



# THE UNFOLDING OF A VISION

Tracing the initiation and development of a unique Christian Literature

enterprise among Arabic speaking people

By

ARTHUR T UPSON

(“Abdul-Fady”)

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(“Abdul-Fady”)

*“What thou seest, write in a book and send...”*

*Revelation 1:11*

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## FOREWORD

By Professor J. N. D. Anderson, O.B.E., M.A., LL.D.

I have known the Nile Mission Press now for some thirty years.

Almost as soon as I went up to Cambridge in 1927, I met Mr. John Oliver, then Secretary of the Mission, whose friendship and counsel helped me much, and through whom I got some vision of the work. I also had the privilege of meeting Mr. Menzies, on furlough from Egypt.

Through them it was arranged that I should visit the field in the autumn of 1931. I had just come down from the University, and was seeking God's plan for my life. I spent some weeks with Mr. Menzies and Mr. Kinnear in the Mission property in Sharia al Manakh, seeing something of the work of publishing and printing, and also learnt a little of the problems of distribution in the towns and markets of Egypt when out on tour with one or another of them.

Next I spent an unforgettable fortnight in Palestine with Mr. Arthur Upson, who took me round Jerusalem, the Lake of Galilee, Carmel and elsewhere. Just then he was giving three special talks to the missionaries studying at the Newman School of Missions, Jerusalem, under the titles: "The power of the Arabic language - and how we get it"; "The power of the printed page - and how we use it"; and "The power of the holy life - and how we need it". And for me those titles will always epitomise the man who gave the titles: master Arabist, master of the printed page, but - above all - humble man of God

The Nile Mission Press has gone through many vicissitudes, both before and since those days; and it is good that some of these should be recaptured and recorded by its first and greatest Director. To some of us, at least, this story will recall, most vividly of all, the one who wrote it. But he himself would always have us look forward, look around and look up: forward, to the great Accounting Day, when we shall see our Master face to face; around, to the fields white already to harvest - with the ever-increasing literacy of the Arab and Muslim worlds; up, to the One who alone can commission and empower workers and crown the Harvest Home.

The author closes this little book with a question asked him by Temple Gairdner, another great missionary to Muslims, from his deathbed some thirty years ago. Now another of the giants has gone to his reward-and the question still remains unanswered until each of us has made his own response. May we face it-and make our response-on our knees.

How well I remember a sentence which Mr. Upson repeated to me several times during the fortnight I spent with him in Palestine; "What man has done, man can do". This sentence was, in part, the secret of his dauntless courage and his tireless drive. But his God is our God, just as his task is also our task; "Arabic for some; Literature, for more; Holiness and world evangelisation, for all".

"Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart".

J. N. D. Anderson.

## SEEING THE VISION

"What do you think?" said Arthur Upson to his bride of six months, "Miss Van Sommer is coming to visit us and see our work. How kind of her" "Yes, very kind" echoed his bride. Neither said or even thought, "How momentous"! Nor did they unduly worry over the fact that they had not yet been able to complete the furnishing of their new home in Egypt.

Their first visitor duly arrived, and was heartily welcomed. In the evening - it was the 3rd of February, 1902, and really cold - they drew chairs around an oil stove, there being no fireplace in their hired house.

Miss Van Sommer stayed with them for two days, and both evenings led the conversation to a definite subject. The first evening she told them of her plan to build a rest-house for missionaries, to be called Fairhaven. This impressed them and led to earnest prayer.

But there was much more to come. The next night she told of her deep desire to carry out a vision she had seen, i.e. a mission press for the Nile Valley. What was their surprise when she disclosed that God had sent her to them because Arthur Upson had been recommended to her as being God's man for the job.

Her story was rather wonderful. As a young girl, her father, an evangelical churchman, had trained her to distribute tracts on the country roads near their home. Many years later, after General Gordon's death, she had come to Egypt to work among soldiers. God signally blessed the tracts she distributed to them. So far, so good. But her heart had been led out to try to help the Egyptians, and other Arabic-speaking people, in a similar way. Some friends discouraged her by saying; "Oh, they cannot read Arabic, they only speak it". Not being convinced, she walked out to see for herself, and was thrilled by the fairly frequent sight of a group of Egyptians, Syrians or Arabs, seated upon the ground enjoying a story being read aloud to them.

This increased her desire to produce books and tracts for Muslims in their own Arabic tongue. Those unable to read could still listen.

She then told how she had already approached the American U.P. Mission - the largest in Egypt - but they, being overcrowded with other forms of Christian work, could not undertake any further activity; however, they promised prayer-support and also some material assistance from their home community.

As to the mission press at Beirut, their valuable publications had been for Christians, not for Muslims; they were then under Turkish rule, and "Books for Muslims" were unthinkable. Miss Van Sommer was thus "shut up" to her proposal for a Mission Press for the Nile Valley, and, having SEEN the vision (indicated in Rev. 1, 11.), she set out to obey it.

Mr. Upson then narrated a very trying experience he had undergone the year before. A colleague, on

leaving for another field, had handed over to him no less than 10,000 copies of an Arabic tract. They had been paid for by Mr. Monro of India, writer of the English original, but none had yet been distributed.

The first few copies he distributed brought a storm of fury over his head. Sheikhs came to him, threatening that they would get him turned out of the country unless he at once withdrew that pamphlet from circulation. (And he had a stock of 10,000 to dispose of!) They alleged that the translator (or writer, or printer) had misquoted three verses from their holy book, Al-Qur'an (Koran). They were, at last, reasonably pacified by a promise to read every word and correct the three errors. To do this - as he had no Qur'an Concordance - Mr. Upson stayed up till midnight, then began at 8 a.m. and worked through that day also, correcting every error. He found, not three errors, but thirty-three! Then he prepared a small page of "Corrigenda", had 10,000 copies printed, and inserted them. He afterwards laid down a hard-and-fast rule: "Never trust a Muslim press for such controversial work"; and a national Christian printer would be too fearful. Therefore there was evident need for a printing press under missionary control.

Thus he, also, had seen the vision.

Miss Van Sommer then told the young couple of a third worker who had "seen it" - Martin Cleaver, of the Egypt Mission Band (now the Middle East General Mission), had written an article on this great and obvious need. He had done more than that to help her, for when she had consulted him as to a suitable man to take charge of a printing venture, he had replied: "Do you know Arthur Upson? If not, I will take you to him". He had done this a year before, but without revealing, their secret plan. Miss Van Sommer told how far she had advanced in the matter and what she had in mind.

Earnest prayer followed, that God's will might be carried out, and the vision thus seen be faithfully "written down" and sent out.

*Host seen God's vision with thine eyes?  
Hast heard Him call thee to arise  
And write it down, and send it forth  
To all the tribes from South to North?*

## WRITING THE VISION

It takes time to inaugurate a new mission, and Miss Van Sommer found her hands very full. The North Africa Mission, however, most cordially agreed to release Mr. Arthur Upson to take up this work, provided, of course, that it was to be God's work.

Her first right-hand man was Mr. Percy Allen of Chester, later of Tunbridge Wells. He undertook the office of Honorary Treasurer and continued for twenty years; then became Chairman of the Nile Mission Press for the rest of his life. A small committee was formed, but at times the way seemed very difficult; "without were doubts, within were fears".

About that time all were greatly cheered by a letter from Dr. Pain (C.M.S.) informing them of a gift of £250 from a personal friend in New Zealand. A week later that was amended, for the kind donor had doubled his gift. After another fortnight it was again doubled and so now stood at £1,000. This was taken to be a sign of God's approval, and was a great cheer.

Meanwhile, a cordial invitation had come from Beirut for Mr. Upson to spend a month inspecting the American Press. He and his wife sailed for Syria on May 24th, 1902, and received a cordial welcome. The American Mission seemed to them to be really glad to find someone "free" to publish books for Muslims, which they themselves could not do under Turkish rule. After a rest in lovely Mount Lebanon - which they styled their "postponed honeymoon" - they returned to Egypt to face a disastrous cholera epidemic during which no less than 64,000 Egyptians died. God, in His mercy, preserved this young couple to carry out His plans for the Nile Mission Press.

Next year their furlough was due. By August, the new N.M.P. Committee felt sufficiently encouraged to advance, so Arthur Upson embarked upon strenuous deputation work which lasted for over a year. His greatest help in the Scottish meetings came from Miss Emma Blackwood who for years was Treasurer there. Some of the earnest friends who were linked on to the work at that time, "stood alongside" for many years. The writer regrets inability to mention all those who have co-operated, some on the Field, others at Home.

At the end of 1904, passages were booked for Mr. and Mrs. Upson, and also for Mr. Gentles, a Scottish Master Printer, who worked for the Press for ten years.

All reached Cairo by the end of January, 1905, and search was immediately made for premises. The first (rented) lodging of the N.M.P. was in the Bulaq quarter, and was dedicated to God's work on February 3rd.

Before long, trouble began with the tenants of flats above our printing works. No doubt the noise of our machines did disturb them on hot summer afternoons, but we never worked them at night, or on Sundays. For the next seven years, we were subject to much annoyance and longed for premises of our own. But, with it all, we were steadily becoming known to other workers among Muslims in many lands, as far away as China. God enabled us to keep going, but it was hard going. Still, as Annie

Johnson Flint wrote:-

*"His grace is great enough to meet the small things,  
The little pin-prick troubles that annoy" ...*

While the work was being started in Cairo, the Committee at home were being greatly reinforced by the appointment of Mr. John L. Oliver as Secretary. Before the end of the year he had visited the Field. For over thirty years he and his earnest wife gave devoted service at the Home end.

Christian workers need evangelistic outlets for their zeal: the mechanical part of literature production is apt to be very "dry". With what joy, therefore, was a welcome offered to a Syrian Muslim convert, who was sent to Egypt for security. He was given a room and, of course, employment. His help to us at this period could hardly be over-estimated.

This friend, Sheikh Abdullah, became a great asset to us. While we were teaching him further Christian doctrine, he was answering correspondence from Kansu, in farthest inland China. Muslim priests (sheikhs) used to write to Shanghai, whence their queries were forwarded to Cairo for Abdullah's (Arabic) reply. What a distance! Five months to get an answer to, a query.

He wrote the story of his life in Arabic; this was translated into English and published in our quarterly magazine under the title of "A Twice Born Turk", the word Turk meaning in this case Muslim. He was, even then, quite elderly, and during the First World War he passed away to the Fuller Life.

Sheikh Iskander, a former protégé, then came from C.M.S., Cairo, to take his place, and rendered great service for many years.

Other interesting accounts might have been given concerning our co-operation with mission churches in not only finding employment for converts but caring for their spiritual life. In 1917 one line in our magazine ran thus: "Prayer requested for nine converts in our employ".

Our lonely workers were greatly cheered by the invaluable help given by Miss Lilius Trotter, founder of the Algiers Mission Band. One of our very earliest publications was her "Story-Parables for Muslims". Later, she visited the workers in Cairo on more than one occasion; she also joined our London Committee. We, in return, visited her stations to develop closer co-operation.

Reference has been made to the extreme inconvenience suffered by N.M.P. being located in hired premises and under dwelling-flats. The Press was - to use an up-to-date word - "allergic" to the tastes of those other tenants. But what could be done? Much prayer was offered to God to give us our own premises.

At last, in 1912, came the answer - a "whirlwind" whose name was Dr. Samuel Zwemer, affectionately called "Uncle Sam". He soon tackled the problem by tackling the staff! "Japanese can grow an oak-tree in a flower-pot, but you cannot. Get your fine oak-tree out of its flower-pot. GET IT OUT!"



He did much more than exhort; he travelled to U.S.A. and brought back promises from three Christian ladies, each offering \$10,000. (One of these was the mother of William Borden who himself came, and worked, and died, all in the space of six months.)

During 1913 a block of existing premises much nearer to the Centre of the city was acquired. But the forty-four rooms were all occupied by tenants who had to be evacuated! It, therefore, took time to get full possession and to build new printing works in the rear, also to pull down two walls in order to make a binding department large enough for oversight.

An account of how the staff eventually only got in "by the skin of their teeth" may be found under "Some Answers to Prayer".

Our Publications Committee was inaugurated from the very beginning and we thanked God for the services rendered by Temple Gairdner (C.M.S.), George Swan (E.G.M.) and Harvey Philips (Amer. U.P.). Each of these was, in turn, Chairman for years, and among other members who read our MSS were two or three Egyptian pastors. When Dr. Zwemer was back from his frequent tours in other lands, he brought renewed stimulus to this Committee which was studiously working all the time.

Dr. Charles Watson, President-elect of the new American University in Egypt, sent a remarkably enthusiastic telegram to Dr. Zwemer to pass on to us:-

*"NO AGENCY CAN PENETRATE ISLAM SO DEEPLY, ABIDE SO PERSISTENTLY, WITNESS SO DARINGLY, INFLUENCE SO IRRESISTIBLY, AS THE PRINTED PAGE".*

## PRODUCING THE MESSAGE

When War was declared in 1914, the N.M.P. had only finished moving into its fresh premises that very morning. Marvelous Providence! The most immediate need after this hard work was for a little rest at Fairhaven and there to consult with other missions concerning the "Moratorium", which happily lasted for only a short period. Then our colporteurs - scattered about the country many miles away - had to be visited and their fears allayed.

Though there was a slight cutting-down of staff, yet on the whole, God enabled us to carry on as usual. In fact some records were beaten, for no less than thirty of our tracts were printed in three months.

Towards the end of 1916 the Junior Department received new life, or, shall we say, the seed sown by Miss Trotter germinated. Miss C. E. Padwick joined our staff and started a big "push" in spite of the war. She was assisted by Miss Elsie Anna Wood whose drawings (now famous, though little known in those days) helped to attract readers.

The London Committee had already sent out Mr. Howard Weaver to take over the business details and provide "job-work" for the war-days. After the war that plan was revised, and the small amount of commercial work (to fill up time during the war) was closed down. The various departments of N.M.P. were "integrated" and all handed over to the care of Mr. Upson who was appointed "Director".

During the war he adopted the Arabic name Abdul-Fady (Bondslave of the Redeemer), largely to direct attention to Christ's Redemption every time it was written. The G.P.O. in Egypt registered the new name, subject to the normal request to file a copy of his "usual signature".

The Nile Mission Press has always been rather proud of its motto: "Old Message: New Methods" One new method was adopted at the close of the war; a "Literary Dinner" was held at the Continental Hotel, leading authors and publishers being invited, among them the editors of the most influential Christian papers.

After an excellent meal, Canon Gairdner, then Chairman of the Publications Committee, explained the desire of N.M.P. to make its work better known by inviting offers of voluntary assistance. Several promises were made by leading journalists. Also the publicity given by the "Egyptian Gazette" and other papers greatly helped the work.

## THE PURITY CAMPAIGN

This was, in one way, a by-product, for it was started by the Director in his spare time. The matron of an English Army hospital wrote to him to call attention to the horrible attacks upon young soldiers who wandered into the brothels which had sprung up like mushrooms. After these young "patrons" had been dosed with "fire-water" liquor, they were often struck in the centre of the spine by some heavy object that would leave no external mark, such as a bag of sand. The stunned lads were then thrown into the street; some were killed outright, others lay with broken limbs until pinked up by the Military Police. The latter, smelling the breath of the victims, naturally thought they had "fallen over the balcony whilst drunk!" The matron knew better.

Abdul-Fady started distributing some hundreds of tracts, etc. in the "red light" district. This developed into an auxiliary crusade "by Egyptians for Egyptians". Meanwhile our machines were busy producing the leaflets and booklets needed. Whilst "snatching (men), out of the fire", some big statistics were run up. On one single evening, 500,000 tracts and pamphlets were sent to the Canal Zone to zealous workers on that side of the country.

After four years, Abdul-Fady estimated that with his own hands, he had given 40,000 tracts to individuals, while voluntary Egyptian helpers, collaborating with him, had distributed another 40,000 in Cairo alone.

One incident may perhaps be quoted. On a dark night, in a terrible slum quarter, Abdul-Fady - alone, as usual - turned to rebuke a poor "fallen girl" for wasting match after match. She knew he was stone-deaf, and having tried, in vain, to warn him, burnt matches to show him that he was standing on the verge of a large cesspool opened that day for emptying, and left unguarded. He never saw her again. Why did she save him from a broken limb or death? Perhaps, because

*"Down in the human heart,  
Crushed by the tempter,  
Feelings lie buried  
That grace can restore".*

High officers became interested, and one General remarked to the Bishop, "If that man goes on with such work, he will kill himself". The General leaned forward and added, very seriously, "Even so, it's worth it and worth it all the time".

## STAFF PROBLEMS

Archibald Forder was in charge of the Palestine work from 1920-1924. He did good work with N.M.P. colporteurs there and in Transjordan, and also at our Jerusalem bookshop. But he was, semi-paralysed through his cruel sufferings in a damp underground Turkish dungeon. At last, with *paralysis agitans*, he was forced to retire, and ere long received his Home-Call.

This and some other problems caused a "black week"; a secretarial help was snapped up by others, a colleague wrote to tell us of changed theological views; and hardest of all, a suitable graduate, fully accepted by the London Committee, finally failed to pass the doctor, even at his third attempt.

But God answered the prayers of many who heard the Director speak at the great missionary meeting of Keswick Convention. In 1926 Miss Hilda Mollison joined us on the secretarial side and has thus served our Father's work for over 30 years. Latterly, when the printing works removed to the suburbs, she took charge of the Cairo bookshop - which remained in the city - with splendid co-operation from Amin Effendi who had given lifelong loyal service, and who died "in harness" on Christmas Eve, 1953.

In 1927, two more men joined the mission. The one, John R. Menzies, a graduate of Cambridge University, proved a very efficient assistant for literary work. When Mr. Upson moved to Palestine in 1931, Mr. Menzies took his place in Cairo, and carried on to the end of the Second World War.

The other, George Wald, after experience with the Forces, had been trained at the Missionary Training Colony at Upper Norwood. He was sent out as Colportage Supervisor, to travel with the men. Later, he had charge of the Jerusalem bookshop until March 1938, when he and his family transferred to Cairo, leaving Miss Leota Davison in charge in Jerusalem. When John Menzies left in 1946, George Wald manfully carried on through the very difficult post-war days. During this period, the N.M.P. had the honour of printing the first edition of the whole Bible in the Eastern Turki language for the British and Foreign Bible Society.

Not all our finest helpers were British or American! Ya`qub ( Jacob) was a Syrian. He joined our printing staff, and - after his conversion in a weekly staff prayer meeting - worked his way up to the post of Master Printer. Whilst he was in charge of the printers, Abdul-Fady could travel to Algeria. On his return he asked Ya`qub (with a smile) "Did our staff turn out as much work in my absence?" The quick reply was:- "Not just as much, but at least five per cent more, for they were all put upon their honour to serve you well in your absence".

Yusef, who joined at a later date, was an Egyptian employee of the Palestine Railways. They disliked parting with him, but agreed to do so because his wife's relations absolutely prohibited her from residing in that "heathen" country of Palestine. For over a score of years, he has been an invaluable help in "costing", book-keeping, etc., up to and beyond the time of the Suez crisis, of 1956, which finally broke up our work in Egypt.

The Rev. Ibrahim Sa'eed, an ordained pastor and eloquent preacher of the U.P. Church (now called the Coptic Evangelical Church), was in Upper Egypt with Abdul-Fady when both men were invited to a special supper. Their hostesses had wanted to hear the address at one of the meetings and so the cooking of a turkey was considerably delayed. Whilst filling time with conversation, Mr. Upson passed a slip of paper to the Pastor: "Ibrahim, write!" A quick reply was given, "In sha Allah" (If God will). But to one used to the Orient, there was too much IF about it! A second request was made, then a third. To that, there was a definite promise, and from then onwards, Pastor Ibrahim became a valued literary worker. No doubt Mr. Upson was led of God in inviting him to "write", to provide a successor to the Director ready for the time when the N.M.P. should be "Egyptianised"! However, Ibrahim's large Cairo Church had to have priority, so the best N.M.P. could get was "part time".

Whilst we were gaining helpers, we were also losing some. Miss Trotter, of Algiers, our enthusiastic partner for twenty years, had been confined to bed with heart attacks; yet from her sickroom had come some of her best work, e.g., "The Sevenfold Secret" (the Saviour's Seven I AM's). On the last visit to her, in March 1928, she heard the report of a journey with Mr. Theobald "down South". Next day the last words were: "Until the day break and the shadows flee away".

Canon Temple Gairdner (C.M.S.) had been endowed with a brilliant brain and was invaluable as a member of the Publications Committee. The present writer will never forget an evening service at which Gairdner tried to preach whilst suffering from throat and chest trouble. He came down from the pulpit and stood between the front pews in order to be heard by all!! That was his last sermon; yet, whilst slowly dying of pleurisy in the purer air of Helwan, he spent much time in writing to N.M.P., a six-sheet letter on his favourite topic of Arabic literature. A quotation from it may be found in our last section.

## THE SILVER JUBILEE, 1930

The completion of twenty-five years of service was an opportunity not to be missed. On March 12th, 1930, in a pavilion erected in the yard between the main publishing house and the printing works, 150 or more specially invited guests were accommodated, including the G. O. C. Forces in Egypt. The Egyptian Gazette (English Daily) gave a generous report of the gathering, mentioning, inter alia, that 100 societies from California to China were being served by the N.M.P., and that the use of its copyright publications had been loaned to those producing literature in Turkish, Bulgarian, Urdu, Gujerati and other languages.

After a Prayer-Gathering in the Board Room, a reception was held in the Director's residence, and parties were shown over the works. The evening meeting was presided over by H.E. Alexan Pasha, of Assiut, Head of the Protestant Community of Egypt and the Sudan.

Apologies were read from Bishop Gwynne, who was unable to leave Khartoum, and the Bishop in Jerusalem, also H. E. Baron de Bildt, the Swedish Ambassador, and General Dobbie, who was away on manoeuvres. The sister-press at Beirut, sent long and cordial greetings, their Director, Rev. P. Erdman, being ill in bed at the time. Then followed greetings from Egyptian, Syrian, Danish and Swedish workers.

After impassioned prayer by Dr. Robert Wilder of the Near East Council, the Director - in thanking the visitors - spoke on the topic "Our Seven Principles". Thus ended a very encouraging gathering.

## SENDING THE MESSAGE

Not all realise that it costs more to distribute the message than to produce it! Yet without sending it, what is the use of printing it?

The N.M.P. from earliest days specialised upon colportage work and directed, the "Joint colportage Committee" for about a score of years. When the First World War began, it looked as though the distribution of our books would have to be held up pro tem. But, in fact, no less than 52,318 copies were sold between April and June 1915. That was remarkable, for not only was the war crippling activities (in a way) but the Superintendent was out of the country! N.M.P. never "hustled", but did "hurry up". And why? See Esther 3, 13-15. Haste was required for the King's business; for the message of life was to attempt to overtake the message of death.

Colporteurs, excellent as they are, cannot reach the better-educated classes. To a certain extent, mission publishing houses depend upon their books being handed to individuals by resident or itinerant missionaries. Here is one typical incident.

A lady and her daughter in Kansu, a far-away province of inland China, fearlessly distributed Gospel literature in Muslim quarters. They ran short of tracts, and - as China was in such a disturbed condition - failed to get others. But what local helpers could not do, the Nile Mission Press did do.

Parcels were sent direct from Cairo, and were very well received by Muslims in those parts who could read Arabic - the language of their holy book - though they spoke Chinese in their daily business.

In Palestine and Egypt, Forder and Wald had often travelled with colporteurs and eaten and slept with them. Such hospitality was possible in those days! The Director, in one month, slept away from home on 26 nights, 22 of them in Egyptian homes.

## EXPLORING NEW GROUND

In 1931 a new arrangement was made at Mr. Upson's own request. The strain had been great, though God had blessed the work, and he now felt that a change should be made. His place as Director was taken by John R. Menzies, M.A., assisted by James E. Kinnear, M.A. who joined the staff in 1928.

Abdul-Fady having removed to Jerusalem, and thus being freed from Cairo responsibilities, it became possible for him to undertake a month's journey of 2,400 miles to make our books better known. As usual he travelled alone, and it was easy for anyone to notice that he was stone-deaf; yet, neither then nor at any other time was he attacked by any Arabic-speaking person. Much prayer had been offered for him. He was unarmed; and *Unarmed* means *Unharmed*.

The route was largely determined by invitations received. It was fairly easy to get a seat in a car to Galilee, thence to the Scottish Hospital at Tiberias. Descending to Lake Huleh, the car after some delay was allowed to cross the border into Syria.

Damascus, the oldest existing city in the world, still housing a quarter of a million inhabitants, was one focal point. Here and at Baalbec (British Syrian Mission), warm welcome was given to the speaker and his N.M.P. books which formed the main objective of his journey. And so to Aleppo.

From Aleppo, the route dipped east-south-east to Dair-*ez-Zor* on the Euphrates: for this stretch of 205 miles the traveller obtained a seat in the "Post-van", which was a Ford car with mail bags tied on the outside. Part of the way there were decent roads; later on there were no roads!

To Mosul was a lonely stretch, during three hours of which only two or three human beings were seen; these were shepherds who, at the approach of winter, had donned their sheepskins with the wool underneath for warmth and the skins outside to throw off the rain.

Mosul, the site of Nineveh, was then a city of nearly 100,000 inhabitants. Its chief street - named after Nineveh--contained the American Mission Bookshop, agent for our Arabic books. But in the streets, English, French, Turkish, Kurdish and Syriac could also be heard.

Kirkuk, chief town of the famous "Oil Land", was visited en route to Baghdad. This being in Kurdistan area, the people (Kurds) did not know Arabic, so the address (for the first time!) had to be given in English and interpreted into Turkish! The bookshop was being well looked after by the colporteur. (Since that time the famous pipe line has been constructed, destroyed, and

reconstructed.)

The journey to Baghdad - capital of Iraq - took the whole of the night. The traveller was met next morning by the Secretary of the Y.M.C.A. who gave very welcome hospitality, but insisted on a lecture being given that night on "What the Sphinx Thinks", as a draw to attract a congregation for the Sunday evening service. The Y.M. also kindly arranged a reception for teachers, colporteurs and bookshop keepers, at which the visitor spoke on "The Power of the Printed Page".

Hillah, "guardian" of the ruins of Babylon, was found to be a live centre. An American missionary told how he had distributed, in a certain famous town, 3,000 copies of Miss Trotter's Story Parables.

From Baghdad, the Y.M.C.A. kindly booked a seat in a Ford car, driven by an Iraqi for the 530 mile journey across the desert (from 6 a.m. to 11 a.m. the next day).

Much had been learned of needs and opportunities in Iraq which could have been fully utilised but for the second war and other circumstances.

As a sequel to a very grave operation upon Mrs. Upson, the Committee consented to their retirement at the early age of 60. After a spell at Nazareth, they left for England, Menzies in Cairo and Wald in Palestine, carrying on as usual.

Early in 1938, personal friends - among them Bishop Taylor Smith - met the expenses of a winter visit to Egypt. The Committee invited Abdul-Fady to lay the "Van Sommer Memorial" stone in a new headquarters just then being erected. Vibration, from greatly increased motor traffic, had damaged the Manakh building which had served so well for a quarter of a century. The old building was sold for almost enough to erect the new one.

## THE SECOND WORLD WAR AND AFTER

The strategic position of the new building (near Cairo station and the main road from Alexandria to Cape Town) made it a valuable property, increasingly so during the war and after. It proved to be God's own provision for the next ten years. The Van Sommer Memorial Hall was filled Sunday by Sunday, in the morning by the Rev. Ibrahim Sa`eed's Arabic-speaking congregation, and at night by an interdenominational group of Servicemen. Services personnel from all parts found a welcome and fellowship two nights a week in the upstairs flat, the outgrowth of a Christian Canteen started by Lady Arthur Smith while her husband was stationed in Egypt. Much printing was done for Chaplains and others, and for the Bible Society, and always some of our own publications. But these were harder to maintain. While the cost of living index in Egypt had increased by more than 300% - and with it the cost of production - funds from home dwindled alarmingly. Change after change took place. The British Forces were withdrawn to the Canal Zone, the Memorial Hall became too small for the Rev. Ibrahim's overflowing congregation, so that they built him a fine new church. Thus income from the Hall was reduced to an occasional meeting, and something had to be done if we were really to press on with the work for which we were there. In 1946 for health reasons, Mr. and



Mrs. Menzies had returned to England, and Mr. Wald was carrying on against crippling difficulties, aggravated by the rising tide of nationalism.

So it came about that, in 1948, the Pillar of Cloud moved on, leading us to sell the city property and build on cheaper land at Zeitoun, a Cairo suburb, so that we might have funds freed to carry on the work of publishing. Difficulties and restrictions were closing in on all mission work, and partly for this reason, the Egypt General Mission were able to loan the help of Mr. David Thompson for a time before he left on furlough. Then when Mr. Wald resigned, in 1954, our friends generously seconded Mr. Aubrey Whitehouse to take charge of the work for one year. But furlough claimed him in 1955, and there was no-one to carry on, though the Committee had been prayerfully seeking someone for months. Even Miss Mollison, who had been ill, was unable, on medical advice, to postpone her furlough and the outlook was dark.

Mr. and Mrs. William Foster came to the rescue. He had already been a member of the Committee for some years; now they volunteered for the Field. It was not, at that moment, realised how apposite would have been Mordecai's words to Esther, "Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" A similar allusion might be made regarding the Rev. Rex Lloyd, Rector of Fulmer, Bucks, and our present Chairman, who, in loving memory of his great-aunt, Miss Van Sommer, has shouldered the heavy responsibilities of the N.M.P.

But the Fosters were not destined to be long on the field. The work continued amidst many difficulties and much political upheaval (although also with blessing) until 1956, when, in consequence of the Suez crisis, all Britishers were expelled from Egypt and the property sequestered by the Egyptian Government.

Meanwhile the Lord's guidance was earnestly sought as to what He would have us do next. There was little hope of the door re-opening in Egypt to British missionaries, yet the need for Arabic Christian literature was greater than ever.

Early in 1957, we were led to start afresh in Beirut, receiving a warm welcome from all communities there. Mr. Douglas Howell, an experienced missionary, an Arabic scholar and, above all, a man of God, felt led to offer himself for the work which is developing rapidly, but with this difference, that we own no property in the land, using instead local Christian presses to print the new publications.

The story of the second quarter-century of the work, and particularly the exciting events of 1956 and the new start in Beirut, will, it is hoped, be told more fully by those who had an active part in them.

We pass on to the narrator's record of some answers to prayer, and to his closing message, written so short a time before his passing into the presence of his Lord, on May 10th, 1958.

*This section, "The Second World War - and After", has been inserted editorially in accordance with the wish of the author.*

## SOME ANSWERS TO PRAYER

It may relieve tension on the part of the reader to pause and meditate upon the goodness of the Lord. Here are a few of the many past blessings. "What God hath done, He can do".

We have already told how, in a day of perplexity, a gift of £250 was doubled, and then in a fortnight, doubled again.

In 1912, the great problem was how to accept Dr. Zwemer's challenge to "Take the oak tree out of its flowerpot". But the next year he visited the U.S.A., and some £6,000 was raised from three donors! The whole cost of the new premises (£8,000) plus the erection of the printing works in the yard, also the expense of removal of the machinery and workers all was met before work began. Later, those donors visited us, were greatly interested and became permanent friends.

Before this removal took place, there was a great need for a treadle machine, to cost £200. Special prayer had been offered one morning. That afternoon the Superintendent - who usually had his door locked whilst engaged in close proof-reading - found a slip pushed under his door. It read somewhat like this, "You prayed in my hearing this morning for £200; here is an American draft for \$1,000; won't you please let me in to hand it to you? W. Borden".

It took some months to get our new printing works erected and all the machinery removed and re-erected; still more to get possession of all our rooms; for there were former tenants to be "evicted" one by one. Prayer was made without ceasing, for it was now July 1914, and European workers were needing to get a short rest in a cooler atmosphere. At last, on a Saturday morning, 4<sup>th</sup> August, every bit of furniture was in position and all machines tested, and the workers exclaimed, "Well, we're in, thank God".

After a mid-day meal, and a hasty packing up, the small party caught the afternoon train for hospitable Fairhaven. On reaching Tanta Junction, half-way down, newsboys jumped on to the footboard and rushed through the carriages shouting "HARE !" (War!). Their Arabic papers were eagerly seized and read; and that night, at Fairhaven family prayers, the one topic was - "Thanks be to God, just in, just in time".

During those war days, a finance clerk was instructed to pay the colporteurs their salaries if he could manage it with so small a balance in the Colportage Account. On return from the Bank he said that he had managed it and had 48 milliemes (farthings) left over. How rich we were, we had one shilling, plus God!

"Cast thy bread upon the waters, and thou shalt find it after many days". Most probably the inspired writer was referring to the Egyptian peasants, during the Nile inundations, wading in the very muddy water, broadcasting seed which - with the fall of the Nile - would sink into the mud and, in due course, germinate and bear a crop.

Here is an example of the "due course". A mission school teacher came into the N.M.P. office to interview the Director. As he was engaged, Mr. Menzies heard the man's story; but ere long, he burst in, with the remark "You must really come and hear this narrative". The narrator cheered several hearts by his story, of which this is a short summary:-

"In 1902 you put your arm on mine and asked WHEN I had been "born again". I was a church member, but I could not answer. Four years later your question recurred to me, and I then saw the Lord Jesus Who said to me "My blood avails for thee". I replied, "Thy blood has saved me". That was twenty-two years ago".

From the time of seed-sowing four years had passed, then to the confession of his faith, twenty-two years more. "After many days", indeed.

During our earlier days, God often raised up helpers who not only gave prayer-help, but also financial assistance. One of our regular helpers was the trustee of the Milton Stewart Fund, and another, the American Christian Literature Society for Muslims. Of much more recent years, the E.L.O. (Evangelical Literature Overseas), at Chicago, has often been "God's Almoner". But whether in those far-off days or at the present time, it has always been the sacrificial gift of Christian believers in Britain, New Zealand, North America, and in many other lands, upon which we have relied for our basic financial needs.

## EPILOGUE

*(Edited from notes written by Arthur Upson shortly before his death in 1958)*

Political upheavals are everywhere. A land which appears more or less tranquil today, may tomorrow emulate others and seek to dispense with foreign personnel - for a time. But, wait and see. Who said that Isaiah 19. 25, ('Blessed be Egypt my people'), was finished and done with?

The Gospel today is on the air; broadcasts from Liberia and other stations go out in many languages - Arabic included. Should this cause us to slacken our efforts? Or should it encourage us to follow up the radio ministry with appropriate literature? Have we forgotten the work of Dr. Laubach, and the vast increase in literacy? The word 'maktoub' ('it is written') has more force in the East than in the West, and still acts like magic.

When the Nile Mission Press started in 1905, we reckoned the number of Muslims to be under two hundred millions. Now, the estimate is nearly four hundred millions. Here is food for thought. Here is a situation which has driven us to our knees.

Like Caleb of old, let us ask in faith: 'Give me this mountain'. At times we have been tempted to sigh: 'Oh, that I had wings like a dove'. More creditable to shout: 'Oh, for the wings of an eagle'. Oh, for the vision of a Julia Ward Howe, in her stirring battle hymn:

`Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the LORD'. `A lullaby, or a battle-cry?', asked Miss Liliias Trotter.

Canon Gairdner's death-bed letter to Abdul-Fady still demands a reply. Here are two sentences from his six-sheet Farewell:

`The race of super-Arabist missionaries has passed away, and left no successors. Is it not treason, tamely to let our lives and our generation slip away, without having yielded our contribution to a task like this?'

He closed with: 'Ever yours, from 1899 until ....ah, that's the point. No gambling! *Now* is emphatically the day of salvation'.

Is our Master awaiting *your* reply ?

The Author.



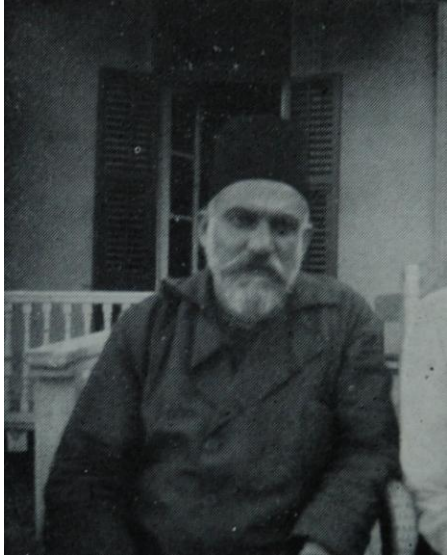
The Middle Years



In Later Life



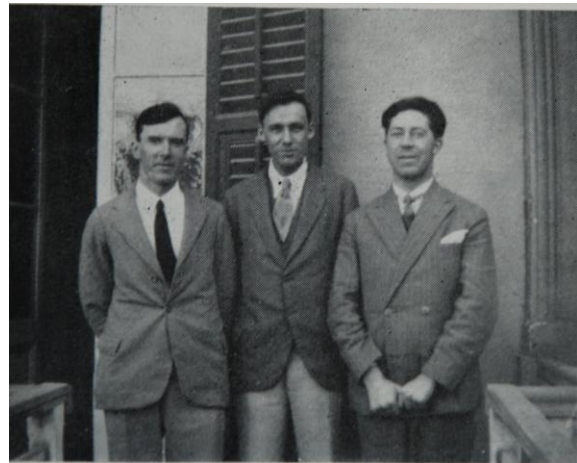
At his desk in Cairo



Sheikh Abdullah

Recruits in the late twenties.

- G Wald
- J R Menzies
- J E Kinnear



*Left to right*

- Amin Effendi
- Sheikh Iskander
- Ibrahim Butros



Arthur Upson and Rev Marcus Abd-el-Masih

With George Swan,  
Mrs Upson in the foreground



With Egyptian Colleagues