have Jesus, the Jews have Moses and we have Mohammed." They will even say, "We believe in all three; we have all the prophets." Their stock statement concerning our Lord is taken from the Koran, "They did not kill him, but one like unto him was placed in his stead." Argument is of little avail for they are utter fatalists: everything they do is foreordained and there is no room for free will.

Naturally, under French rule, there is an increasing amount of intercourse with Europeans. Missionaries say that, as a result, Moslems are in many cases more bigoted than ever. They see that many foreigners profess no religion at all, and on the other hand they look upon Roman Catholics as idolaters on account of their numerous images. They know that mosques have been built in England, and that one British peer has accepted their creed, and they make capital out of this isolated fact. Here in Morocco some of the dilapidated mosques are being repaired: money is forthcoming for the task as the government is administering ecclesiastical funds and preventing bribery and corruption.

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You wanted to hear more especially about the women and their attitude toward the Gospel. I can assure you that when one gets a little glimpse of their lives one cannot wonder that there are so few open

confessions. A woman has virtually no life apart from her men folk. First, she is under her father, then under her husband, and if left a widow she may be under a son. Suppose she accepts Christ and is driven from home, where can she go? She can't take a room and earn her living as an English woman would do: she would lose all claim to respectability. As one of the missionaries said the other day, one does not attempt to excuse the lack of open confession, but certainly one can well understand it.

These poor Moslem wives! Theirs is indeed a hard lot. It is pleasant enough to sit on the roof as I am doing now, but to have no other place for recreation, no exercise whatever, must be cruel. No wonder they suffer badly from indigestion! The physical effects of such confinement, however, must be of small import compared with the warping of the mind.

As we were passing the mansion of a gentleman of official position my missionary hostess pointed out a tiny window. It was on the stairs, she said, and was the only place where his two wives could look out, so she was wont to wave a hand as she went by. These women are not allowed even the freedom of the roof. This is surely nothing more nor less than imprisonment, though they call it a man's "care" for his wives.

I ought to make it clear, though, that there is considerable variety in the treatment meted out. Some who are closely interned as a rule, can occasionally visit their relatives provided they both go and return under cover of darkness. But even these are greatly to be pitied, being denied the privilege of enjoying God's beautiful world in the blessed sunshine. In some families one of the sons will let his wife go out

as much as she chooses, so long as she is veiled, while another will not give permission to cross the threshold. This must lead to endless heartburnings.

My hostess tells me she once obtained a husband's consent to take his young wife out for the day, veiled of course. Although of the poorer class she had always been closely confined. She had never been near enough to a tree to see what it was really like and had never seen tomatoes growing, although they are so common here. She stood and stared at ducks on a pond with the interest of a little child and seeing stubble in a field she supposed it grew like that.

A woman of the better class once said wistfully: "I have never seen a motor car or a wheeled carriage of any kind. I have only caught the flash of their lights in the distance." This lady's husband owns a fine machine, and her children recognize the various makes of motors, just as boys and girls do at home. But the car can't come near their house as the streets are too narrow. It is kept in the garage in the newer quarter, which explains her not having seen it. What must be the feelings of a mother whose children know so much of the modern world, while she is a prisoner within four walls, unavoidably ignorant as compared with them?

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Worse even than imprisonment and humiliation is the fear of divorce which hangs like a sword of Damocles over the heads of these women. Each remains a wife only so long as it suits the whim of the man. It is not necessary that he should institute

court proceedings or give any reason for divorcing her. He simply goes to a lawyer, says, "I divorce my wife," pays a small fee and the deed is done. A statement to this effect is then endorsed on her marriage lines. If he changes his mind later, he can ask her back twice, but the Koranic law forbids his doing this a third time.

I met a woman lately who had been three times divorced by the same husband and three times reinstated, but this was a flagrant breach of the law and quite a special case. As we sat in her pretty room drinking tea, she asked the missionary if I were married and being answered in the negative, exclaimed, "Poor thing!" We each pitied the other! This involuntary expression seemed to give one a flash of insight into the Moslem woman's view of life. The position of an unmarried western woman is utterly incomprehensible to her. The liberty and equality that we enjoy she but dimly understands and as for fraternity, or happy comradeship with those of the other sex, she cannot conceive of it.

To show how little these people think of divorce, let me tell you of another house I visited. Having removed our shoes we sat on the sumptuous cushions and while the missionary talked to our hostess I tried to take things in without appearing to do so. I counted fourteen clocks all contradicting each other, and these somewhat distracted my attention from the little daughter-in-law, who looked sweet and interesting.

My friend was surprised when she was introduced, for she already knew the sons of the family and their wives. Our hostess explained that this was a new wife, her son having divorced the other one. "I understood it was his brother," said the missionary, " who had

divorced his wife." "So he did," replied the lady, "and now my other son has done the same. They did not care for the girls." This was said without shame or hesitancy, just as you would say you had dismissed your cook.

So, if a woman should anger her husband to the uttermost by becoming a pervert from his religion, you may see how much chance she would have of remaining a wife.

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But quite apart from this, humanly speaking, insuperable obstacle, there are other determining factors in a woman's life. Chief among these, perhaps, is the lack of privacy. Suppose she has education enough to read the Gospel, which a hundred to one she has not, when is she to do it? There is no "quiet time" possible to her, in which she can pray at leisure and feed upon the Word of God. As long as her husband is in the house she is fully occupied, and when he is out, the other women (and their joint families) are all over the place and she cannot call any room her own. If she draws her curtain they will think she is doing something she ought not. If she prays they will set upon her as an "unbeliever," for these Moslem prayers of which we hear so much, are not at all like prayer in our sense of the word. They are mostly a series of genuflections and exclamations and women take little part in them. ("Gymnastics!" a Moslem said the other day.)

What would become of our own spiritual life if we could not read the Bible and never had any time alone with God? We know how cold we get if we

skimp our prayer time for days together through pressure of work. Situated as they are, can we expect these women to manifest a robust faith? Can we wonder that they should shrink from the ordeal of confession, when it means being turned out of house and home without any means of livelihood? Clearly, when a woman becomes an avowed believer it is a miracle of grace. Humanly speaking it is impossible, though we must never forget to add, "but not with God, for with God all things are possible."

I heard a beautiful story the other day of one who came to the women's class years ago and said she wished to "hear the Word of God." The expression surprised the missionary and she asked what had led her to become interested in the Gospel. She said that an aunt and a cousin were attending this class and they told her what they had learned. She believed the message and confessed her new faith among the neighbours. When there came an epidemic of typhoid she went in and out helping the sick and giving them the Good News. She herself succumbed to the disease and died trusting in Jesus and refusing to witness to the prophet when urged to do. She is remembered with love and gratitude.

This same missionary is now rejoicing that a woman-servant has been brought to the Lord, after twenty-two years of teaching, waiting and prayer. Truly a hard-won soul!

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"What about the men?" you will ask. "Why don't more of them come out for Christ? They are very

differently situated from the women." Yes, of course comparatively they are free. But as I said in a recent letter, they are liable to be thrown out of employment and to be faced with beggary for themselves and their families. Of course the ideal thing is to take the plunge and trust the Lord, and we who know His ways feel sure He would appear for their help. But we have never been called upon to make such a decision ourselves so it surely does not become us to be censorious of others. God is their judge. When one realizes a little of what it costs to be a Christian in these parts, one feels a poignant sympathy with those who go away "grieved" because the requirements seem too hard.

Some few do come out boldly, as you know. The North Africa representative of the B.F.B.S. told me the other day of a wild young fellow who was converted through reading an Arabic Bible that he found in his father's library after the latter's death. His curiosity was aroused by a paternal warning on the front page, to the effect that the book contained blasphemy and was dangerous reading. He became a Christian and suffered persecution. They tried to poison him and a price of 10,000 francs was put on his head, but he remained true.

In a town not far from here I met a man who is making a brave confession. He stands in the marketplace beside the missionaries and fearlessly witnesses for Christ. Again, I have heard of a man-servant of one of these workers, who belonged to the Aisawa sect, a very fanatical sort of dervishes. Constant intercourse with Christians led him into belief of the truth and he was openly baptized. Constrained by circumstances to return to his own village he settled on a little farm

and there in his daily life he witnessed to his Saviour. Without any further help from missionaries he held on for fourteen years, and quite recently he passed away having proved faithful unto death.

But these are quite the exception. No missionary would wish to persuade anybody that results are satisfactory. They frankly say that if they might see one conversion a year apiece it would make them very happy. Sometimes they labour for long periods without any definite fruit, though they know of many cases of real interest.

Looking over this barren field I am confronted by two questions. Is the seed sufficiently watered with prayer? We Christians at home have a great responsibility in this regard towards our representatives in the field. Perhaps if the Universal Church would engage in a concerted effort of intercession for Moslem lands the slumbering seed might awake to fruition hitherto unknown.

Again, is it not rather unreasonable to talk about there being so few converts, in any country, if we don't send out sufficient labourers to gather them in? Take this city of Fez. It is the business of the Church to see it is evangelised, whether by this Mission or that, this denomination or that, makes no difference. It goes without saying that men are necessary for this. However courageous women workers may be, they can't tackle a man's job in a Moslem land. With shame be it said, that here in this stronghold of Satan, this centre which throws out its challenge to Christ's young soldiers the world over, there is one man only to uphold the banner of the Cross. I mean, just one man accredited as a representative of a missionary society,

here for the purpose of proclaiming the Gospel. And it should be remembered that at least half of his time is given to the medical work.

So I feel we may well stop talking about the paucity of converts until we have remedied the paucity of labourers. It does not seem rational to expect one man and three women to evangelize a city of 130,000 souls. We don't do this way in business: why should we be less practical in regard to the matters of the Kingdom? Needless to say, I am not reflecting on the Mission: I am arguing that it ought to have more worthy support from the Church at large.

Your affectionate friend,

Ruth.

Later.

Before closing this letter, I must add a bit, to complete the Moroccan part of my story. I am writing on the train, a comfortable corridor one, and shall soon be crossing the frontier into Algeria. Out here one gets such mixed experiences of ancient and modern, primitive and progressive. From that roof in old Fez I touched with my hand the house on the other side of the street. Needless to say, wheeled vehicles did not penetrate that quarter. But once outside the walls I travelled by a comfortable "autobus" to Guercif, a distance of some 120 miles.

For the greater part of the way it was most a beautiful drive, the road zigzaging over the hills. A long stretch of the Middle Atlas in the distance lay covered with

snow. No less lovely than its shining heights were the dimpled slopes of a lower range, where mauve and purple and maroon melted the one into the other. I have mentioned the wild flowers before, but you can't get a true picture of this scene unless you put into the foreground an acre or two of blue convolvulus to match the sky, or a bank of brilliant marigold.

The roads are splendid : thanks to French engineering, the country is now open. Open ! What a contrast that word suggests with the conditions of one generation ago ! Open to the tourist, open to the merchant : is it realised that it is also open (though within certain limitations) to the herald of the Cross? Apparently not, as so few have come.

When we passed through Taza, the upper town of which is some 4,000 feet above sea level, its two missionaries were on the watch for us. Though the bus was to stop only five minutes they had come down from the heights for a greeting and a handshake. Taza has had Gospel messengers for less than a dozen years. Previous to this the country was so torn with civil war that it was not possible for missionaries to settle here. Being a strategic point, it was seized alternately by the Pretender and the Sultan so it has suffered severely from bombardment. People are living even yet in ruined houses and as a result a number of accidents have occurred, walls having fallen in and killed the inhabitants. The French authorities are encouraging reconstruction.

But it is difficult to secure a new or renovated house and the rents for such have risen in consequence of the shortage. These two women workers have had to take what they could get, and it is poor enough.

Part of the house is, in fact, unsafe for habitation so they can make but a limited use of it, and as it is only rented they can't afford to repair it. They did, indeed, put in some decent windows for otherwise they would have been unable to do their work.

Now here is something for which we might definitely pray. Perhaps you would bring it before our local missionary group. I am sure they will be glad to join these two brave sisters in asking for suitable premises for the prosecution of the Master's work. By the way, these two have quite a reputation as hikers. They tramp long distances to reach untouched villages, and they have penetrated to the borders of the Desert in a little open car, and then gone about among the oases on foot. Yet one of them has been out nearly forty years and the other over twenty! Some pluck, as Americans would say!

But to return to the 'bus stop. When those five precious minutes had flown we waved good-bye to each other, brimful of words which could not be spoken for other reasons besides lack of time. Then the motor sped swiftly through the plain and pulled up at Guercif.

Not so long ago this was known as the place of the cut-throats, and a moment's glance at the landscape suffices to explain the reason. Travellers crossing the broad plain could readily be spotted from the mountains around, and had no chance when the bandits swooped down upon them. Under the French there is security and an attractive little town is now springing up. The railroad has recently been extended so that it is now possible to go direct to Algiers, a journey of about twenty hours.

At Guercif I found two heroic women. A work

was begun here one year ago and is carried on very quietly by means of a dispensary for women and children. You would scarcely believe how much wisdom and tact are necessary or how easy it is to arouse suspicion. I can't attempt to enter into this just now, but I mention it as suggesting the great variety of the problems that missionaries have to meet.

In another hour we shall pass through Oudjda, the frontier town, where one woman is stationed as a witness for Christ. Within three days of home she is as much alone as if she were in Central Asia. Can we at all sense the solitude of it, I wonder ?

So this is Good-bye to Morocco. As I leave it, there sound in my ears the parting words of that missionary nurse at Tin Can Town, " Don't forget the lack of labourers."

IV.

Snaps from a City

ALGIERS,

April 13th.

My dear Lydia,

This is a most picturesque city, with its white houses rising terrace above terrace and tier above tier, their tall palms standing sentinel beside them. There are rugged cliffs crowned with pine woods, and deep ravines filled with luxuriant undergrowth. The gardens are gorgeous with apples of gold in pictures of silver, or in our more literal western phraseology, oranges in a setting of white blossoms. The lemon trees also are laden with ripe fruit and the Japanese medlars are on the turn and just beginning to rival them in colour. The climbing roses are in the freshness of their early beauty ; walls are draped with royal bourganvillea and flower-beds are overflowing with all imaginable hues, which yet never seem to clash.

Climbing up and down these fascinating streets and lanes, contemplating the city from every angle, I have been trying to imagine what the word "Algiers" meant to Europeans slightly over a hundred years ago. A name of terror it surely was ! When one remembers that more than sixteen hundred slaves were set free after Lord Exmouth's naval victory, and that as many

as 20,000 were employed in the building of one fortification, one gets a faint idea of the despotism of the Algerine pirates.

The best place for dreaming of that dreadful past is of course the native city. Here the houses overhang with sombre mien, and you might easily get lost for the alleys twist and turn continually, forming a hopeless labyrinth. At the top of the steep incline, broken by frequent flights of steps, stands the Kasbah, or Fort, which is little changed since the days of the pirates. From this eyrie they swooped down upon their helpless prey, and having secured a batch of prisoners, sold them into slavery or subjected them to tortures of diabolical ingenuity until death closed the tragedy.

I am told that one of those monsters delighted in throwing his Christian victims to the lions, which he kept in a deep moat near his palace. Each morning he would settle himself comfortably in his arm-chair and hold a parade of slaves and when he had deliberately looked them over he would point at one individual. His minions understood the gesture and immediately tossed the poor wretch to the brutes for their morning tit-bit.

English, French, Spaniards and Americans, sailing the seven seas, had good cause to dread these Algerine pirates. You will remember that their barbarities came to an end just over a hundred years ago, when the Dey of the moment struck the French consul on the face with his fan, thus precipitating the war which cost him his realm. I passed his palace this morning and must confess I did not feel sorry that he got his deserts.

But this coast provokes recollections of history that

go back much farther than a single century. One thinks of the Church of North Africa, which in the early days of our era was so strong, wide-spread and influential and one remembers that its roll of martyrs outnumbered that of any other section of the Roman Empire. Truly Algiers affords plenty of material for quiet thought, and great reason for thankfulness that our lot is cast in happier days than those.

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Easter Day.

I am thinking of you all at home, meeting in glad assembly, pouring out praise and adoration and getting a fresh vision of the meaning of this Day of Days. It is sad to think that most people out here know nothing about it, but are putting their trust in divers forms and ceremonies, and busily going about to establish their own righteousness. To read the Gospel narrative amid such surroundings as these is to feel more than ever the force of its divine simplicity and the majesty of the Person of Christ.

I don't believe I told you, when writing from Fez, how we went early one morning to the Feast of the Sheep, though I have referred to it more than once as a forthcoming event. It was held in a great open space outside the city wall, called the Mesulla or Place of Prayer. Nature furnished a wonderful setting for Fez is situated in a basin with mountains all around. High and low, rich and poor, gathered for the great celebration. The representative of the Sultan headed the procession and was followed by government officials and the chief men of the city, accompanied by the French military.

Men of dignified bearing rode on horses magnificently caparisoned, their saddles embroidered in gold. Wild-eyed muleteers raced each other on their bony steeds, which vividly reminded one of Don Quixote's charger, Rozinante. Crowds came on foot, in flowing white burnouses, and there were many two-horse carriages and modern motor cars. To complete the picture, three aeroplanes circled overhead.

The multitude gathered before the shrine where they knelt in prayer, prostrating themselves upon the ground. Then, after a short discourse from the Chaplain-General, the sheep was sacrificed and a muleteer carried the poor dying creature at full speed to the Government House, followed by other riders in mad career. The people believe that if the animal has not breathed its last before it reaches the goal, this is a good omen for the coming year.

As soon as the ceremony was completed at the Place of Prayer a gun was fired as a sign that all the people might now kill their own sheep and they flocked home to offer their several sacrifices. You will imagine, better than I can express, the feelings of Christian missionaries as they see a whole city offering atonement for sin, while refusing the one Atonement already made, treading underfoot the Son of God, and counting the blood of the covenant an unholy thing.

The story goes that once in the midst of the ceremony a young Arab dashed into the throng and cried aloud, "Your sacrifice is vain! Behold the Lamb of God, even Jesus, which taketh away the sin of the world!" He then ran for his life and though hotly pursued he escaped.

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This year, less than a week after the Feast of the Sheep, the Jews celebrated their Passover. I was travelling that day so saw nothing of it, but I could well picture it for I have attended a Passover service in Jerusalem itself. I came on here and in order to learn at first hand what is being offered to these people in the way of religion, I went to the Cathedral of Our Lady of Africa, where they were getting ready for Easter.

This building gives to Arabs and Berbers so imposing a presentation of Christianity as to suggest to the average mind that here is the religion of Europeans at its best. It stands on high, almost at the summit of the cliff on which the city is built and seems to dominate the Bay. At the edge of the precipice is a monument stating that His Holiness the Pope will grant plenary indulgence to the souls of the dead, whose friends will come and pray for them in this church on Sundays.

On entering the building, one's attention is at once arrested by the Black Virgin, raised on a platform, perhaps twenty feet high, gorgeously dressed and crowned with precious jewels. She is surrounded by a circle of electric lights and thus a dazzling picture is presented to the eyes of any poor, ignorant folk who come to seek her blessing. She is black because she is our Lady of Africa, but how Rome explains her transformation from white to ebony, which is of course equivalent to a post-mortem transition from Shem to Ham, is more than I can say.

The walls of this church are adorned with a motley collection of models, the votive offerings of petitioners whose prayers are said to have been heard. There are hands, feet, arms, legs and heads, far more than

enough to stock the physiology department of a college. Several baby dolls dangle from hooks and there are also two models of ships, supposed to have been saved from wreck.

Other parts of the walls are covered with tablets bearing such inscriptions as these : " Thanks to Mary for hearing my prayer," "Thanks to Mary for success in an examination," "Gratitude to Mary for my conversion from Islam," "Thanks to Mary for curing my son." There must be thousands of these. One little tablet says "Thanks to Jesus." If one found it in a temple of Vishnu or Siva it would seem scarcely more out of place than it does here.

Some sad-faced women from the country came in while we were there, and they lit candles and presented them. This ceremony they would doubtless find quite natural, as candles are commonly used in the Moslem religion. Poor, ignorant Arabs and Kabyles are wont to repair to this Cathedral as a last resort in trouble. They have prayed, likely enough, for the death of a co-wife or to be rid of the husband himself and have tried to answer their own prayers by the help of various charms. These having failed to work, they bethink them that the foreigners' way may be more efficacious, so here they come and with uplifted hands plead earnestly before the Black Virgin. What an awful travesty ! While one fully and gladly recognizes that there are many true believers in the Roman Communion, and not a few eminent saints, one cannot shut one's eyes to the fact that the cult of the Virgin is a form of idolatry.

The forces arrayed against the truth here in North Africa are indeed tremendous. Islam hates our Lord

with a bitter hatred, His ancient people still reject Him, and a church nominally Christian puts a gaudy image in His place. "O Lord," we are tempted to cry, "Let not man prevail against Thee!" But Easter reminds us that He has once for all won the victory and is now at God's right hand, far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named, and one day He will reign from sea to sea and from the river to the ends of the earth.

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When that great day comes, no doubt we shall hear of not a few brave witnesses who from age to age proved faithful to Christ in the midst of this darkness. One of them will be Geronimo who, because he refused to deny his Lord, was built into the wall of the Turkish Fort. He was an Arab, the Spanish name having been given to him in baptism, and when it was understood that he had left Islam for Christ the cruel pacha determined to make of him an awful example.

When inspecting the building operations, this despot spied some moulds into which concrete was being poured and cried to the foreman, "Leave one of them empty till to-morrow: I will bury that Christian dog in a slab of cement." The threat was noised abroad and it is said that next day all Algiers came out to see the sight. Geronimo died so bravely that the pacha himself was confessedly amazed.

The whole story is thrilling but what I specially want to tell you is that I saw the other day a perfect cast of this faithful martyr in the act of dying, a most impressive and moving sight. When the French

demolished that old fort, they found that his body had formed, in the soft concrete, a complete mould, and by pouring in liquid plaster of Paris they obtained this wonderful cast.

The very cords that tied his hands behind his back are clearly seen, and even the folds of his short tunic. The muscles stand out in a way suggestive of strain and agony but the mouth is firm and on the face there is an expression of fortitude and peace. In a unique way, he being dead yet speaketh. One wishes he might speak to the many secret believers in this Moslem land and tell them that, if they would confess Christ, His grace would prove sufficient, even in the uttermost extremity.

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While the work is slow and difficult here, as in all these regions, there have been some bright conversions both in connection with the North Africa Mission and the Algiers Mission Band, so closely associated with the name of Miss Lilias Trotter. This latter Mission has its home in a building formerly occupied by the Vice-Admiral of the pirates, and in its inner court, where Christian slaves suffered cruel torture, a little Arab service is regularly held.

Other organizations at work in Algiers include the British and Foreign Bible Society, the London Jews' Society, and the American Methodist Mission. There are also independent missionaries.

The members of the N.A.M. carry on various classes and do much visiting in the homes. In those dark houses in the native quarter where many a woman spends her days with no outlook except through one

little window opening on the narrow, squalid alley, there are those who eagerly watch for the coming of the lady with the Book.

The transforming power of that little volume has sometimes been strangely illustrated, even though there has been no open profession of Christianity. More than forty years ago, two missionaries were studying Kabyle with a sheikh and they persuaded him, against his inclination, to read with them one of the Gospels. He manifested no interest in it but regularly gave the lesson and went his way.

But there was a sequel after all, and the missionary with whom I am staying has told it to me. One day she came across three beautiful women and getting into conversation with them, was promptly invited to pay them a visit. Accordingly, she went and as usual took her Bible and read a short passage.

The grandmother was delighted, and, turning to her daughter-in-law, said, "Do bring the boys in and let them hear this." "I think you already knew something of the story?" queried the missionary. "Yes," replied the old lady with evident sincerity, "I have heard it and I believe it and I love it. My husband died believing it and I want to follow him where he has gone, and I should like to learn as much as possible before I go." It turned out that she was the widow of that sheikh who had been the language teacher of those two missionaries. Through reading the Gospel he had been brought to Christ, and before his death he gave a clear testimony though surrounded by Moslems urging him to repeat the creed and witness to the Prophet.

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The N.A.M. in this city is chiefly concerned with the Kabyles. Of the Society's thirteen stations in Algeria, ten are centres of work among these people, while three are mainly engaged in the evangelization of the Arabs. The mixture of races and languages in a city like Algiers is somewhat confusing to a newcomer. Soon I shall be going down into Kabylia, the mountain home of these interesting aborigines, and then I shall hope to write you more fully about them.

Your affectionate friend,

Ruth.

P.S.—I ought to add that you might see something of the Kabyles and some interesting work among them next time you have occasion to visit Paris. There are thousands of them in that city, engaged as 'bus drivers, factory hands and "ouvriers" generally. They must be pretty enterprising to go so far from home to make a bit of money. But most of them are very ignorant and often find themselves in difficulties, being victimized by unscrupulous people and robbed in many cases not only materially but morally.

A missionary and his wife, of long experience in Algeria, are carrying on work among them. Besides holding Gospel meetings, they maintain a Foyer, where these Kabyles may spend their leisure time and learn to read and write. Another missionary assiduously visits the cafés where they congregate and thus brings many of them into touch with the Foyer. He also does a great deal in the way of colportage.

These strangers in a strange land have no home

life, having left their wives and families behind in Algeria. Very many cannot afford better accommodation than that of a fourth-rate lodging-house. So you may well suppose the N.A.M. proves a friend in need, and while it offers social service in a variety of ways, its constant aim is to lead them to the knowledge of Christ.

It is in Paris, too, that the younger missionaries commence their language study, as they must all know French, as well as the more difficult Arabic or Kabyle.

V.

An Industrial Effort

CHERCHELL,

ALGERIA.

My dear Lydia,

I can hear you asking, "Ruth, where hast thou gleaned to-day?" I might answer "Where the hot sirocco blows," but that would be scarcely fair, since it doesn't blow all the time, though it happens to be doing so with a vengeance during my visit to Cherchell.

A two or three hours' motor run from Algiers brings us to this historic town, the ancient Caesarea, erstwhile capital of the province of Mauretania. The road runs between the mountains and the Mediterranean, past little French towns and fishing villages, and every here and there in a field or garden we catch sight of some relic of old Rome. A well-preserved aqueduct spans one of the gorges and when we reach Cherchell, behold an amphitheatre, capable of seating three thousand persons, in the middle of the town. It is used to this very day.

To friends of the Mission, Cherchell is best known for its Carpet School which has been a centre for industrial work since 1904. The girls employed here have received constant instruction in the Scriptures and a considerable number of women have also had

regular teaching. Carding and spinning the wool at home, they have brought it in every week and had a Bible lesson before returning with the fresh supply.

Alas! the tariffs that are destroying the trade of the world have all but annihilated this industry. Since Great Britain put a duty of fifty per cent. on rugs and carpets, that market has been virtually closed. The crisis has also affected France and Algeria to such an extent that orders have largely ceased. Many of the government carpet schools have shut down entirely; others have reduced the number of workpeople. One which formerly employed two hundred and fifty now has only thirty.

Apropos of those Roman remains that I have just mentioned, there is a beautiful mosaic floor, and the missionary who specializes in carpets produces one which is an exact copy of this, both in design and colouring. Truly a piece of fine art!

Whatever may be the final effect of tariff restrictions on the industrial aspect of the work, on the spiritual side it has certainly been worth while. Of the little group of women and girls who have been baptized in this town, every one was for a longer or shorter time employed at the Carpet School.

I saw one of them on Sunday helping in the Primary Department where some fifty little darlings were gathered. Another was working among older girls: she is very efficient, having had the unusual privilege of long training in the missionaries' own home. Her mother was a bitter opponent of the Gospel and even spat at one of the ladies. She took a knife to her daughter one day, so that the girl had to flee the town. But she soon returned and was baptized, choosing as her hymn

for the occasion, "O Jesus, I have promised to serve Thee to the end."

She refused to be married to a Moslem and is still single, as Christian men are very scarce. Taught by the missionaries she reads Arabic and French and is a great joy to them and an all-round helper. Most girls don't even know their letters and one of the tasks of the workers is to give the converts sufficient instruction to enable them to read the Gospel for themselves.

Besides the four lady missionaries there is a young married couple who are doing good work among boys and youths. It is very important that someone should get hold of these rough lads. They are subject to many temptations, including that of drink, which is a great and growing curse among the Moslems. When reminded that they are not obeying the Koran they will say, "Neither do Christians obey the Bible." The missionary gives French lessons to boys who have not had school opportunities and every class closes with a Gospel message.

This work among the young is only a part of a varied programme. I often feel how poorly and inadequately I describe the work of the missionaries. It is not easy to do so in any fair or worthy way. For one thing, all the stations have much in common and I fear I should weary you if, in writing from one place after another, I dwelt upon the same activities, viz., the various classes, the dispensary work and the visitation of the women in their homes.

But you know I did not promise you a detailed account. As a matter of fact, the missionaries themselves never make full reports, even through the regular channels. Though their lives are replete with sacrificial

service, I don't suppose half of it is tabulated or recorded. Their days are punctuated with interruptions, people coming for help or advice sometimes even before breakfast. Doubtless the personal touch counts for more than anything else, and "a little bit of love" is more effective in many cases than a sermon or an address. One feels the force of such lives but one can't express this in words. "The day shall declare it."

Let me know if you would like one of those rugs or carpets in Roman, Moroccan or Smyrna designs. It would make a charming wedding present, and even with the duty would not be very expensive. You could choose your own colours to harmonize with the room you had in mind.

Ever your friend,

Ruth.

VI.

About the Kabyles

DJEMAA SAHRIDJ,

KABYLIA, ALGERIA.

April 21st.

My dear Lydia,

I am now in the heart of the Kabyle country, which for the beauty of its mountain scenery may be compared with the Highlands of Scotland. This village of Djemaa Sahridj was the cradle of the North Africa Mission. When it was founded in 1881 by Mr. Edward Glenny, Mr. George Pearse and Dr. Grattan Guinness, it was called the Mission to the Kabyles. Djemaa was chosen as the spot for beginning work, being one of the largest villages in the country, with a population of about 3,000, and in a healthy locality.

Like practically all Kabyle villages, it is perched on the top of a hill, this one being some 1500 feet above sea level. Its name means the Gathering of the Fountains, and according to popular legend it can boast ninety-nine springs, though it would be hard to find them all.

I saw many interesting things when wandering about the village this morning. For instance, there was the meeting-place where the old men used to regulate the community affairs and even decide the issues of

peace and war. It is fitted all round the walls with massive stone benches which have been polished by the slow friction of the centuries. The place made me think of the moot-hill of our Saxon forefathers. It is still used as a rendezvous for the village elders and to a certain extent for the transaction of community business, but its glory has departed.

The Kabyles, like the Riffs of Morocco and the Tuaregs of the Sahara, belong to the Berber family, the aborigines of North Africa who were here even before the advent of the Phoenicians. They have sustained the shock of invasions by the Romans, Goths, Arabs and French, and they still preserve their nationality and their language and follow their ancient customs, though they have been forced to retire to the tops of the mountains.

If you want to see living pictures you should visit the fountain in the centre of this village when the women and girls are doing their washing. An artist would find models enough to last him for many a day. These Kabyle women are not secluded like the Arabs, except those of rich families and the Marabouts who belong to the class said to be descended from the Prophet. Some of the girls are bewitchingly pretty and many have skins as white as our own. They wear a picturesque costume, a robe cut square at the neck and drawn in at the waist by a gay sash, a bright handkerchief over the head and large silver ornaments, set with coral and decorated with enamel. They seem brightly intelligent and very friendly.

I was in and out of a number of homes to-day with one of the lady missionaries. Kabyle houses are built of stone, close together, which gives a village a solid

compact appearance from a distance. Mud is used instead of mortar and the roofs are covered with tiles. The outside aspect leads one to expect a greater degree of comfort than one finds on entering. The interior is very bare; indeed, of furniture there is practically none. They sit on the floor, except baby, who has a basket cradle hanging by ropes from a rafter.

There are no windows, all the light coming from the open door. Neither is there any chimney. The fire is made in a shallow hole in the middle of the floor, the smoke dispersing itself as best it can. Seeing how my eyes smarted in a couple of minutes, I wonder how they keep their sight under such circumstances. As you would expect, many babies get burned by rolling into the fire.

The living-room is divided into two parts by a row of extraordinary objects which for want of another name one must call jars. They are made of wicker, plastered on the outside with mud, and are used as receptacles for grain, figs and other staple foods.

On the one side of this strange wall or partition live the human inmates of the house, while the other is given up to the animals. Yet one felt in those primitive dwellings there was much of cleanliness, if little of comfort, and certainly there was a spirit of gracious hospitality. The girls were busily employed in raffia work, and their trays and other things were both substantial and artistic. These are sent to Algiers where they find a market among tourists.

In one house I saw two sisters, the elder quite good-looking and the younger positively beautiful. As the former plied her task, she said, in French for my sake, "I have had a deal of sorrow. I have twice been forced

to depart from my home! the first time I left behind me a boy and a girl, and the second, two beautiful girls, more beautiful even than my sister here." ("Yes," said the missionary to me, "they were indeed lovely, like two perfect English children.")

One can read an indefinite amount of print about the treatment of women in Moslem lands, without really grasping its meaning. But come face to face with a woman like this, hear how she has been cast off like an old shoe by two husbands, and has been robbed of all her children, and at last you begin to comprehend.

In another home the mother and daughters gathered round the missionary's knees, evidently drinking in her words. Then in a pause the older woman looked at me and asked, "Does she know the Lord Jesus?" I was much struck by this, for in all my wanderings far and wide I have seldom been asked that vital question. Here was a Kabyle woman, concerned to know whether it was well with my soul. Truth to tell, she is not a baptized believer, being a Moslem's wife, but she makes no secret of her love for the Saviour and her delight in His Word.

The Kabyles were slow to accept Islam. It was forced upon them by their conquerors, and while some, having once adopted it, became intensely fanatical, a large proportion have never had any convictions on the subject.

For one thing they are very ignorant of the doctrine, as few of them know Arabic and the Koran cannot be read in any other tongue. Their religious knowledge consists of a few stories and sayings handed down from father to son. Islam holds them because it is bound up with all their customs, national and domestic, and

they cannot cut loose from the religion without condemning themselves to social ostracism. They keep the fast of Ramadan, not from any deep sense of duty, but because if they fail to do so they will be utterly disgraced.

Ignorance is the twin brother of superstition and the Kabyles furnish plenty of illustrations of that fact. They are greatly given to making pilgrimages to holy places and holy men. They fancy that the very act of going to the sheikh will bring them a blessing, though he gives them not a word of instruction and may even lay about him with a big stick. A semi-lunatic man in this neighbourhood does so behave, and they count themselves happy to have a beating from him. One woman in the village got the sheikh to write her a passport to heaven, for which she paid the sum of three francs. A cheap ticket, that! (By the way, among the Kabyles a sheikh is equivalent to a priest, although elsewhere it means a chief.)

Many wear amulets, or charms, consisting of a bit of the Koran sewn up in leather and the children have a coin fastened on the cap to keep sickness away. Even animals sport one. These Moslems do not observe the severely simple worship of Almighty God that some people suppose. There is much of animism in their religion. They have a motley collection of false and foolish notions, and believe in a heterogeneous variety of spirits and demons, whose influence is to be feared.

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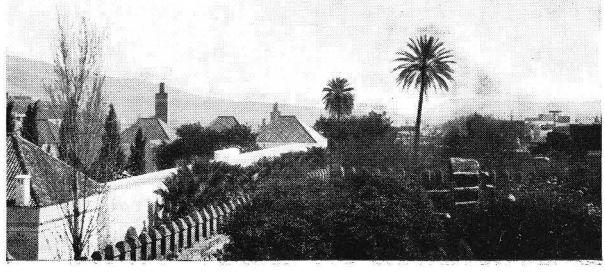
During the half century that the North Africa Mission has been established in Djemaa there has been considerable encouragement and from time to time

A CAR-LOAD
OF BOYS.

ALGIERS :
WOMEN
RETURNING
FROM THE
CEMETERY.



A GARDEN
IN FEZ.

definite blessing. Here, as elsewhere, women workers have borne a large share and the medical help which they have been able to render has opened many homes to the Gospel. Their dispensary attracts a goodly number of patients, there are classes for girls and at present two of the lady missionaries are devotedly caring for four unwanted babies.

On Sunday afternoon we witnessed the baptism of a Kabyle girl, who was brought up by missionaries formerly resident here. As an orphan child she was handed over to them by the authorities at the age of fourteen months, and she is an instance of patience and love not bestowed in vain. Though living at Algiers she chose to return to her native village to be baptized in the presence of those who had known her from babyhood.

As for the men's side of the work, there is again a dispensary, but I will not dwell on this as there are other features which are quite unusual and show remarkable ingenuity. One of the first things that struck me was that the missionary's house and yard were a rendezvous for boys of all sizes. Any afternoon when school is out there may be as many as thirty of them here. There is supervised play, football in particular, and the missionary and his wife take a practical interest in them. During Ramadan some years ago the sheikh tried to organize a boycott of the Hall but the missionary was more than a match for him. He built a switch-back railroad on the property and put on a good miniature car fitted with ball bearings. It proved a veritable magnet for the boyhood of the village and his originality was rewarded as it deserved to be.

It was interesting to have a peep into the Sunday

School treat these lads were enjoying the other day, and to see how eagerly one after another came forward to relate a Bible story. Equally delightful was it that same night to see four and twenty men sitting in the Hall, singing hymns and listening attentively to the Gospel message. Such a scene is only too rare in these Moslem lands.

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Speaking of that Hall I am tempted to say a word about an aspect of missionary work which may seem prosaic but is very important, namely the business of building. I have been much struck in this place with the value of versatility and the fact that on the mission field there is good use for any talent a man may happen to possess.

When mine host came here it fell to his lot to turn a fig orchard into a mission station. It was on a steep slope so first required levelling, in itself no light task. He needed stone to build the Hall and found it on the property, some few feet below the surface. Lower down he was fortunate enough to come upon sand which he required for mortar. In six months, with unskilled native labour, he had built the Hall, including under the same roof a vestry, dispensary and club room or "Foyer."

Next it was necessary to build a house for himself but he could not do this until he had first found water. He was not a wizard and had no divining wand, but the presence of a crystal deposit on the rocks convinced him that water was near and he dug till he came to a living spring fifty feet down. Then he built his own

house, a five-room bungalow with a verandah. Later on he added a baptistery to the Hall and piped the water down to it from the top of the hill. Evangelistic work was not neglected in the interest of building: it went on as usual. The missionary apparently thought nothing of this exploit; to him it was all in the day's work, but I must say I am much impressed with the value of these practical gifts when associated with evangelistic zeal. I wish some of our young fellows at home could visit such a station as this and see that it takes the whole of a man to make an all-round missionary and the most clever and capable are the ones who are needed in the field.

Before I turn away from this Gospel Hall there is one thing I must certainly mention I am only sorry you can't see it for yourself. It is a stone on which there is carved, in relief, a large fish and it is evidently a relic of Roman times. That early Christian symbol, how much it meant! How much was expressed, without words, in that suggested acrostic, ICHTHUS; Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour! I believe it occurs very frequently in the catacombs. Is it not interesting to find it here, in this mountain village, turned up by the spade in the twentieth century, showing that there were disciples in this very spot in those early days? This secret sign, so much used in times of persecution, seems to link the present with the past. To those who are called to suffer for the Name, it is surely a reminder that they belong to one great company with the saints and martyrs of olden time. It ought to be an inspiration. I hope it is, at least to some!

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Later.

Don't be shocked at the confession I am about to make: I am beginning to wonder what is the use of statistics! We read that a missionary has the supervision of two, ten or twenty out-stations, but we have not the faintest conception what is involved in reaching them, whether he has to climb a mountain or can roll round to them in his car. I have just had an unforgettable trip to an out-station, or rather two of them, and it has given me much to think about.

We started after an early breakfast and got back when the stars were beginning to peep, so it was quite enough to fill the day. We were seven: the missionary, his wife and their fine Kabyle boy, the mule, the donkey, the dog and I. We had to cross a mountain to reach the first out-station and then climb to the top of another to get to the second. Our way lay for the most part along the side of ravines and in some places it was very steep. Talk of hairpin bends! I never saw so many in my life before. There were no roads, properly so called, only mountain paths, and for a considerable part of the distance they consisted of old water courses, where the stones were not smooth and rounded but sharp and jagged. I acquired a great respect for mules, that one, at any rate.

Coming to a village we paused awhile to watch them pressing the olives. These were put into a trough containing a large stone wheel, which was turned by a mule and two women. After the fruit had been crushed, the pulp was put into flat rope baskets and these were piled one on top of another and placed in the press. This primitive piece of machinery was made of heavy beams of wood with a central corkscrew

shaft, which was turned until the oil was all squeezed out and received in a jar at the bottom.

On we went, until we saw perched on the mountain side a little building of corrugated iron, not exactly a thing of beauty, but one of thrilling interest, because so much prayer and work were back of it, and so much courage and faith had been required to bring it into existence. It is a strange coincidence that this piece of land has long borne the designation, Iril Bou Aisa, or the Hill of Jesus, Jesus being a name sometimes given in these parts though not a common one. It stands within easy reach of several villages and one may hope that ere long many of the mountaineers will come to know the true significance of the Name that is above every name.

The missionary carried all the material for this little place from Djemaa Sahridj on the backs of his beasts. Off the Hall there is a tiny kitchen and also a sleeping apartment like a ship's cabin. It is fitted with two bunks, upper and lower, and one could well imagine oneself at sea, only the windows slip up and down like those of a railway carriage and the view therefrom corrects any such impression. Here these two come once every week; the missionary teaches the men and his wife the women, and as the meetings break up late they spend the night in the cabin.

As soon as the Hall was opened there were signs of interest on the countryside. The little place was crowded and as these people knew nothing of coming at an appointed time, the two missionaries were sometimes kept talking four hours on end. Several appeared to turn to God, one man in particular being a clear, outstanding case.

Then followed trouble, or rather troubles in the plural, treading on each other's heels, like the servants of Job. The White Fathers tried to secure a house within a few feet of the Hall, and failing in this attempt they bought land a little further on. Some people would think one very narrow for speaking of this as a trouble. But you know too well what it means, when you are trying to instruct ignorant souls in the Gospel, to have someone come and sit on your door-step, as it were, and contradict what you are teaching. It did seem too bad, for these mountains are thickly sprinkled with villages, and the White Fathers could have had plenty of space all to themselves. But they preferred to come where the Protestants had already settled.

Then a café was opened within a stone's throw, though you would not recognize it under that term, for it was just a shack. But like many resorts of greater elegance, it served chiefly as a gambling den. Next, the son of the man who had sold the land sickened and died. The cause was pneumonia from a neglected cold, but the superstitious villagers took it as a bad omen and were afraid to attend the meetings which seemed to have called down divine vengeance. In all this the missionaries recognized the hand of the Arch Adversary and they had faith to believe that blessing was on the way, just because he was so bent on frustrating their work. So none of these things moved them.

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I mentioned above that there was an out-standing case of conversion at this out-station. The man in question openly confessed Christ and came into Djemaa

for baptism. He lived an hour's walk beyond the out-station and desired the missionaries to come and hold meetings in his village. Accordingly they did so, using one of several houses belonging to him and they received much encouragement. When, for family reasons, he could no longer loan them that place, he offered another in a more central position. The room was low, so he set to work to improve it, digging the floor a foot deeper so as to raise the ceiling, and then putting on a coat of whitewash.

Now have patience with me while I tell you what happened, for you will agree that it gives one a vivid realization of the difficulties of the work. We are so apt to take for granted that a man can go to a place, hire a room and preach the Gospel, whereas, in the mission field, the whole political system, not to mention all the powers of hell, may be opposed to such a simple procedure.

The room had been renovated and looked very nice, when one market day the Amin, or head man of that village, called on the missionary and protested against its being used for the propagation of the Christian religion. He averred that the people objected to music, so the missionary waived his rights and for peace' sake told him that they could manage without it. But the matter was not allowed to drop. The Amin gathered the Tamin, his assistants, together, and they went in a body to the Kaid. This dignitary is the head man of the tribe and has several villages under him, and he himself acts under the French government as the native administrator.

As the Kaid took the view of the Amin, the difficulty began to look serious. The former felt it his duty to

bring the matter before his superior officer, the French administrator. That gentleman came to the village, held an enquiry, and elicited the opinion of the inhabitants at large on this vexed question. The bulk of them supported the Amin and objected to the presence of missionaries in their midst. The administrator, in a spirit of fairness, asked, "But do these people do you any harm?" Then one man had the pluck to answer, "My little boy owes his life to their medical help."

No one could bring any valid complaint against them, and the Amin himself had exhausted his arguments when he said they were trying to turn people away from their ancient religion. Nevertheless, things looked black and the administrator feared actual bloodshed. It was his duty to preserve peace, so while recognizing the good work of the missionaries he requested them to withdraw for the time being, till this storm should blow over. One can scarcely blame him, for he was solely responsible for protecting the life and property of these foreigners.

It seemed as though the work so promisingly begun must now close down. But God's servants refused to be discouraged. They sent out an S.O.S. to their friends far and near, even to some in the United States, asking for instant and urgent prayer. Then, having done everything possible, they quietly awaited developments.

Some weeks later the Amin again appeared at their house, accompanied this time by the native Christian and a man to act as a witness. He had a plan to propose. He would not mind their holding meetings outside the village, so long as they surrendered all claim to that house inside. He wished, in fact, to buy the house

which was the subject of dispute, if the Christian would consent to part with it.

The attitude of the latter impressed our friends very favourably. He said he had given that building to God and could not sell it without consulting the missionary. The upshot of it all was that the bargain was clinched and the convert quickly acquired a piece of land just outside the village in its stead. This was, in fact, an old threshing-floor, levelled out on the side of a slope. It soon became evident that it was an even more suitable site than the first, because people from other villages would feel more free to come there. So here is another Araunah, offering his gift to the Lord on a mountain in Kabylia. But if we boast of him at home, Satan will be likely to attack him and he will need the help of intercession that he may be kept true.

* * * * * * *

Having heard of this wonderful answer to prayer, you may suppose I was delighted to have the opportunity of visiting the further point, an hour's march from our first stopping-place. We called at the home of this convert, whose wife was sitting on the floor of the court-yard making elegant pottery without any mould. We saw his beautiful married daughter and a bright bunch of youngsters and he took us out to the consecrated spot on the hillside. This Christian is eager to lose no time in proclaiming the Good News, but he cannot build at once as the Amin is in no hurry to pay up the purchase money for the other house. So he has erected a temporary shed of branches, plastered with mud and here we stood together in prayer, asking for a continuance of the blessing which God has definitely begun to bestow.

It was more than interesting to hear from his own lips the story of his experiences and the way in which he is trying to reason with his fellow villagers and convince them of the folly of their superstitions. He speaks French beautifully and one notices this with many of the Kabyles. It is no patois that they talk but the pure language with a perfect accent. They get it in the schools but even those who do not attend pick it up, as they are natural linguists.

So back we came, slowly descending the heights, "revolving many things" as old Virgil would say. At any rate, I speak for myself. I had had a glimpse of the difficulty of holding an outpost, and the effort which the Enemy will make to wrest even one such from the soldiers of Christ. When I read henceforth in missionary reports dry statistics about the number of outstations, I shall at least know that many a thrilling story probably lies behind those bare figures.

Back in the missionaries' home at Djemaa, I was dressing in the morning and the whole entrancing landscape lay bathed in sunshine, the early stillness brooding over all. Suddenly there burst forth a triumphant chorus, "Jesus shall reign where'er the sun doth his successive journeys run." You will guess at once that it was the gramophone. Yes, a record of the B.B.C. choir. But it fell so unexpectedly upon the silence of the hills that it might have been an angels' song. It brought the blessed reminder that all His faithful servants are on the winning side, since He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet.

Yours in that happy prospect,

Ruth.

P.S. If you are interested in the Kabyles, you ought to read "Thamilla, a Story of the Mountains of Algeria" by Ferdinand Duchêne, translated from the French by Isabelle May and Emily M. Newton. Published by the Fleming H. Revell Company. It has been called the "Uncle Tom's Cabin" of Moslem women for it pleads their cause as Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe pleaded the cause of the slaves.

VII.

Fishing for Men

AZAZGA,

KABYLIA, ALGERIA.

April 24th.

My dear Lydia,

Before I do anything else I must introduce to you my Kabylia fokeeh, whom I have not yet mentioned. You would know that if I needed a fokeeh in a city I should need one even more in such a country as this.

This missionary has spent practically twenty years in pioneer work. He came straight from the language school to Kabylia and instead of being appointed to a station, with the usual duties and responsibilities of a resident worker, he was designated for extensive evangelism. This includes visiting markets and villages.

Naturally, he knows Kabylia more intimately than most, knows it as you never know a country you have merely traversed by train or motor car. For the first two years he went afoot, then he had recourse to a mule for reaching the more distant places, and now that there are good roads he runs a car, provided by a friend of the Mission. This, however, merely serves to extend his base of operations, for ultimately he leaves the highway and climbs into the mountains.

He is, as you can see, a very suitable man for a guide

to the inexperienced traveller. But I regret to say that he takes a wicked delight in making people's hair stand on end. He has almost succeeded with mine, although this is less easy than it might be, as it isn't bobbed. I spotted this evil trait in him the very first day, when I came down by train into Kabylia and he met me at the jumping-off place.

He took me to Djemaa and we were only half way there when he calmly informed me we were coming to a "death-trap." He related the story of the 'bus which at this point left the road, leapt through the prickly pear, landed in a field and was soon reduced to cinders. Well, Lydia, while I am prepared to die, I confess I am not prepared to be damaged for life, so these gruesome tales send a shiver down my spine. I console myself with two considerations, first he is a capable driver and in the second place he is probably no more inclined than I to shuffle off this mortal coil. However, since he says I must consider myself lucky if I get back alive from to-morrow's adventure, I had better write you as much as possible to-day.

I thought you would like to hear about his work because it illustrates a phase of missionary effort which so far I have not described. You realize, of course, that there are no public meetings for both sexes, but lady missionaries proceed on the zenana principle, and visit from house to house, while men reach men as best they can. They can't preach by the hour in a street chapel to a changing crowd, the way they do in China, but they have to go and sit down in leisurely fashion wherever the men happen to be.

They congregate at three points. Outside the mosque they are apt to sit and chat and then there is

the thadjemath or public meeting-place of which I told you in my last. The French allow some measure of local self-government and meetings of one kind and another are held here. As long as there is no actual business on hand, it serves as a rendezvous where the men come and gossip when work is over.

Thirdly, there are the cafés. These are a modern innovation and not a desirable one. Card-playing and dominoes form the chief features, the man who loses paying for the coffees. Actual gambling is forbidden by the authorities, but these little places cannot, of course, be constantly watched. In some villages the old men will not consent to the opening of a café. In most cases they must be outside the boundary as the women coming to the fountain are not supposed to cross any spot where men are wont to gather. These, then, are the three points where the missionary goes a-fishing, the mosque yard, the thadjemath and the café.

Sometimes, climbing the hill, he sees a group of men at the top, but when he gets there, not a soul is in sight. This is passive resistance and is, in fact, the strongest form of opposition. When they argue and contradict he has some hope of making an impression, if not on his opponent, then on one or more of the by-standers. But when they merely vanish, of course he can do nothing. He must tramp on to the next place.

Happily, this behaviour is exceptional: usually he finds a few men in one or other of the three centres and salutes them with the greeting, "Peace be unto you." If they reply in like manner, "Peace be unto you," he is free to sit down amongst them. Otherwise

he can only shake off the dust of his feet and take to the road again.

He carries with him wherever he goes his indispensable bag. It contains his dental instruments which, odd as it seems, may be the most useful means of making contact with the people. One has always understood that eyes, mouth, ears, nose and throat are intimately related, but it is a fresh thought that the extraction of a molar may help to open the ears to the message and the eyes to the truth.

Of course he has his Bible, or rather that part of it which is published in Kabyle. The whole has been translated by one of the veteran missionaries of the N.A.M. now resident at Algiers, and the portion thus far printed includes Genesis, Psalms, Proverbs, Isaiah, and the New Testament. The bag also contains a stock of Scriptures for sale or distribution and a set of Bible pictures to show to the children.

Chatting with the men and answering their questions, the stranger watches an opportunity to read a bit from his book. Sooner or later what is read provokes discussion and ere long an impromptu meeting is in full swing and he is preaching the Gospel. He finds that to hold the attention of these people he must talk largely in parables; they have no appetite for abstract truth. Proverbs also are useful. It is, in fact, remarkable how stories and maxims serve to keep them in good humour. An interrupter can quickly be silenced by a homely proverb, even though it have no depth of meaning. "No beans will grow well except in your garden, I suppose," will suffice to turn the laugh on a disturber and cause the group to give the stranger a chance of stating his case.

Villages vary, of course, and sometimes in the more remote ones it is difficult to get a hearing. The forest people resent the presence of foreigners and the French officials have no easy time among them, so it is natural that the missionary should have but a shabby reception. In one village visited by my fokeeh, two old priests were his chief opponents. "What do you want here?" asked one of them. "Is that the way you treat a visitor? You know I have come a long way and am tired. May I not sit down?" "You can sit for five minutes," said the priest, "and then you must go." In that brief space the missionary got in a word for his Master, and hoped for better luck next time. One day he saw both old priests at the bottom of the hill, and reckoning on his own superior walking powers, he hurried to the top, sat down in the midst of some students, and had ten minutes' talk with them before the two old fellows arrived breathless and put an end to the proceedings.

Of course the chief hope is in the young, so the missionary pays special attention to boys. They will follow him anywhere out of sheer curiosity, true to boy-type the world over. So he gets them into a field or some other quiet spot, talks a while, and gives their active minds a bit of exercise in the way of memorizing hymns. Their own poetry is execrable. Some of the mission hymns are very good and one in particular is a résumé of the life of our Lord. At the close, my fokeeh distributes illustrated leaflets furnished by the Scripture Gift Mission. He has found that lads with whom he has had even this slight contact are ready in after years to listen to him in the men's meeting-place and they help to break down prejudice.

Another result is that fathers when they come to

the Azazga market will sometimes stop at the mission house and ask for more reading matter for their sons. The place is easily found, as it fronts on the street and in one of the windows there is always displayed a Gospel poster, which is changed from time to time. The missionary, one way and another, makes large use of literature and disposes of about 10,000 tracts and booklets in the year.

Free education, under French rule, secures a reading public, and thus greatly increases the hopefulness of missionary work. There are about eight hundred Franco-Kabyle schools in the country. The majority, it must be confessed, are elementary, and boys leave at ten or eleven years of age to become shepherds. So they don't get much beyond a first reader, and if offered a Gospel in the market later, they will say, "I have finished with books." They can only be called semi-literate.

But in the large villages good work is done and there is a keen spirit of emulation. Some of the pupils win scholarships and go on to Tizi Ouzou or Algiers for further education. Some become lawyers for there are enough quarrels in Kabylia to furnish a living for a considerable number. Others enter the Auxiliary Medical Service and are entrusted with such tasks as vaccination, or the care of isolation stations.

I mention this to show you that among the rising generation of Kabyles there is a growing proportion of young fellows whose minds are open to new ideas.

On the other hand this part of the country is a veritable hot-bed for Moslem propaganda. Koranic schools abound, the chief of them being the one at Sidi Mançour, where there are 120 students, ranging

from lads of twelve to men of thirty. They learn to read and write Arabic, memorize the whole of the Koran, and sometimes spend four years on the works of one Sidi Khellil. A school like the above may have as many as a dozen classes, all chanting at once in various rooms and corners.

My fokeeh surprised me very much when he described his method of approach to these students. The doors are open, as you know, and any one passing by can see the pupils squatting on the floor. This missionary simply holds out a book and signals to a lad to come and get it, which he is not slow to do. He is speedily followed by others, till perhaps the whole school is in the court-yard. You will not wonder that I expressed surprise at this procedure, seeing that with us it would be the height of impropriety to entice pupils from their class, or even to distract their attention in the slightest degree. Here it is different. There is little actual teaching; they are merely repeating the words of a book, and even the school-master is glad of a change and will rise and accompany his boys into the yard to hear what the stranger has to say.

Sometimes he will put them up to ask questions and challenge the statements of the missionary. For one thing this shows to good advantage the brilliance of his scholars and for another it gives them practice in debate. Islam must surely come off victorious, he thinks, in any dispute. But those who know something of the power of the Word of God, the vitality of the incorruptible seed, have good hope that even when dropped into such odd crevices as these, it may spring up unto everlasting life.

One day when my fokeeh thus disturbed the even

tenour of a Koranic school the teacher invited him to address the students at length. He turned to Stephen's apology, that masterly historical survey, because it deals at first with what Moslems and Christians believe in common and leads on from Moses to the heart of the Gospel. They not only listened but gave him supper at the close, and two of the chief men, the steward and a teacher, served him with their own hands, not sitting down to eat until he had finished.

When the meal was over the students returned to the guest-hall for further discussion and kept the missionary busy until eleven o'clock that night, the head-master concurring in this proceeding. Without attaching too much importance to their courtesy, one feels at least that it showed an unexpected readiness to listen to the doctrine. It inclines one to believe what many people say, that the Kabyles are broader-minded than the Arabs.

A missionary thus pioneering in the villages can usually plan to meet different groups at different hours and so make the best of this time. He may go to a café in the morning, and though most men are at work, he will see the lazy, the unemployed and the sick. If he turns up at another village when school is out, he can have an open air meeting with the boys. Finally, in the evening he will try to reach yet another village when all the men are back from the fields and sitting in the public place. But such a program as this evidently involves hard work and great fatigue.

The Kabyles are very hospitable; they will almost invariably ask the stranger to remain till the next day. In fact, they have a common verb of three letters, which means to stay-the-night. They feel it

is not fitting that folk should be out when spirits and demons are abroad. Such as they have they offer, and ask for nothing in return, but the cous-cous may be reeking with black oil or cooked in butter that was churned two years before.

If there is no personal invitation, the village authorities assume responsibility for the guest. The Amin tells one man to provide a room and another to furnish food. He may say to a third,"You have an old woman in your family : send her to clean up." So amongst them the stranger is cared for. He must be off early in the morning, however, for the men have to get to work, and he may be waked at four or five o'clock by the host calling out that his mule is ready and he can go in peace.

Usually, when weather permits, that is, in spring and summer, he prefers to be independent and sleep in his tent. He pitches it beside his motor car, gets light by running a flex from the one to the other, cooks his food on his little primus stove, and enjoys cleanliness and a certain degree of comfort. But it is a hard life at best, though this worker did not say so, and when all is done there is not much to show in the way of results. These belong to the Hereafter. The pioneer missionary endures as seeing Him who is invisible, confident that "no toil for Him can be in vain."

I have always, as you know, been an enthusiast for missions and a great lover of missionaries, but I have never appreciated the self-sacrifice of their lives so much as I have done of late.

* * * * * * *

April 27th.

I am still in Kabylia. With this French village of Azazga as my headquarters I have been driving about with my fokeeh, visiting scattered missionaries. The utmost care is necessary in motoring. One of these roads, in the short space of eight miles, makes a hundred and fifty-nine turns, or virtually twenty to the mile.

Taking another tortuous route, up through the cork forest, we reached Les Agribbes, where one devoted woman is labouring alone. She had just been dealing with a group of Bedouins who had come from their tents for medical help. She is known as "Mother" on this countryside. I can't describe her work in detail. But perhaps you can imagine her spending the night in a Kabyle home, nursing a sick baby, surrounded by eleven women and children, all fast asleep, with the donkey, two cows, the rooster and the hens in their own section of the same living-room. Or picture her teaching her beloved class of shepherd boys on Sundays, after they have brought their flocks back from the pastures.

Our drive to Michelet by the newly-opened road was a never-to-be-forgotten experience. The mountains were gleaming in purple and gold: broom and lavender make such a rich combination. We went up and up until we were high above the ravines, above the forests, and nearly on a level with the snow. It was almost too thrilling. I did not need my fokeeh's warning, "Now we are entering the danger zone": I saw quite enough proof of that. Clearly he had not been exaggerating after all.

In two or three years things will be different. There will be a splendid and comparatively safe road for

tourists, for the French are doing wonders. But now, while it has been opened to traffic, the road is not finished. They are still widening it, and rounding the most dangerous corners, and evidently they intend to build parapets along the worst of the precipices. But only a few yards have thus far been protected. In nearly four hours' driving we met but a single car, which was indeed a mercy. In one place the workmen, having felled a large tree, had let it block the way and we had to sit there until they had sawed it through and dragged it aside. At last we reached the top, where the road runs along a saw-like ridge and the mountain drops sheer down on both sides of it.

Then the scene changed. Rarely have I seen such a striking contrast as I did that day. A few moments later we found ourselves on a flat open space in the midst of a bustling throng, buying, selling, chattering, eating under the trees. Wherever did they spring from? From little villages hidden among those hills, for the commune has a population of 72,000 souls, and the one next to it is even larger.

Here we found a missionary who has been seven years in this eagle's nest. (Perhaps I should add that it is reachable from another direction by a better road.) She is now rejoicing in the help of a colleague, a young French lady and they are doing fine work. Every Sunday they have a meeting for French women and these attend well, although they are Catholics one and all. There is not a single Protestant in the village other than those two.

On market days the little Hall is devoted to Kabyle women and is turned into a rest-room for them, with sleeping mats on the floor. They begin to arrive at

six in the morning and are very glad to lie down and take a nap after having tramped over the mountains for perhaps a couple of hours. Many are widows who come regularly to market to do commissions for shut-in women who cannot attend to their own affairs. At 7.30 a.m. the missionaries have a service with them, and when they have left, another group will come in and yet a third, so that the workers are kept busy for several hours. On other days they give themselves to visiting the villages.

Kabylia is said to have some three thousand of these. When you stand on the mountain top you can see the whole country spread out below, and these little settlements capping the peaks and nestling among the trees. How many of them are being evangelized? I am sure that is what you chiefly want to know. Only about five hundred are "regularly visited" they say. And if you pursue the enquiry further and ask what this expression means, you learn that a missionary goes there at least once a year, perhaps several times, and spends one day.

There would not be many Christians in England, or America, I am thinking, if the Gospel were preached in each locality not more than half a dozen times a year. In Kabylia it is only the favoured 16 per cent. that get even this much attention : the 84 per cent are untouched unless perhaps by some occasional colporteur.

The shortage of men missionaries is most regrettable. I believe in the N.A.M. there are four women to one man, and as these can seldom work directly among men in Moslem lands, the latter are not being evangelized to any worthy extent.

A still more urgent need is that of voluntary native workers. It seems highly improbable that there will be any great ingathering of souls unless and until there is a band of men who have come out from Islam and are prepared to go all lengths in witnessing for Christ. The paid evangelist is badly handicapped. He is looked upon with suspicion as having sold himself to the foreigners. The independent witness, though he may be able to give but a fraction of his time to the work, seems to be far more effective than the agent of a society. Though the labourer is worthy of his hire, the one who requires no hire exercises the greater influence.

If one takes a world-wide view of the Mission field, and considers the vast populations of China and India, one can scarcely wish to see any great concentration of foreign missionaries in the Barbary States. But I do think that the proportion between men and women needs adjustment, and three to five would be a more satisfactory ratio than one to four. I take the impression that twenty strong men, ready to face hardship and difficulty, are urgently and immediately needed.

But we ought surely to pray that, in addition to such reinforcements, God will raise up and endue with power a native ministry. Without this I can't see how these scattered villages are ever to be evangelized.

Yours as ever,

Ruth.

VIII.

Handicaps

BOUGIE,
ALGERIA.

May 8th.

My dear Lydia,

Bougie has a French name, by mistake, but it is not of recent growth, and has nothing to do with candles. If it isn't as old as the hills that surround it, at any rate it goes back to Roman times. It is famed as one of the holy places of Islam, and is often called "Little Mecca." Here, on the 27th of Ramadan, is held the Great Prayer, for which the tribes gather from far and near. This ceremony is seen at only a few points in the Moslem world. Like Algiers, Bougie is perched high upon a rocky cliff and has a splendid outlook over sea and land. The poet Campbell came here a hundred years ago and wrote of the mountain scenery, "I drop my pen in despair. . . . . Scotchman as I am." I may as well follow his example, specially as I am pledged to tell you about wonders of another kind.

"Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were a present far too small. . . . . My soul, my life. . ," these are greater! It is surely a tremendous claim, yet one cannot question that the human soul transcends in value the material universe. Here the spirit that outshines the glories of nature is that of Raymond Lull,

the first outstanding missionary to the Moslems, martyred six hundred years ago.

He was eighty years of age when he was stoned on the public square while preaching the Gospel. His friends carried him down the hill, through the great gate which still remains, and laid him on board the boat, where he breathed his last as dawn was breaking over the sea.

While missionaries are no longer martyred, native converts, as you know, risk everything when they confess Christ. But for this fact, there would doubtless be many more. It is inspiring to meet those who are fearless in their testimony. One such happens to be in the house at this moment. He is a great joy to the missionaries, specially because they see in him a very definite work of the Holy Spirit. Though they preached in his village and distributed literature, they had no idea of the conflict going on in that soul until after the victory had been won. God brought him through.

He had two dreams, in one of which he was commanded to "Go the way of Jesus." In the other, someone offered him a drink, from which he recoiled, feeling instinctively that it was poison, but he was assured that it was good and that he had been drinking it all his life. Then Jesus Himself drew near, took a bunch of grapes, crushed them and handed him the cup. He drank of it and knew that henceforth he was to be identified with Him. After this revelation he was in such agony of mind that for two weeks he could not sleep.

Being a fine Arabic scholar, he studied the Bible and the Koran side by side. He discovered many contradictions in the latter and became convinced of

the truth of Christianity. He tackled the sheikh in the public meeting-place, proving from the Koran itself that Jesus is greater than Mohammed.

The sheikh, less of a scholar, found himself in a tight corner, and could only escape from the difficulty by the use of his official power. He forbade that anyone in the district should work this man's fields or buy his produce. Nothing daunted, the Christian took his oil and figs into the desert and found a market among the oases, while he imported poor men to till his land.

Wherever he goes, he gives a frank, spontaneous testimony, saying, "Formerly I was miserable. Now I am happy in Christ." The influence of a man of this calibre, who has the advantage of independent means, is of course incalculable. A missionary of thirty years' standing who has talked with him at length, has expressed the conviction that God has raised him up to be a leader of his people.

* * * * * * *

As I sit at the window writing this letter, the garden gate opens and girls in gay shawls come trooping in, for their weekly class. It is held in the little kitchen, and the missionary and his wife have to clear this every time, since in a room ten feet square, there is no space even for a table, when twenty or thirty girls sit sewing on the floor. In muddy weather, you may imagine what extra work is involved.

Some of them looked in early this morning to ask an odd question. "May we come this afternoon, but not to sew? If any woman sews to-day her hand will tremble when she gets old." This one little item will give you a peep into their dark minds.

But the light is beginning to dawn. Recently, at the close of the Bible lesson, the missionary asked, "Is there one girl here who believes in the Lord Jesus as her own Saviour?" Without hesitation bright-faced Tata stood up and said before them all, "I do, with my whole heart. I believe He died for me."

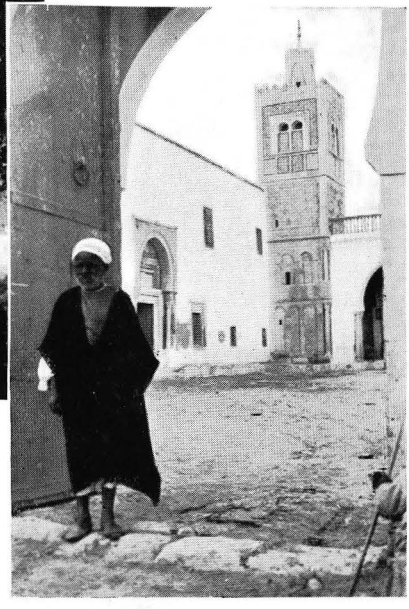
They called her a "turn-coat" when class was over, but this did not trouble her. She is witnessing in her home, not only with her lips but in her life. The neighbours say there is not another girl like her in all the quarter, for she never gets angry like themselves, but always seems happy. Alas! she has just been shut up, for custom is inexorable. No more classes, no more freedom! Another girl has her corner on the kitchen floor, where she so loved to be.

* * * * * * *

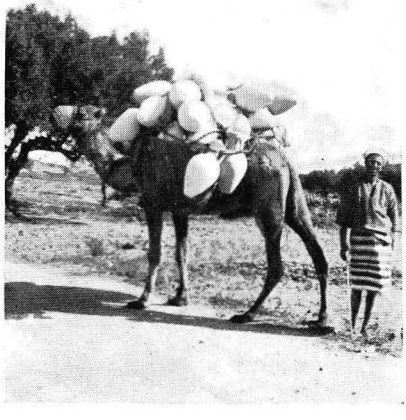
Bougie is an important place and offers unusual opportunities for missionary work, on account of its industrial development. The harbour has been enlarged, mineral resources are being exploited and the extensive vineyards attract workers here from the surrounding villages. The senior missionary and his colleagues visit these vineyards in the noon hour and are able to reach some thirty to forty men and boys in each.

The main difficulty here is the lack of suitable premises, the meeting-place being a damp, little native shop, with a low ceiling, and no ventilation except through one small window. People can't be expected to go there. As you see, the missionaries have to use their own kitchen, and even apart from this claim on their space, they are so cooped up that they can scarcely turn round.

TATA.



THE PRECINCTS
OF THE MOSQUE.



THE POTTER'S
HANDIWORK:
GOING TO
MARKET.

It is grievous to see faithful workers like these handicapped for want of ordinary equipment, or in other words, for lack of a little cash. If people at home only knew, surely this would be forthcoming! There is plenty of money for other cults. It has flowed in abundantly for the renovation of the mosque; the old Catholic Church has been enlarged and a new and costly one has now been built, the Jews, too, have a fine synagogue, but the preaching of the Gospel to the natives is relegated to this wretched little place.

It might do for an out-station, perhaps, but for the centre of missionary work in the sea-port of Kabylia, it gives a regrettable impression. It suggests a warning rather than an invitation and is calculated to repel even those who might otherwise be interested. What a mystery it is that spiritual work should be hindered for the lack of a few poor pounds!

This will be my last letter from Algeria. I have visited roughly half the stations of the N.A.M. in this country, and am disposed to believe that those I must omit are just as interesting as the ones I have seen. I am truly sorry not to get to Lafayette, Batna, Tiaret, Oued-Amizour, Tebessa and Bône. For your sake as well as my own, I should like to have stayed longer and seen more, for you asked for plenty of information that you might share it with others. But, after all, I feel that the somewhat full description I have given you of a few places will afford you a better idea of the working of the Mission than you would get from a concise summary of every station's activities.

Your affectionate friend,

Ruth.

IX.

Jew and Gentile

DJERBA ISLAND,
TUNISIA.

May 15th.

My dear Lydia,

If you realize where I am at this moment you will begin to wonder whether I shall ever see "Home, sweet Home" again. For Djerba is the isle of the Lotus Eaters, and you know full well that those who tasted that seductive fruit lost all desire to leave these shores and forgot even the name of their native land.

"Where is this mysterious region?" you will doubtless ask. It is "where the feathery palm-trees rise and the date grows ripe under sunny skies," and if that is not sufficiently explicit to satisfy your enquiring mind, it is off the coast of southern Tunisia.

I believe I wrote you last from Bougie, Algeria. Two long days on the train brought me to Tunis, but instead of staying there, I was led by circumstances to make a dash for the south. After another twelve hours on a primitive railroad I reached Gabes, which is an oasis by the sea.

The scene on which I gazed all that day was a great contrast with the mountain region of Kabylia which I

had recently left. The plain which skirts the Gulf of Tunis is as flat as the sea itself and for the most part it is covered with a scrubby grass, though there are cultivated patches bearing olives and palms. The camel is the animal most in evidence, and one sees him drawing the old-fashioned plough, munching his unappetizing morsel, or standing tethered beside the low, black tents of the Bedouins.

Next morning I boarded an "autobus" full of Arabs and had a drive of some sixty miles through country which was desert enough, in all conscience, although not *the* Desert. Ere long we reached the miniature port, where lay a boat ready to carry us over to the Isle of Oblivion, the land where it is always afternoon.

Now that I have been here several days my feelings are somewhat mixed. Of course it is wonderful to be standing on this classic soil, breathing the air which is redolent of ancient story. But I can whisper to you, Lydia my dear, what I should hesitate to say out loud, namely, that this spot is too sandy to allow me to be sentimental. I think nothing is more tiring than to walk over loose sand, and when that sand gets into your shoes, it drives out all poetic feelings. Of course if we adopted the life of the lotus eaters we should not notice this drawback, for we should not be trudging about as I am doing now. We should sit us down "upon the yellow sand, between the sun and moon upon the shore," forswear all effort for ever, and simply dream our lives away. But after all, that is not my idea of bliss, or yours either!

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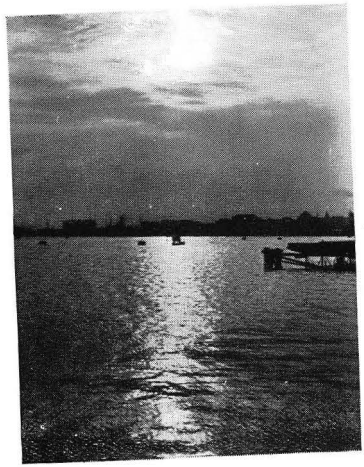
Spite of sand, this isle is not without its charm. It can boast of half a million palm-trees and as many olives, besides oranges, lemons and figs. Its gleaming white houses are of the oddest pattern I ever saw, like cylinders lying along. In Djerbian buildings generally there are many curves and arches, and even so prosaic a place as the market is more suggestive of cloisters than anything else.

What struck me as queerest of all, when I drove through the island to its central village, was the constant recurrence of what looked like big and little skating rinks, of brilliant whiteness. I could not imagine that these islanders indulged in roller skating to the extent that this would imply, and I wondered if they could by any chance be threshing floors. But no, they are receptacles for catching rain-water, and this drains through a hole into an underground cistern. You will see from this that Djerba has one great drawback and you will sympathise with the missionary who has only boiled rain water to drink. The many stone wells testify that water is found below the surface, but for the most part it is not potable.

This is a very democratic sort of place: its limited area is divided into nearly six thousand small holdings and in connection with the several industries that occupy the people there are active co-operative organizations. For instance, all the oil-producers belong to one of these, the fishermen to another, the weavers to a third. We looked in upon one of the latter yesterday as he sat at his own hand-loom, making a beautiful blanket. In other homes we saw women sitting on the floor, carding and spinning wool. They so held the distaff that it ran unceasingly up and down the



SUNSET ON THE GULF OF TUNIS.

WHERE WE EMBARK FOR DJERBA ISLAND.

shin bone. This sometimes turns black in the process, so they say. If I were a spinster, I should certainly make myself a wooden shin and contrive to save the bone one!

I was struck by the warm and friendly welcome the missionary received when she took me into these homes. The women would stop in the midst of their work, even washing, and positively entreat us to sit down and partake of refreshment. It was specially strange to be taken to the house of the ex-Kadi, the former head of the Moslem religion in the island, whose antagonism has evaporated.

This is not due to any camouflaging of the message on the missionary's part, for she gives the straight Gospel every time in every house. "You are not the only one who is expecting Jesus to return," said the Kadi to her one day. "We Moslems also expect Him and the present state of the world suggests that His coming draws near." I have heard this conviction expressed several times before: it is based on something in the Koran. But the Moslems do not believe that He ever died on Calvary; they say He will die when He comes next time. In spite of the mass of error in which the modicum of truth is mixed, it is surely interesting to see that Mohammedans, like Jews and Christians, are looking for a Coming One.

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There is nothing about these Djerbians suggestive of lotus eating. They appear to be very industrious. Besides engaging in agriculture and the several employments I have just mentioned, they dive for sponges,

which abound on this coast and they make good pottery.

They are, moreover, very keen merchants in their small way. The story goes that a non-Djerbian, to escape competition with them, went as far as Central Africa. There to his dismay he found a lame Djerbian, so he threw up his hands in despair and then threw up his business too. If a one legged Djerbian could penetrate to the heart of the continent, how could he ever hope to compete successfully with two-legged ones?

You can take that tale for what it is worth. At the back of it is the fact that these people do leave their island to make their fortunes and are found in various countries of Africa. When the father feels he has toiled long enough in the little shop in a foreign land, he returns home to live on his own plot of ground and his son goes to carry on the business. You will judge from this that evangelistic work among these islanders may have far-reaching results.

Not until quite lately, however, have these interesting people had any resident missionary. Now they have one woman. She on her part has a parish of nearly 50,000 souls, though of course she is without official recognition and has to work in a very unobtrusive way.

When she arrived she was warned, by those who knew Djerba, that it was highly improbable any homes would be opened to her, both Arabs and Jews being intensely fanatical. The only hope lay in prayer and to this she had recourse. Asking for guidance, she strolled down a country lane and there she saw a small boy crying bitterly. He was in great pain for he had struck his bare foot against a stone so hard as to tear

off a toe-nail. She carried him to his mother and helped to dress the little foot, and thus this home was opened to her and she was invited to several others before her first week was over. She has now entered about half the villages and regularly tramps these sandy paths to visit them.

School-boys evidently like to come to her tiny apartment, where some get help with their lessons and all find understanding friendship, so lacking in their lives as a rule. They often show a spirit of serious enquiry. One young fellow comes who actually lives in the mosque, where he has been a student and is now a teacher. He is plainly attracted by the Gospel and is not ashamed to be seen going to the little Hall. He will even wash the floor, by way of helping the missionary, surely a sign of sincerity.

Yesterday I met a little chap of about twelve, who came in to ask if he could do any errands. Not long ago he was given to lying, like most of them, and did a bit of thieving on occasion, but he has greatly changed and has won a good character at school and elsewhere. When Ramadan came in, which presents the greatest test to all new believers, this small person took a firm stand and refused to keep the Fast.

His simple honesty came out in a charming way at a Christmas party given to a group of young people. He had to pay a forfeit, by answering six questions, "quite truthfully." "What is your favourite scent?" "What is your favourite cake?" And so on. They were having great fun laughing at his answers, when the last question was proposed. "Whom do you love the most?" Then the boy's face suddenly became serious, and he said quietly, "Jesus." "Why,

Mohammed?" he was asked. "Because He died to put away my sins."

He gradually came to feel that the name Mohammed was no longer suitable to him and a while ago he announced that he wished to be called John. That in itself is a confession of faith to all and sundry. At first he was subjected to petty persecution hard for a boy to bear, but now his school-mates and others have stopped worrying him ; maybe they feel some degree of respect for the sturdy independence of the little fellow. Anyhow, everybody calls him "Petit Jean." He is one of the many who have never been counted as converts, but in whose hearts a work of God is assuredly going on.

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These school-boys come to the missionary by ones and twos, and some of them ask her into their homes, where she gets opportunities among the women and girls. The interest shown by the lads has caused her to feel very keenly the need of a man to labour among them, and she has made it a matter of special prayer. God has wonderfully answered and this is quite a story in itself.

The Harbour-Master and his wife, French Catholics and society people, have been gloriously converted. They told me all about it themselves yesterday, and they would be only too glad to tell the whole world, if they could, how great things the Lord hath done for them. Madame was brought up in the strictest Catholic traditions and educated in the Convent of the Sacred Heart in Rome. Her grandfather was Lord

Chamberlain to the Pope, her uncle is the head of the Noble Guards of His Holiness, while two of her cousins are ambassadors to the Vatican, the one from Spain and the other from Hungary.

She was nurtured on the very essence of Roman doctrine but found no satisfaction therein. Clearly she was not the sort of girl who could accept everything blindfold. She questioned so much that her family dubbed her "the heretic," not that she had ever met heretics in her life or knew anything about them. She never prayed to the saints or even to the Virgin, truly though she loved and reverenced the latter. She prayed to God Himself and pondered over spiritual problems without a soul to help her.

In the whirligig of time she found herself in this isolated spot, wife of the Harbour-Master and mother of two little children. Here she met our missionary, and over the teacups the two had many earnest discussions on religious matters. But Madame was shy of Protestantism, for in her eyes it signified a sect that had broken away from the one Church, which, whatever its faults, had been divinely ordained. The missionary gave her a Bible, saying it was the Word of God, not a sectarian book at all, and she could interpret it for herself.

Although she had been taught that it was a great sin to read it, she ventured to do so. The Lord Jesus revealed Himself through its pages and she is to-day rejoicing in a full salvation. Radiantly happy, she said to me, "Now I am wholly surrendered to Him!"

When the missionary was seeking to win this soul, she little dreamed that God was working in the heart of the Harbour-Master himself. He was nominally

a Roman Catholic but what he knew of the Church served rather to disgust him with religion than otherwise. Yet he longed for peace with God, and the death of his brother and his father within one year of each other made him realize the uncertainty of life and the need for settling without delay the one supreme question.

How wonderful it is "to watch the Master work," taking up one human instrument here and another there, as best may serve His purpose! A missionary in North Africa who has retired from active service on account of ill-health, systematically sends out tracts by post, getting addresses from printed lists. Providentially the name of the harbour-master of Djerba was entered on his books, and the little messengers were duly forwarded to him. It was through these that he became awakened to his need of a personal Saviour, and not long afterwards, through reading that well-known booklet, "Safety, Certainty and Enjoyment" he came into the full light of the Gospel.

Now he regularly conducts worship in the little Hall on Sundays and Fridays and as he learns more of the things of God he seeks to pass them on to others. His leisure is devoted chiefly to the study of the Bible, which he had never opened up to a year or two ago. He is also learning Arabic. Although his secular occupation takes the bulk of his time he is anxious to master this language in order to preach the Gospel to the Jews and Moslems. He seeks to evangelize his European neighbours by sending them, through the post, tracts similar to those that proved such a blessing to himself.

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When telling you about the Europeans and the Arabs on this old-world island, I must not forget to mention the colony of Jews. Some four thousand of them are congregated in two villages known as the Big Ghetto and the Little Ghetto. Historians differ as to when they first settled here. Some say it was after the Babylonish captivity, others connect it with the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus. At any rate, here they are, clinging with passionate intensity to their ancient customs and exhibiting an almost idolatrous reverence for their law. It is not the pure law of Moses, though doubtless that formed the original foundation. They think more of the rabbinical teachings than they do of the Scriptures and in fact they make the law of God of none effect through their tradition.

We went over to the Little Ghetto yesterday, on the occasion of a special festival, and had ocular proof of that rigid observance of law. Across almost every road and alley there was stretched a wire, to indicate that beyond that line no Jew might carry any burden on the Sabbath Day. One Sabbath this missionary saw a group of women and children on the road, and noting that a little tot was crying piteously from fatigue she proposed to carry him, as his mother seemed unable. Then the woman explained that it was not lawful to carry one's child on the Sabbath : one might only pick him up when inside the house.

If you are likely to need a handkerchief, you must not put one in your pocket, for that would be "carrying" it ; you must tie it round your neck as an article of clothing. These Jews, now that their prejudices have been disarmed, are willing to have the missionary visit them on the Sabbath, since they are then at leisure,

but they object to her appearing in their village carrying a hand-bag or a book.

As I have just said, we went to get a glimpse of the festival which was in progress. There is a noted synagogue in the Little Ghetto, known as the Ghriba, which owes its fame to the legend that an ancient roll of the Law was here discovered. Once a year Jewish pilgrims flock to it from all parts of North Africa, and there is a sort of hostel where many of them stay. That is to say, there is a large edifice built round the four sides of a court, and consisting entirely of tiny windowless cells. Each of these serves to house a whole family or party, and here they cook and eat and sleep in dirt and darkness for about a week, attending the services at the synagogue opposite.

When we looked in, a black-bearded rabbi was speaking to the people, while at the same time old men were reading aloud from their books of law or prayers, one was drinking coffee and many were simply lounging. An old woman of wistful countenance was kissing a sacred scroll, candles were burning in honour of departed rabbis, offerings of money were thrown into dishes of oil, the air was full of incense, and tawdry paper hangings seemed to divest the place of whatever dignity it may originally have had.

God's ancient people are as badly in need of the Gospel as the heathen or the Moslems and this missionary does her best to give it to them. She has been able to make friends with some of the girls and has succeeded in organizing a sewing class for them. She also gives out Scripture portions, particularly those which may be expected to appeal to the Jews.

One day she was distributing in leaflet form the

Fifty-Third of Isaiah, when, turning round, she saw that a young rabbi had collected the papers she had thus far given out and was making a bonfire of them. Deeply grieved, she reproached him for his ignorance of his own Scriptures. On her next visit he came and apologized, saying that he had not understood, and she was then able to talk freely with him of the Sin-bearer.

While they were antagonistic at first, these Jews are now friendly, and will sometimes ask if she has any new books for them. She was surprised one day to come on a group of them sitting round a man who was reading aloud from the Gospel of Matthew. Seeing her, one of them asked if the feeding of the five thousand was really a true story.

There were a number of Jews from Tripoli at the festival this week and several of them spoke of the N.A.M. missionary there. You probably know that the work in that country is in its initial stages and the society has only one representative at present labouring in that great area. Yet here on the island of Djerba I have seen and spoken with young Jews who have had medical help from that missionary and have received copies of the Gospel at his hands. They expressed warm appreciation of what he was doing and of his kindness to themselves.

I might mention the similar testimony of an Arab fisherman whom we visited the other day. He was sitting on the floor of the court-yard mending the sail of his boat. While not a confessed believer, he wants his wife and children to hear the Good News and he has asked the missionary to distribute booklets among the men in the oil press attached to his house. His interest in the Gospel is due to that solitary worker in

Tripoli whom he used to know. After all, no parallels of latitude or meridians of longitude can circumscribe the sphere of any servant of God.

When you stay with missionaries as I have done lately, you realize that they have good reason to feel encouraged, even when they cannot report actual baptisms among the Moslems and the Jews. Every home opened to the Gospel message, every foe turned to friend, is a proof of God's working and an earnest of better things beyond.

Yours affectionately,

Ruth.

X.

Many Adversaries

SFAX,
TUNISIA.

May 19.

My dear Lydia,

I wonder whether you ever made an expedition in search of troglodytes. I was much "intrigued" by the suggestion that we should do this : accordingly, when motoring from Djerba to this coast town of Sfax, we "fetched a compass" so as to include the mountains where they were said to exist.

These ranges are lower than those of Algeria but they are striking in their very barrenness and sometimes almost weird. We found the roads not too bad, though punctuated every here and there with a hole two or three feet across, a long crack or a crumbling edge, so that my fokeeh had to keep both eyes open. This good man, whom I now introduce to you, came to rescue me from the Isle of the Lotus Eaters and to pilot me round Southern Tunisia.

When "Carrie," faithful and efficient as she is, became tired and overheated with climbing, we let her rest awhile and betook ourselves to hunting for specimens in the rocks. We found bits of gypsum of crystal clearness, as well as other varieties in pink and black. But we began to fear that darkness would over-

take us in the mountains before we had discovered any troglodytes. I was anxious to find them, for back in my school-days I became interested in ammonites, belemnites, trilobites and the rest. At last, shortly before sunset, we came upon a number of these interesting vertebrates, ranging from two feet to six in length, in the caves of Matmata.

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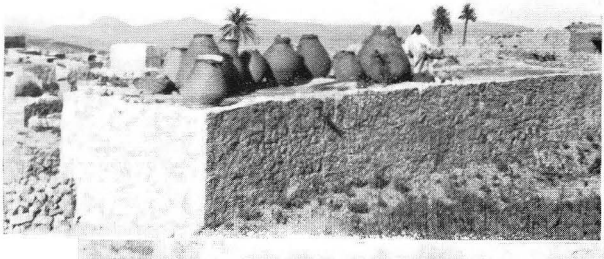
Do forgive me, dear, for trifling with you. I know it was very naughty, but I could not resist the temptation. The term is so very suggestive of fossil remains and after all, what I have just said is literally true : I never tell fibs !

Of course, troglodytes are neither more nor less than cave-dwellers. Perhaps you know as much about them as I do, and have raised your eye-brows in mild surprise at my levity. Well, never mind, I will be serious henceforth.

There are scarcely any ordinary houses in Matmata ; the inhabitants practically all live in the caves. The landscape as a whole presents the appearance of a great rabbit warren. It is broken up into mounds of irregular shape and size and dotted with black spots, these being the mouths of the tunnels which lead into the domiciles of the troglodytes.

Here is the way they build. They dig out a circular hole in the tufa, some twenty or more feet deep and about thirty across. This becomes the court-yard of the house and it is connected with the outside world by one of the above tunnels. From this as a centre they bore other passages, opening out into various



THE HARVEST
ON THE ROOF.

IN A
TROGLODYTE'S
COURTYARD.

rooms, some for the family and others for the camels, the donkeys or the cows. These have vaulted roofs to ensure stability.

When we arrived on the scene a dignified troglodyte came forward and invited us to his abode, where we met his wife and truly pretty children. They were far remote from the primitive type associated in one's mind with the idea of cave-dwelling, very different from the troglodytes described by ancient Greek writers as not even possessing the power of speech. This man spoke Arabic and French, turn about, with equal fluency, and cordially welcomed us into his home. He said the caves were cool in summer and warm in winter. At the entrance to the court-yard a fire was burning brightly in a deep hole, and the leaping flames seen against the back-ground of the black, vaulted tunnel, produced a Rembrandtesque effect.

We entered a spacious apartment where stood a large hand-loom, while all round the walls there were great earthenware jars, containing the family provisions. The furniture looked as if it had grown by deposit, as stalagmites do, or been carved out of the earth like the room itself, but the man explained that, contrary to appearances, it was really made of wood. This had been covered with plaster and whitewashed, together with the walls, so the bed, the lamp stand and the rack were all fixtures.

The mother, who was busy spinning, made friends with me without the assistance of words, and the missionary had a good talk with her husband. He listened very attentively and I was afterwards interested to hear how the Message had been presented. The Englishman said he came from a far country, but after

all they had a common ancestor. All Arabs of course believe in Adam and recognize that through him sin came into the world, and death by sin. So they were soon on common ground and the missionary led up to the theme of our common salvation. "If you were about to appear before the Bey of Tunis," he said, "you would have a bath, go to the barber's and get a new suit of clothes. How may we prepare to appear before God? We can wash our hands, but who can wash his heart?" Then he preached unto him Jesus and for once in his life, from a passing stranger, the troglodyte heard about the way of salvation.

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Leaving the mountains behind, we came on to this seaport of Sfax, noted for its olive plantations, its salt beds and its large export of phosphates. The olive yards cover about a hundred square miles, and in the midst the authorities have very astutely built a tower which they call the Point of View. Everyone, surely, who climbs it must get a new vision of Tunisia's possibilities.

Besides the above-mentioned industries, Sfax produces quantities of almonds and has a not inconsiderable trade in sponges and dried octopuses, (or -pi, if you prefer). The Greeks largely live on these during Lent. In consequence of the development of its resources in recent years, the place now has a population of about 100,000.

In this large city there is only one missionary, though there is a devoted pastor at the French Protestant Church. The solitary missionary is a woman,

representing the N.A.M. and her activities for the most part take the form of classes and visiting. But for the past eight years she has had a Bible Depôt in the shape of a kiosk, which has attracted a good deal of attention.

Situated near the General Post-Office, and the band stand, in the heart of the city, it has been as a light shining in a dark place. In its windows there have been displayed open Bibles in Arabic, Hebrew, Italian and French, and always one or more illustrated posters. Besides Gospels and other portions of the Scriptures, the literature of the Nile Mission Press has been on sale.

The missionary spent two hours every morning in the kiosk, and people would drop in on their way to the post-office or the market, and children would sometimes come in before school. She kept a set of Harold Copping pictures to show them and through this valuable medium sought to give them the Gospel.

I came here just too late to see the little place where so much good work has been done. A recent municipal order required all wooden kiosks to be removed, so a fortnight ago the Bible Depôt disappeared.

This missionary has encountered a good deal of opposition from time to time and has been much disturbed by bands of hooligans. Not only in her Sunday School outside the native town but in the very centre of the European quarter she was subjected to stone-throwing, so that it became necessary to protect her kiosk windows with wire netting.

Over and over again she has been spat upon and has even had filth thrown upon her as she sat in the kiosk. This sort of treatment could scarcely have persisted without the tacit approval of those in authority,

for the thing was not done in a corner. A little "muscular Christianity" might have been in place, but a lone woman cannot practise this and is consequently at a disadvantage. When my present fokeeh caught a boy throwing dirt, he did not hesitate to pick him up by the heels and mop up the mess with his naughty pate, so that he did not repeat the experiment. But this is scarcely a lady's job.

Sfax is acknowledged to be a very fanatical place. It was here that Dr. and Mrs. Leach, with their little boy, were mysteriously murdered, thirty-seven years ago, soon after coming to open up medical work.

Both Moslems and Jews are bitter in their opposition. About three years since, a certain rabbi made a tour of Tunisia, stirring up enmity and exhorting Jews to beware of Christian publications. He affirmed that the books of the Prophets, printed by the Bible Society, and sold at the kiosk and by colporteurs, were not genuine. He worked so successfully on the feelings of these Sfaxians that they held a bonfire in the precincts of the synagogue, and destroyed some four hundred francs' worth of Scriptures. Previous to this they had been in the habit of purchasing portions of the Old Testament, because those published by the B.F.B.S. were cheaper than their own.

When we went into their synagogue on the Sabbath, which, strange to say, we were welcome to do, we saw men in modern dress walk up one after another and kiss the doors of the cupboard behind which the sacred crolls were kept. Honouring God, in literal fashion, with their lips they will at one and the same time destroy with their hands His Holy Word. Could inconsistency go farther than this?

As for the Moslems, they have become more fanatical since the recent riots in Tunis, over the burial of a man who had dared to wear a hat instead of a fez. He was not accused of any sympathy with Christianity but he had donned a trilby, which was presumably the first step in the wrong direction, or shall I call it the thin end of the wedge? (I fear neither of these metaphors is quite apt.) Anyhow, they refused him Moslem burial and the result was a clash with the authorities, who did not want him in the European cemetery. Fancy one's right to a final resting-place hingeing on a hat!

This clash had its repercussions here in Sfax, so that house after house was closed to the missionary, just when a few women were beginning to get interested. They now became positively afraid to have friendly relations with the foreigner. Certain young girls who merely invited her into the courtyard were beaten by their parents for so doing.

Moslems and Jews having severally failed to down one little woman, the Roman Catholic priest has tried his hand at the same manly task. A fortnight ago he warned his congregation against this lady, "who represents a rich society" (save the mark!). He gave out instructions that whoever received any literature at her hands should bring it straightway to him, and he would "know what to do with it." Romanists, Moslems, and Jews are alike in one thing, at any rate: they are all opposed to the circulation of the Word of God.

This faithful worker refuses, however, to be discouraged. She recognizes that she has been placed here as a witness and must give her testimony, whether

they will hear or whether they will forbear. As for results, she knows that "the wise, and their works, are in the hand of God."

Your affectionate friend,

Ruth.

XI.

The Foreign Legion

SOUSSE,
TUNISIA.

May 26.

My dear Lydia,

The place from which I now write is sometimes called "The Pearl of the Sahel." This latter term signifies the region of scrubby plain lying back from the Gulf of Tunis, which I described in a recent letter. Although so barren during the greater part of the year, it produces immense harvests of barley in the early spring, when conditions are favourable. In the Roman period a large population was supported here as is evidenced by the thickly-scattered relics of cities and towns. Sousse to-day furnishes the outlet for the surplus grain of the Sahel and also exports esparto grass, which is painfully culled by the natives, with their bare hands, on its broad, brown plains.

This is one of the oldest stations of the North Africa Mission, work having been initiated here some thirty-five years ago. At one time there were as many as ten missionaries on the staff and a strong witness was borne among the Moslems. A well-known doctor painted John Three Sixteen in full on the side of his house. The Arabs came by night and erased the words "His only-begotten Son," so the doctor painted them

in again and this happened not once but frequently. At last, when time had done its worst and rain and sun had blotted out the inscription, three words remained upon that wall, the three which had been so bitterly attacked, "HIS ONLY-BEGOTTEN SON."

For about twenty years the American Methodist Mission was in operation here and the N.A.M. deemed it desirable to leave this part of the field to the sister society. But owing to the financial crisis the Americans have now been obliged to retire and have handed over their Hall to the N.A.M., which is represented by one married couple. Hence, though the history of this station goes back a long way, it has been broken by a gap of two decades and the present missionaries have had the task of reorganizing the work.

Besides the usual meetings for the Arabs, a dispensary on their premises and a Bible Depôt in the centre of the town, they engage in considerable itineration among the villages, being blessed with a car. This is the one I ventured to name, "Carrie." I feel that a helper so faithful and uncomplaining might at least have a name, and "Carrie" is suitable, not only as a pet diminutive but because its life-work is to carry folk. I wish the friends who furnish such cars to the missionaries could realize the value of their own gifts. It would surely rejoice their hearts. But I wish still more that Christians who have money to invest could see this chance of getting splendid returns. For a car not only saves the strength of the workers, it also saves so much time as to double or even treble their contacts with the people and their opportunities of presenting the Gospel. It means more spiritual work at less physical cost.

I will not take time just now to describe what is being done among the Arabs, as I have already given you in other letters a detailed account of most of the phases of missionary effort. I think you will like to know about the work among the "foreigners" in which class our own sailor boys are included. When British boats come into harbour the missionary goes down with an armful of magazines, such as Punch, The Graphic, The Sphere, and Chambers' Journal. Among these he puts a judicious sprinkling of attractive and readable evangelistic leaflets. As the officers are always welcomed to his home, he and his wife have extra busy days while the boats are in port.

There is yet another form of service of peculiar interest, namely, that connected with the French Foreign Legion. If I remember rightly, I have never described this sort of work before, though at Fez the doctor and his wife were engaged in it.

The Foreign Legion has been in existence for more than a century, as an overseas auxiliary of the French army. In the old days anyone could enlist; no questions were asked and no credentials required. A man might even give an assumed name if he chose. Now they are more particular, but the fact remains that the Foreign Legion consists largely of those who for one reason or another have been obliged to leave their native land.

A man may be guilty of a crime and be forced to flee from justice; he may have committed some political offence and be in danger of arrest. Very often there is a woman in the case; sometimes an unhappy home is responsible and, again, there are lads who enlist from love of adventure and the desire for a romantic life. There is a minority of thoroughly good

fellows, "down on their luck," and unable to find employment. It is, of course, a sadly familiar fact that many University graduates are saying to-day, "Give me any old job, so that I may eat a piece of bread." The French Foreign Legion appears to offer a refuge to all such.

The légionnaires have a reputation for being daring and fast-living men, extremely brave on active service, and often, in fact, utterly regardless of their own safety. "A short life and a merry" seems to be their ideal. Even if they were far from being prodigals and profligates before enlistment, they feel they must take the Legion as they find it and live up to its traditions. It is expected that it shall surpass the other branches of the army in drinking and dare-devilry, and a man has no chance of being considered a jolly good fellow unless he gets drunk after every pay-day.

It takes peculiar gifts, of course, to work successfully among such men as these for as a rule they are prejudiced against religion. Naturally, they will not betake themselves to Church or Sunday-School. They must be reached socially if at all.

A few years ago the missionaries put at their disposal a room which they could call their own. It happened to be a spare garage. It was nicely fitted up and here the men spent their free evenings, writing letters, playing games or having a sing-song. Provided with a stove they could make themselves coffee when so disposed. On Sundays, when once won by kindness, they would come over for the morning service and they often spent the rest of the day in this snuggery, which offered a welcome change from the camp.

Now, however, the missionaries do the légionnaires

even better service than this, for they virtually keep open house for them. Realizing that in many cases the tragedy of their lives has been due to the lack of helpful home influences, they seek to share their blessings with them so far as possible. Their hospitality is unbounded and half a dozen nationalities may at any time be represented at their table. In fact, as many as fourteen can be enumerated as having been found from time to time in the house or in the Hall.

Once a month there is an entertainment of which the programme is often arranged by the men themselves. The wireless is a great asset. Like the car, it makes one wish the givers might only know how much good they have done. Men who seldom hear their native tongue love to listen to it thus. Then there is the gramophone which can be played electrically with the wireless as amplifier. The missionary is hopeful of collecting old records from friends in England, as an aid to his work among these men of many lands.

One of his chief difficulties is the fact that the group is continually changing. They may not literally be here to-day and gone to-morrow but many remain only a short time. Every month forty-five leave for Morocco.

Another hindrance is the language. When they join they do not understand French and often it is only in their second or third year that they can find any pleasure in mixing with those who speak it. Hence they do not venture to come to the house or the Hall until a year or two before their time is up. Some indeed, after completing their five years, do re-engage in the Legion, and the missionary finds it easier to help these, for they have acquired facility in the language, they enjoy extra privileges and have more free time.

The Sunday services and the Wednesday Bible Class help to crystallize impressions and give definiteness to the Gospel appeal, but day in, day out, in all the social intercourse, the one aim is to lead the men to a knowledge of Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord.

This effort has been greatly blessed. If those who have been converted here during the past few years could gather under the spreading vine and tell their stories, there might be written a book more fascinating than any Canterbury Tales.

There is the Belgian whose home is on the field of Waterloo. Life became unendurable for him by reason of his mother's remarriage, and the nature of the brute who captured her, so he joined the Legion. Out here in Africa he found Christ and has now gone back to Belgium to labour there for Him.

There is the German priest who, after taking his vows of celibacy, found himself hopelessly in love with a girl. To avoid being excommunicated by the Pope he ran away and joined up. He lost his health, poor fellow, in this country, and was invalided out of the Legion. But while here he was led to Christ and it was as a new man that he returned to his native land.

Another German was engaged to be married and the date of the wedding was fixed, but within a fortnight of it his fiancée jilted him. He joined the Foreign Legion and tried to drown his sorrow in drink. Here in Sousse the Lord found him and he is now a true disciple and has lost all taste for alcohol.

The son of a French pastor was a lieutenant in the regular army, and a grief to his parents, being the only member of the family who remained unconverted. As the result of a regrettable episode for which he was not

entirely responsible he was obliged to leave France. He too joined the Legion, and here in Tunisia God answered the prayers of his parents, using a Sousse missionary as His instrument.

A tall, handsome Roumanian was among those who thankfully embraced the opportunity of social intercourse and appreciated the taste of home life. He was of noble birth but had been obliged to leave his country for political reasons, after a period of great suffering. Like so many others, he joined the Legion. He was not very long at Sousse, but it was long enough to get a new view of life. When he was drafted to Tunis and came to say Good-bye, the missionary pressed him to make an immediate decision for Christ : "Why not now?" he urged. The answer came back, quick and clear, "Yes, I do accept Him, now and for ever."

If only one or two of these légionnaires had found salvation here in North Africa and become true soldiers and servants of Jesus Christ, how well worth while this work would be ! It is of course impossible to estimate even roughly the good that is done. Who can guess the influence of a Christian family life on those who have lost touch with home and in many cases are prodigal sons?

* * * * * * *

Later.

I wish you could have been with us yesterday when we were exploring the catacombs. There are several square miles of underground passages in Sousse, containing nearly ten thousand tombs, partly pagan and partly Christian. The bodies were buried directly in plaster

and have left their impress, and the skeletons still lie there in better or poorer preservation. It seems almost a shame to violate their privacy.

A good many graves are closed by slabs of stone on which the inscriptions in some cases are quite clear and the lettering beautiful. The dove of peace is seen with the olive branch in its mouth, and this probably represents the end of a period of persecution. There is also a striking bas-relief of the Good Shepherd, and again the mystic symbol of the fish.

I suppose we shall never in this life gain any adequate idea of the Universal Church. But a place like the catacombs does serve to give length and depth to one's view. One looks back through the centuries and realizes that time does not count, and that we are all one in Him who is the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last.

If history furnishes the long backward vista, the missionary outlook to-day gives an inspiring breadth of view. Even the little group of légionnaires meeting in this house is suggestive of the various nations and kindreds and peoples and tongues that make up the one true Church.

I have often tried to describe little groups to you, and varied scenes that meet one's eyes in the mission field. Every now and then they seem to melt into each other, dimly forming a mystical whole, specially in a place like this, where one looks back into the ages, as well as out and around the world. I am reminded of some of the paintings of the old masters, in which the clouds consist of a multitude of faces, easily missed by the casual glance but there all the time.

"What are these, and whence came they? These

are they which have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Thank God that you and I have each her own place in this great Society.

Yours in that best of bonds,

Ruth.

XII.

The Cost of Confession

TUNIS,

June 5.

My dear Lydia,

You see I am back in Tunis, through which I hurriedly passed about a month ago. On the occasion of my first visit to this ancient city, everything seemed wrapped in a veil of mystery, for the simple reason that it was nearly mid-night when I arrived. Shadows and silence strike one as more awesome in a land where all is strange.

So magnificent did this house appear that I almost wondered whether they had brought me to the Bey's Palace by mistake. The great stone hall, the wide marble staircase, the marble floors, the uncommonly lofty ceilings, the tiled walls, suggestive of mosaic, combined to produce an imposing impression. I understood better in the morning, when the merciless sun-light turned poetry into prose. This was once, indeed, a palace, belonging to a prime minister of Tunisia, but the neighbourhood having deteriorated it is now let out in flats and the N.A.M. has one of them. Although the place does not look as princely by day as it did by night, here as everywhere the hospitality of the missionaries is royal in a real sense.

But before I begin telling you about Tunis, I must

say a little about the town from which I have just come, namely Nabeul. Of course you take the Mission's magazine, "North Africa," so you are familiar with the name, whether you dare pronounce it or not! You know it is one of the half dozen stations in Tunisia.

They say that "Nabeul" is a corruption of "Neapolis," not that it was named after Naples, but that it was itself a New City once upon a time. That was long ago; now it is a small country town, which holds its market once a week and is recognized as the commercial centre for the agricultural district of Cape Bon.

This market is one of the main attractions for the missionary. He is not allowed to preach in the open air as do his colleagues in Morocco, but he can set up his folding table and display his literature, and a crowd soon gathers round. While he talks openly with one or two, the rest listen, and he virtually has a small meeting. In this way he becomes known throughout the peninsula, so that when he goes on a cycle tour the people say, "There is the man who sells books at Nabeul" or "He is the one who speaks of Jesus Christ and no one else." This latter remark is called forth by the fact that they believe in "all the prophets," Jesus to them being only one of many.

Unlike the markets in Morocco, which are open and deserted country six days out of seven, the Tunisian markets are held, you observe, in towns and villages. So the missionary is able all the week to visit the shops. To sit down and talk, even for an hour at a time, is not considered an interruption to business. Men squat cross-legged on the floor all day long making some specific article, and selling every now and then to any

customer who drops in. Conversation under these circumstances is natural and welcome. In fact, some of these workers, when they see the Englishman in the street, will call out, "Come and sit down and read us a story from your book."

He carries, amongst others, several very short Scripture portions, consisting sometimes of only a psalm or two. As the Moslems reverence David he is able to start with one of these and lead up to the Gospel. It is true that before he gets very far, there may be a heated argument ; they may even shout him down and declare that it is all a pack of lies. In that case he can only leave them and try again another day.

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I was much interested in strolling about the little town and watching the craftsmen at their work. There is something truly fascinating about domestic industries, in which each worker can exercise his own skill and taste and produce an article that does him credit. Mat-making and pottery are the main handicrafts of Nabeul. Leather slippers are also made, in delicate colours, with ornate designs. Each shoe-maker sits outside his miniature shop, in a white arcade, working away at a small round table, so heavy, so worn and so antique-looking that it might have been in use for centuries.

There are about a hundred pottery ovens, turning out the standard household articles, and a few that produce the artistic ware for which Nabeul is famous. One is never tired of watching the eastern potter. Every jar and bowl that grows into beauty under his skilful fingers seems a sort of miracle, and reminds

one what wonderful things the Divine Potter can do if only the clay is plastic in His hand.

Mat-making is an important industry, for mats are needed in every home. They are used not only on the floor but along the walls, where they form a kind of dado, and take off the chilliness that would otherwise be felt. You see, they have no chairs, and sitting on the floor they naturally lean back against the wall.

The reeds are gathered green from marshy places thereabouts and some of them are coloured with vegetable dyes though most are simply bleached. The mat-loom, consisting mainly of two young tree trunks, more or less planed, is stretched upon the ground and when the warp of esparto grass or string has been threaded up, the reeds are woven in and pressed home with a wooden bar. Three men will work on one large mat, or sometimes one man with two boys to help him. It was distressing to see how the fingers were cut and swollen by constant handling of the reeds.

The problem, here as everywhere, is how to get into touch with all these people. They are independent, prejudiced, suspicious, both in the town and in the surrounding villages. In a certain place, where they were decidedly hostile, a new idea came to the missionary. He had met with several repulses when at last one man of a more friendly disposition invited him into his shop. Sitting there he noticed how many men passed in and out and chatted with this saddler as he sewed. What if he too should sit and work among them instead of going round from shop to shop? The experiment was worth a trial, at any rate.

He had taken up book-binding as a hobby and with the ready consent of the friendly saddler he brought his

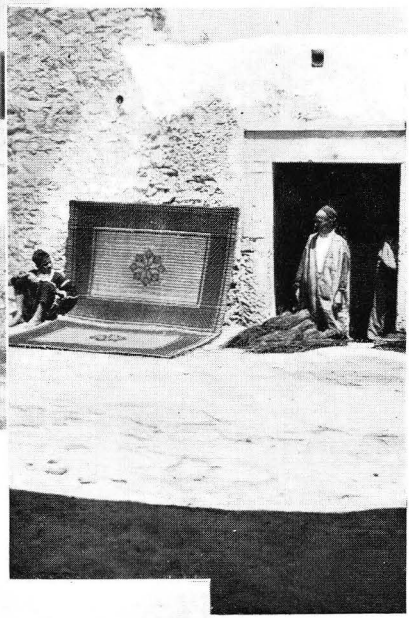
"box of tricks" next time he visited the village. Taking out his wooden press, leaf cutter, canvas, needles and thread he set to work. The plan was immediately effective, and men, instead of showing themselves shy and suspicious, came and sat down for a chat, when they saw him engaged in manual labour like themselves. Needless to say, he is not using the same method all the time or in every place. Like other missionaries, he adapts himself to circumstances and follows that wise maxim, "Varied methods but one Gospel."

In a certain village there was a Jewish money-lender who practised his remunerative business only one day a week. He was willing enough to let his shop to the missionary on occasion and not only did many drop in and out during the day, but in the evening one or two of the principal men came for a more leisured discussion. This simple but somewhat novel plan of campaign reminds one of the word of the prophet Ezekiel, "I sat where they sat." The power to do this is no doubt one of the great secrets of influence.

Lantern services are another practical means of evangelism. The pictures are shown in the garage, being thrown on the white-washed wall, so that no sheet is required. Natural history slides and views of foreign parts are something of a "draw" and then comes the Bible Lesson, usually based on some Old Testament biography or New Testament parable.

One of the lads who loved to attend these weekly gatherings has just passed away. He was often in the house for his home was not a happy one, and there he could spend a pleasant evening and get help with his English. There is good reason to believe that he died trusting in Christ. When he became too weak to speak,

MOTHER'S
PRECIOUS
BURDEN.



A MAT JUST
OFF THE LOOM.

RUINS OF
CARTHAGE
AMPHITHEATRE.

a friend urged him to witness to the "Prophet" by lifting of the finger. He did not respond but he nodded his head when the missionary quoted his favourite hymn, "All my trust is in Thee, Lord Jesus,"

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A woman connected with this boy's family has become deeply interested in the Gospel since his death a fortnight ago. She dreamed that she saw him in a beautiful place and he told her that the way of Jesus was the true one. Of course the missionaries don't encourage people to place any dependence on dreams, which might easily be misleading. Still, they recognize that, as in the case of that man at Bougie, a dream may sometimes be used to bring a soul into the light.

The work among the women of Nabeul is conducted by the wife of the missionary and one single lady. Classes were at first held in native houses but conditions proved very difficult and they could give but little definite teaching on account of the frequent interruptions. Some woman would put her head into the courtyard and shriek out, "You will all go to hell if you listen to her," and various means were taken to distract the attention of the hearers. So it seemed better to meet quietly in the home of the missionaries, even if it involved a reduction in numbers.

The women have the most absolute faith in Mohammed, ingrained in their very souls, as it were, without being able to give any reason for it whatever. Even though interested in the Gospel, when prayer is offered in the name of Jesus, they have been known

to add aloud, "and of Mohammed." One of them listened with tears in her eyes as the missionary by means of the Wordless Book explained the way of salvation, and then said, "It is very beautiful, but Mohammed is our friend and intercessor." One of the chief drawbacks is their inability to read. It means that they can never learn a single thing aside from what they are taught orally.

A young orphan girl, alone in the house all day while her brothers were at work, was occasionally visited and became strongly attached to her foreign friend. "Oh, I do love you!" she exclaimed recently. "If only you could believe in Mohammed! If only you would repeat the witness! You will never go to heaven if you don't believe in him." And with the tears streaming down her face, she pleaded with the Englishwoman to yield to the "Prophet of God." This faithful worker herself felt reproached by the intensity of her concern. That was surely unnecessary, but many of us at home may well feel ashamed when we compare ourselves with that Moslem girl.

I am sorry to say that the missionary can no longer visit her. She has lately found the door locked and a fierce dog on guard. Maybe the brothers eye with disfavour the friendship with the foreigner; at any rate this sort of thing is too common to excite surprise. When individuals show signs of interest in the message or merely of affection for the worker, their relatives are apt to put a stop to the intercourse.

Thus the missionaries are constantly frustrated but they persevere, seizing every opportunity to teach the basic facts of the Gospel through Bible stories, texts and hymns, in the classes and in the homes. They

feel that when minds have been stored with truth, there is something on which the Holy Spirit can work, something He can use to convince of sin and make clear the way of salvation. They are preparing in faith for the "day of visitation" which they believe will surely dawn.

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So much for Nabeul, from whence I came here. Now my last week in North Africa is being spent in a spot which takes one back in thought over more than two thousand years. When the Romans under Regulus had won a victory over the Carthaginians in the First Punic War, they took up a position at the little town of Tunis.

Cato's famous slogan, "Carthage must be destroyed," echoing along the shore a century later, must have struck fear into the hearts of the Tunisians. When the once mighty city finally fell, in B.C. 146, they with all the rest of the inhabitants of the district came under the yoke of the conqueror.

The Tunis of to-day is essentially cosmopolitan. It has a population of 250,000, and of these only about half are in the "native city." The European element consists chiefly of French and Italians, but there are small colonies of Maltese, Greeks and Russians. The Jews form a large section of the community, numbering about fifty thousand.

When you walk down the magnificent Avenue de France, under the palms and the ficus-trees you see more smart suits and Paris gowns than veils and burnouses. But when you enter the native city, at

once you are in the very heart of Islam. The white-turbaned men whom you meet in the narrow streets have studied in the great Mosque or Zeitouna and in most cases have taken their degree. The undergraduates, though they too have the right to wear the distinctive coiffure of the student, often dispense with it and are less recognizable, but there are some seven or eight thousand of them attending classes and moving to and fro.

The city is sprinkled with the tombs of saints, whited sepulchres, to which the people come to make vows, to offer prayer, and to present their gifts, from a dish of cous-cous to a jewelled coronet. Close to this house the pavement is so narrow and crooked as to be dangerous when a tram passes. If you ask why the authorities can't straighten out that little bit, you are told there is a saint's tomb behind there, which must not be disturbed. A large department store, a branch of a Paris firm, has to suffer a marabout in its very midst. The company could buy the land but could not touch the tomb.

So this is indeed the heart of Islam, and there are spiritual presences here, invisible but none the less real for that. Strange examples may be seen of men who surrender themselves to an indwelling power. They impersonate camels and other animals, and not only eat straw like the ox, as did Nebuchadnezzar, but even chew up the camel's staple food, the prickly pear, which would appear an impossibility. Some are lions, others are tigers. They are bound with fetters and chains, but the chains are plucked asunder by them and the fetters broken in pieces.

A visitor does not see all this ; he simply sees a

quaint and most interesting city. The souks, or covered markets, offer an endless variety of striking effects, on account of the prevalence of arches and the black shadows contrasting with the dazzling light on the white walls. The different trades have their own sections of the town and one could spend many an hour wandering among the bazaars and could easily get rid of a good deal of money in the souks where they sell brass, carpets and inlaid work. The fact of this being a University centre accounts for whole rows of tiny shops displaying Koranic commentaries.

I should like to take you to another little place where they sell the Book of Books. While it is near enough to be easy of access to the students of the University, it is not actually in the native city but is so placed as best to serve the mixed population, Europeans and Jews as well as Arabs. It is on a busy street which has electric trams and four-storey buildings, and its window has been made attractive so as to show to advantage the large open Bible and the smaller ones in various bindings in Arabic, French and Italian. The interested customer will find several other languages represented inside.

This is the Bible Depôt of the North Africa Mission and for many years it has been a centre for work among Moslem students. Those who visit it usually come for the express purpose of debate ; they like to practise on the missionary the dialectic methods they have learned in the Great Mosque. Sometimes a Moslem teacher will come with several of his pupils, to give them an object lesson on how to tackle Christianity.

These young fellows hail from all parts of Tunisia and are commonly from "good families." Their

parents need to be people of means to keep them here seven years, without their earning anything. Some of them, indeed, give an entire decade to the study of the Koran and the commentaries thereupon. They are preparing to be judges and officials of one sort or another.

While most are self-satisfied and argumentative, there are a few who sincerely desire to discover the truth. Some of these have come to the missionary's house by night, wrapped in their burnouses, their faces hidden in the hood. Nicodemuses of the twentieth century, they have been ready to acknowledge much and anxious to know more. They have taken the Scriptures away to investigate them and from time to time, through the long years, there have been cases of conversion.

But not lately. As a matter of fact there is no worker at present specializing along this line. In the absence of the senior missionary on furlough there is nobody qualified to deal with Moslem scholars. This sort of work requires peculiar gifts and long preparation. These men must be met on their own ground and a missionary must know the literary language and the contents of their books in order to discuss with them. One feels that the very difficulty of the task should appeal to University men at home who desire to make the best of their talents in the Master's service.

There is another entirely different class of students who equally need wise and patient dealing, namely, those who are studying in the French colleges, preparing to be doctors, lawyers and teachers. Far from filling their mouths with the sententious declaration, "There is no God but God and Mohammed is His prophet,"

they are inclined to argue that there is no God at all. They are well up in modern thought, proud to put everything to a scientific test, and strongly impregnated with French atheism.

They are even informed in regard to the conflict of opinion in the Church to-day ; they know that points of doctrine which have always been deemed essential are now treated lightly by many Christian teachers, if not actually abandoned and disclaimed. To the evangelical missionary they quote the words of these recognized leaders, men of far higher standing than his humble self. It is, you see, not an easy task to deal with them. But it is one which should appeal to trained thinkers who still hold the faith once for all delivered to the saints.

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If you want a study in contrasts you should come along and see the boot-blacks. They are quite a feature of this town, several battalions of them being stationed at different points, armed with boxes and brushes. Poor young rascals ! They give you a very good shine for the equivalent of a penny but I fear they find it rather hard to make a living. They eke out a scanty subsistence by collecting cigarette stubs in the streets and, after removal of the paper, selling the contents as loose tobacco !

The missionaries have a class for them and are able to secure their attendance by the gift of a piece of chocolate on each occasion, and the additional prize of a bandanna handkerchief after eight appearances.

These "barefoot boys" come into the hall full of

life, with their bootboxes under their arms, airing their "Bon jour" and other French phrases, and ready for mischief whenever an opportunity presents itself. They seldom give their true names as they don't want ladies to look them up, also they prefer that the police should not have access to any information regarding their past lives. Many a boy not yet fourteen has already had a "past." Their noms de guerre sometimes imply a sense of humour, as for instance in the case of Ali Ben Bicyclette, "Son of the Bicycle."

I have told you from the first that the various stations of the N.A.M. have much in common. That of course you would expect, and you know I have never given you a full account of the activities in any place, for that would have been tiresome, even to a missionary enthusiast like yourself. The girls' classes here are held at the unusual hour of 7.30 a.m. but this is not early enough for some of the pupils, who prefer to begin at six o'clock. In fact, the other day it was just 5.50 when certain of them arrived.

Their homes are none too comfortable, and when from six to ten people sleep in one room, they are not sorry to turn out at sunrise. The missionaries can't keep girls standing in the streets so they have to let them in, whether they themselves have finished their toilette or not! They put them into a class-room and one of the younger workers dresses with her door open and her eye on the mirror which affords her a view of what is going on therein.

There is a quiet, steady work among the women, and kindness and patience are gradually breaking down prejudice. But the poor things have been taught that it is a sin to listen to the foreigner, so even while

attracted, they come in fear and trembling. While a Gospel address was being given one of them was heard to pray, "Lord, forgive us for listening to this heresy!"

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The N.A.M. is doing an interesting work among Italians. More than forty years ago one of the missionaries, coming here to study Arabic, was impressed with the unmet need of their large section of the city. After working among the Arabs for eight years or so, she felt called to devote herself to these Europeans. The effort was richly blessed of God and the three missionaries who are at present engaged in it have great cause for thankfulness.

They have a house, which is named Bethesda, and a hall for meetings; there is a good Sunday-School, classes of various kinds are held during the week, and the little church is steadily growing. An Italian business man, who is a good preacher, is glad to serve gratuitously on Sundays. From time to time converts of the Mission have gone to other places as evangelists and pastors, some indeed as far as Italy and Morocco. Here in Tunis it is recognized that the presence of the Mission has improved the neighbourhood and that it forms a valued centre of life and activity.

The workers at this station have the great advantage of a car, and three of the ladies being chauffeurs, they go in groups to the villages around, thus reaching both European and Arab settlements. The new missionaries have an opportunity in these itinerations of serving their apprenticeship. It is here in Tunis that the N.A.M. has its language school and the recruits are

hard at work studying Arabic through the medium of French. This cannot be other than a hard task, although they have all had a period of training in Paris before coming out. More than in most fields do the new-comers need the prayers of friends at home that they may conquer the linguistic difficulties.

Besides all the phases of activity that I have mentioned there is a hopeful work among the French. It is at present in charge of a married couple who have lately arrived and they have already seen definite fruit to encourage their hearts.

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Later.

We have just been visiting the ruins of Carthage. We stood among the broken columns of great Christian temples, eloquent of the time when the Gospel was preached throughout this region and the Church was represented by such notable leaders as Augustine, Cyprian and Tertullian.

In the amphitheatre we looked upon the very spot where Perpetua and her comrades yielded up their lives for Christ on the 7th of March, 203. You remember, she was a lady of good position and Felicitas was a slave. They were both young mothers, Perpetua's baby being a few weeks old, while the little daughter of Felicitas was born in the dungeon. Three young men suffered at the same time, all being thrown to the wild beasts.

Their utter fearlessness was a wonderful proof of Christ's sufficient grace. Saturus said to the soldier Pudens, who was interested in the Gospel, "I am going forth and shall be destroyed with one bite of that

leopard : remember my faith, and let not these things disturb thee, but confirm thee."

The two women were exposed to a wild cow, chosen for its fierceness. After Perpetua had been tossed and wounded she re-arranged her robe and bound up her hair, so the witness records, "lest she should appear to be mourning in her glory." Then she went to her friend who was lying injured and lifted her up, and they stood together before that vast audience, clothed with the dignity of Christ, awaiting the end of the ordeal. To her brother Perpetua said, "Stand fast in the faith and all of you love one another, and be not offended at my sufferings."

Historians say that in no part of the Roman Empire did the Gospel take firmer root than here in North Africa. Tertullian affirmed in his Apology that half the people in every city were Christians. It is grievous to think that the Church has been virtually wiped out, and that this region, consecrated by the blood of the martyrs is to-day dominated by a power which hates our Lord with the very hatred of hell. I use that word advisedly, for one feels out here that Islam's opposition is unearthly in its intensity ; it is the concentrated venom of the Old Serpent.

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Under these conditions we are confronted with the question, "What should our attitude be?" One knows there are earnest people who feel it is scarcely worth while to invest money and labour in work among Moslems, since the results are so meagre. They reckon that the same amount placed elsewhere would bring

in more converts. This seems to me a rather material view: so many souls for so many sous. They lose sight of the desperate struggle that is being waged against "wicked spirits in the heavens," a struggle in which the Church Militant is privileged to have a share. They don't grasp the fact that to give up the fight in such a realm as this is equivalent to saying, "Let us leave Satan master of the field."

Thank God, even here in North Africa, in spite of bitterest opposition the Gospel is winning priceless trophies. Yesterday it was my privilege to meet a young man who may be thus described, one who though only twenty-three, has already passed through virtual martyrdom. I heard him give an address in French and afterwards I had a long intimate talk with him.

His grandfather was chief of one of the brotherhoods and a leading Moslem. Of six children he was the only one who lived so of course he was the light of his mother's eyes and all her hopes were bound up in him. She destined him for a religious career and he early showed promise of making his mark in the Islamic world.

At thirteen he knew the entire Koran by heart and was ready to begin his theological training in the Great Mosque. But he soon learned things about Mohammed which violated his moral sense. At fourteen he was a Communist, he had given up God and taken Lenin in His place, and his chosen device was the hammer and sickle.

He used regularly to pass the Bible Depôt where Mr. Liley, who has since gone Home, was often to be seen standing at the door. The missionary invited him in but he made fun of him, used bad language and went off laughing. He was sorry afterwards and mani-

fested his regret by returning to the Depôt, where he had a long talk with a younger worker, the book-binding man whom I mentioned above. "You speak to me of the Son of God" ; he said, "show me God Himself and then I shall be ready to hear about His Son." The missionary gave him that word of Jesus, "I am the way, the truth and the life, no man cometh unto the Father but by me." It took root.

Later on he had a two hours' conversation with Mr. Liley, which made a deep impression on his mind. Let me quote his own words, "I quitted the Depôt, but I left my heart behind." Nevertheless, when he met his pals, he went off with them to drown his thoughts in drink. Still, he must needs seek Truth. Falling in with American missionaries he was much attracted for there was a native evangelist working with them, one of his own people, and regular Arabic services were held in their Hall.

Now do mark this : the young fellow was not converted, he was not baptized, he was simply interested and carried a Gospel in his pocket, yet persecution began. He was forcibly dragged before his assembled family ; they tore out his hair till the court-yard was sprinkled with his blood ; they threatened to kill him and finally they locked him up along with the fowls, in a room about a yard and a half square. Next day, through a hole in the door, he saw that police were on the spot, examining the blood-stains. He called out to them and they broke down the door and took him before the Commissary. He refused to lodge a complaint against his persecutors.

From that day he had no home but a Roman Catholic insurance man gave him a berth in his office and a room

in which to sleep. Very broad-minded of him it was, for the lad was attending the Protestant Mission. Of a surety he will not lose his reward.

In the streets this young enquirer was subjected to the most cruel insults. Men spat in his face, they threw potatoes at him and rotten tomatoes and their words hurt him quite as much as their blows. "There goes the traitor," they would say, as they sat sipping their coffee on the pavement. Feeling he could not stand any more, he left Tunis, but he soon returned, determined to face it out.

Two consecutive summers he went to camp with the American missionaries. There he had intensive teaching and happy Christian fellowship and gradually he came into the full light of the Gospel. Now he is witnessing for Christ in private and in public, counting all things but loss for the knowledge of Him, ready not to be bound only but also to die for Him at any moment.

His own mother actually hired an assassin to kill him and she has definitely said she is willing to pay as much as 10,000 francs to have him despatched. She makes pilgrimages from one saint's tomb to another, for the express purpose of praying down curses on this her only son.

There have already been three attempts upon his life, the last only a few weeks ago. In one of these he was knocked senseless and carried to the hospital, where the doctor gave him two hours to live. But after six days of unconsciousness he began to recover, doubtless because God had something more for him to do. His eye has been injured, perhaps permanently. Truly he bears in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus.

As I sat talking with him on Sunday evening, I

came to understand as never before why there are so few converts in Moslem lands. "To be an Arab," he said, "is to be Moslem, and when one becomes a Christian, one loses not only one's family and friends, but also one's very nationality."

He told me there are many who are attracted by the Gospel and disposed to believe but are held back by considerations of the cost. Can we wonder? Death is not the only thing to be feared, nor even the worst. They administer a drug which affects the brain. He cited the case of a man thus poisoned here in Tunis. So the convert,—nay, the mere enquirer,—has to face the possibility of becoming a madman.

This young man told me about one of his personal friends who was recently done to death. They studied together in the Great Mosque and his chum, like himself, would drop into the Bible Depôt and discuss religion on the way home. His father was a well-known sheikh and also an author. The boy was intelligent and honest, he soon recognized the truth and became a Christian. He gave a public address in the American Hall, which on this occasion was filled with his fellow-students.

His people imprisoned him in the house for a whole year on the pretext that he was insane. Later they managed to get him into a lunatic asylum but he convinced the doctor of his sanity. "I am not mad," he said, "I am here because I am a Christian." Accordingly he was discharged. This, however, did not mean freedom: he was taken home and literally starved to death. In his last hour they tried to force him to assume the attitude for the witness, with the forefinger upraised. So strenuously did he resist, so tightly did

he clasp his hands, that they could not move them when they laid out his body for burial. He died repeating an Arab hymn in praise of the Lord Jesus.

No one can say how many Arabs have died the martyr's death, for they are not permitted the privilege of making a public confession. They are put away privately. When the young man whom I have just met was in hospital, the papers had a long account of him. His death was regarded as imminent, but far from manifesting indignation at the treatment he had received, the city journals used him as an object lesson. They told young Moslems that this was what they might expect if they denied the religion of their fathers.

He is without fear ; his heart is "garrisoned" by the peace of God. In the Bible Depôt on Sunday night he said, "Here in the place where I showed hate to a servant of Christ, I am proud to testify for Him. . . . The Lord always strengthens me. When persecutions increase, the power of Christ increases in me. . . . . There are no words to express the joy in my heart."

As I have already intimated, this young man has linked up with the American missionaries. A number of workers here and in Algeria have been used to bring him into the place of blessing. Herein is that saying true, "One soweth and another reapeth."

* * * * * * *

Now my dear friend, Lydia of the open heart, I must bring to a close these letters from the field. You will have appreciated the fact that all along the way the reapers have dealt most kindly and truly with me. I have enjoyed holding converse with them during

the noon rest and in the cool of the day, when work was done. Even in their busiest times they have let fall some handfuls on purpose for me or I should never have gathered as much as I have.

They are labouring in a hard field and are often weary, but they do not give me the impression of discouragement, but rather of faithful perseverance and quiet confidence.

Many of them are expecting the speedy return of our Lord and Master, and you will agree, there is no greater incentive to activity than this, or any more comforting cordial in times of trial and distress.

I wish you could have met all these friends whose work I have attempted to describe. But you will have that pleasure (who knows how soon?) when sowers and reapers, and gleaners and all, rejoice together in the great Harvest Home.

Yours in that blessed hope,

Ruth.

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