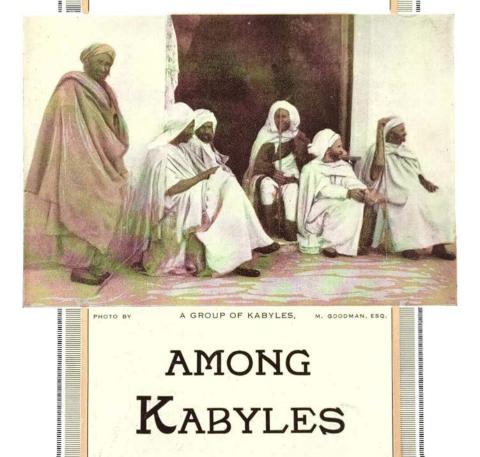
# NORTH AFRICA MISSION



# **AMONG** KABYLES

Price Twopence



WORKERS AT DJEMAA SAHRIDJ, 1914.

Standing (from left to right): Fraulein Eymann, Mrs. Ross, Mrs. Warren. Sitting: Miss K. Smith Miss J. Cox.

## AMONG KABYLES

Mohammedan Kabyles

of Algeria. . .

<u>Djemâa</u> Sahridj. In the heart of the Kabyle country which forms a part of the French colony of Algeria, at an elevation of about 1,500 feet above sea

level, stands the native village of Djemâa Sahridj. Built upon the ruins of Bida Colonia, an ancient Roman colony, at one time the seat of a bishopric, it has been called the "Damascus" of Kabylia. In times past, the Kabyles always chose an elevated position for their villages in order that they might be able to see the approach of any foe and have the means of defending themselves and their property. Djemâa Sahridj is well-watered, it being commonly said that there are as many as ninety-nine springs in its vicinity. As a natural consequence, there is considerable vegetation, and even in the summer time the greenness of the spot is refreshing to the eye.

It was here that the North Africa Mission opened its first station as far back as the year 1881. Ever since that time there has been Gospel work going on, and not a few of the native Moslems have been brought to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Two of the lady missionaries at present at this station have laboured here in the Gospel for twenty-six years; and if space would allow, much might be written of the events of the last thirty-two years. It is, however, with the present condition of things in the village that this booklet deals.

Before making acquaintance with the The village itself, it will be well to take a wider Kabyles. glance at the people of Kabylia. These go by the name of Kabyles and are of Berber origin. The Berbers are supposed to be the aborigines of North Africa. Whether this is so or not, it is at any rate certain that they were in the country before the Phænicians bore down upon the coasts. Through the successive invasions of Phænicians, Romans, Goths, Arabs and French, they have held their own and refused to be merged in the conquering nations. Naturally, of course, their race has become mixed more or less by intermarriage, but to a wonderful degree they retain their original characteristics.

In personal appearance the Kabyles are a fine race—tall and muscularly built. Their complexions are rather dark as a rule, and occasionally one meets those with a negro strain in their blood, probably introduced by slaves from the south. Some, however, are fair and have red hair, indicating an admixture of European blood. Among the better class, the young women have clear, white skins. Kabyle girls marry very early in life, and before they have reached middle age they often, as a result of hard work and cruel treatment, look quite old and withered. Though by the Koran a man is permitted to have four wives, a Kabyle generally contents himself with one. one, however, he does not treat well; as, in common with all his co-religionists, he regards women as but very little better than the beasts.

The men of the poorer class wear a long woollen burnous or robe over a loose cotton shirt, and strong leathern shoes. Some adopt the Arab dress, while others now wear European clothing. The women are very fond of adorning themselves with silver jewellery.

Most of the houses are built of stone and are only one storey high. They are often grouped together round a court-yard. The roofs are made of tiles and the floors of beaten earth, while there are neither windows, chimneys, nor fire-places. Furniture is scarce and primitive. A raised portion of the floor forms the bedstead, and the babies' cradle is hung from the rafters. Provisions are generally kept in tall earthenware jars or vessels made of twigs coated with clay. The well-known cous-cous is the staple article of diet. This preparation, which is made of flour



Photo by Mr. T. J. Warren
A NATIVE OIL MILL AND PRESS.

Women often take the place of the mule in the photo.
Olives drying in the foreground.

rubbed by the hands into small grains, is steamed and eaten with vegetables or oil, or occasionally with meat.

The Kabyle language is one of several spoken by the Berbers: when the North Africa Mission started work, it possessed no literature of any kind. M. Cuendet, one of the oldest workers, has been engaged for many years in the translation of the Bible into Kabyle. He has quite lately completed the task, the difficulty of which can hardly be estimated. The whole New Testament and some portions of the Old

Testament have already been published by the British and Foreign Bible Society, who hope to issue further portions, and, later on, the whole Bible.

Although all Kabyles profess the Moslem religion, they are more easy of approach than the Arabs. Fanaticism is much rarer among them, and they are more ready to mix with foreigners and less tenacious of their own primitive ideas. Each village has its thadjemath or open meeting place, fitted with stone



Photo by Mr. T. J. Warren

A VILLAGE THADJEMATH.

Belkassem, Native Evangelist in the centre. Some of the men are holding Scripture portions given by the Scripture Gift Mission.

seats all round, where the affairs of the village or tribe are discussed. Boys of school age (i.e., from six to fourteen) are compelled by French law to attend school, in those places where schools are provided, but as the accommodation is limited, a certain number of the poorest are exempt.

Industries. chief industries small prope

Agriculture and fruit growing are the chief industries. Many of the people own small properties which they cultivate, but

as there are too many for the land, numbers drift away to the large towns. Emigration is on the increase, hundreds going to France and finding employment in the vineyards or in soap and sugar factories. A good many of these emigrants return to their homes for a few weeks in the course of the year.

Trades vary with the districts. Native tools and knives are made at Djemâa Sahridj, and wood-carving is carried on there also, mostly in the form of photo frames, work and glove boxes, knives and book stands. These articles are taken to Algiers and sold to tourists.

Kabylia is a very mountainous country Physical and has been compared with Scotland, features. Switzerland and Palestine. It has the geographical features of the two former with the flora of the latter. Figs, olives, and grapes abound. Orchards of fig trees are to be seen everywhere, and the fruit forms a staple part of the food of the people. The fig tree, with its spreading branches and its silvery bark, makes a pretty picture. In the spring it breaks out into fruit before the leaves are fully developed. Next to the fig in importance comes the olive—a striking contrast in appearance. It is an evergreen with a rugged trunk, and with leaves, dark green on their upper sides and light green underneath; the fruit becomes when ripe a rich, purple black. The vine is allowed to grow freely by the natives, though those cultivated by the French colonists are cut back every year. It is a curious sight to see grapes hanging from the branches of trees, and even from the prickly pear by the roadside. The ash tree is grown for the sake of its leaves and young twigs which are used as fodder There are many wild flowers; and for the cattle. ferns of various kinds abound in the ravines and mountain passes. It is difficult to find one's way along the monntain paths; they are mostly only mule tracks, winding round and round to the summit-sometimes only the beds of mountain torrents. The villages which are often built on the spurs of the hills like eagles' nests, are very numerous. From one point it is estimated that three hundred can be counted.

The distance from Algiers to The Road to Djemâa Sahridj is just over eighty Djemaa Sahridj. miles. Until quite recently the best way of covering the distance was by railway to Tizi-Ouzou, and thence by road; but now, a motor-bus runs every other day from Algiers to Mekla, which is only about a mile from the village. Beyond Mekla the road is rough, and the mountains on the right curve round and terminate in an abrupt headland, under the shadow of which lies the village of our quest. Djemâa Sahridj is, with one exception, the largest village in Kabylia. It is divided into four quarters, and from a height these divisions can be plainly seen. The roadways or passages between the houses are narrow and very dirty, but they would be much dirtier if it were not for the constant stream of water which runs through most of them, carrying away some of the refuse which would otherwise remain and become malodorous.

Near the entrance to the village, The Old only a little way from the main road, Mission House. stands the old mission station-now the centre of the work carried on among the women and girls of the neighbourhood by Miss J. Cox and Miss K. Smith and their helpers. It is built in bungalow style, with a verandah running round the house. Eight rooms and two small kitchens open on to a closed court-yard. Large windows look out on the flower and vegetable gardens bordered by a hedge of roses and blackthorn which surrounds the house on three sides. On the north is a broad gravel walk with a field beyond, also belonging to the Mission premises. This is guarded by a hedge of prickly pear. To the

right and left of the house are two halls, each capable of seating a hundred people. Three small Kabyle gourbies (huts made of branches of trees and earth) are used for storing wood and tools, etc., and for grinding ccrn and cooking. These complete the simple but useful arrangements of the "Home." The following picture of daily life there is drawn by Miss Kate Smith who, with her friend and co-worker Miss Jane Cox, has laboured for a quarter of a century in this village.

The Home and School.

"For nearly seven years 'Djerah' has been a Home and School for Kabyle young women. The aim and object of this work is, firstly, to bring the girls to Christ and teach them how to live and walk as His followers; secondly, to train and prepare them to be useful wives for the converts; thirdly, to fit them to earn their own living in case of necessity. After many difficulties we have in God's strength succeeded in making the "Home" appreciated by parents as well as children.

"Our present household consists of Miss Cox and myself, two European helpers (one French, the other Danish), a native woman as cook, and fourteen young Kabyle girls and children. Two Christian native men and women come daily to work. One of these men, A-, is the deacon of our little native church, and has worked more or less at this station for twenty-six years. Formerly, he was our faithful guide and attendant on our itinerating journeys among the mountains; now, he is our helper and the faithful guardian of our house and 'Girl's Home.' He also acts as mason (the house needs frequent repairs as the walls crack easily on account of the clay soil), glazier, locksmith, gas-fitter, tree-feller, etc. The other man is the gardener and general servant, fetching water from the fountain, chopping wood for fires, going daily an hour's walk to fetch our bread and the letters. wife (also a Christian) cards and spins wool, washes, cooks, etc., and assists her husband in gardening; for our field and kitchen garden must supply for twentyfive persons. The other woman comes daily to weave and to teach the children her art. Her beautiful pieces of work find ready purchasers.

"Let me describe a day's work-

"The alarum is sounding, and though scarcely dawn, we hear the girls moving briskly. D- is lighting fires and helping to cook our breakfast. S- is dressing, preparatory to washing the younger children. It is the rule of the house that every one has a cold bath every morning, summer and winter. L- has gone to sweep, wash and polish the black and white tiles in the Hall used for classes. Mand Y— are doing the same thing for the floors of the Hall used as an 'Ouvroir,' and the court of the house. How quietly and steadily they work! No talking, playing, disputing or grumbling as in the past. That is all changed, and we can rise and pray without being disturbed. It is true that Fraulein E- must occasionally look round to see that the work is properly done; but punishments for neglected and slovenly work are very rare now.

There is a buzz in the school-room where the little ones are being dressed in their bright coloured frocks and head-kerchiefs. They are soon taken to the 'Ouvroir' where, after warming their hands, they are set to work picking wool. Soon we see D—— H—— bringing along five or six sweet little maidens, who have come for Kindergarten teaching, which Fraulein E—— undertakes. Of course they must come to our breakfast tray for a bit of sugar or a crust of bread. Such a hurrying to and fro is going on now—emptying pails, beating mats, sweeping, dusting! for the little girls are doing the sleeping room.

"At eight o'clock the big bell rings. 'Heads!' is the cry. Yes, all the girls come to have their hair combed. This is a most necessary function, for alas,



there are few clean heads in the village, and many diseased ones. So 'Heads!' means constant work.

"Another bell, and soon all are seated on mats before a meal of dried figs. Then come prayers; and as the men join us, we are quite a large party. The children have splendid memories, and sing hymns in Kabyle and French, and recite passages out of the Bible without difficulty. After the Bible reading and lesson, all kneel, and often our native helper leads reverently in prayer.

"Now all separate to their different tasks. Some go to Mademoiselle for a French lesson; the tiny ones to Fraulein E—— for Kindergarten; others to Y—— for weaving; two prepare the vegetables for dinner. The gardener is waiting for orders; the missionary menage must be directed, callers Interviewed and a thousand and one other things attended to.

"The gate bell rings and a sweet, bright-faced young woman enters. This is A—'s wife, who was brought to the Saviour by her husband. She has come to help in the Women's Class about to be held in the further Hall. The women begin to arrive. Most of them are very poor and sad looking. Some of them have little daughters in our 'Home,' and, of course, they must peep in as they pass and see their children at work. Looking round, they exclaim, 'D'ldjineth' (It is heaven)! Soon the sound of hymn-singing reaches our ears—the meeting is going forward. Some of these poor souls know Jesus and pray in His Name. They are much changed since those early days when we often shed tears over their terrible conduct. As they go away, we notice their poor weary faces.

"Another ring at the bell and the blind man arrives. He asks for his Braille book and is soon reading a chapter in Hebrews quite intelligently. We left our children busy at work. They have had recreation by this time and a general sewing class. Now they have some more play while we dine. Then

comes the Kabyle meal. The big earthenware pot is steaming on the fire. All is ready—cous-cous, vegetables and sauce. Three groups are formed—seven in each group—and we ourselves dispense the food. Soon the native wooden spoons are plying, and all do full justice to the meal. The tiny children are then taken to their homes while our children enjoy (?) a siesta; or at least we do, for this is our only 'quiet time' during the day.

"On rising, there are classes for French, knitting, darning, canvas-work and sewing, followed by a walk—two and two—on the road. When the fields are reached, all scatter joyfully, some in search of vegetables for the next day's meal, and some to gather wild flowers.

"The day is waning, and all fall into line again. Home reached, a simple supper of 'galette' or a kind of porridge; then, bedtime, when each child, lying on two forms placed together, is comfortably covered with a thick, woollen blanket, spun and woven by little hands in the 'Ouvroir.' One of the elder girls then kneels reverently and asks God to bless them all, solemn little sounds of 'Amen' coming from beneath the rugs."

Thus, day after day, are these young girls living in the atmosphere of a Christian home; surely the ultimate results can be neither few nor unimportant.

Though the material benefit of the natives is not the primary aim of those who devote their lives to the Lord's service in North Africa, there is abundant evidence that material benefit does follow in their wake; and where dirt and misery once reigned, now cleanliness and prosperity are visible. Quite recently, the first baby girl was born in a Christian Kabyle home. Whereas, among the Moslems, the birth of a girl is always a profound disappointment and the little one suffers accordingly, this child was warmly welcomed by both parents. Unusually, infants are

not washed for several months, but kept swaddled up in dirty rags, their heads anointed with salt and oil to form a crust to protect them from any damage; this child is clean and sweet and well cared for.

But better than all this, good though it certainly is, God has set His own seal on the efforts of His servants, and there have been cases of conversion among those under instruction, and as many as eight women and girls of the village have been baptised on profession of faith.

But the work of the North Africa Work among Mission is by no means limited to the Men and Boys. care and instruction of the young This branch was specially taken up Kabyle women. some six or seven years ago by the two ladies mentioned above; and the work among men and boys hitherto carried on by them was removed to new-rented premises farther up the village. Standing back in a garden, this house was originally built for a rich, native family, and consisted of two very large rooms on the ground floor and six smaller ones above, which were reached by a staircase outside the house. A good deal of alteration was necessary to make the premises at all suitable for mission work. An entrance with staircase, a fair-sized sitting-room and small kitchen now take the place of the ground-floor rooms. small rooms have been added and a large cistern has been built for rain-water. Even now, the house, though healthily situated and commanding pleasant views, is by no means convenient for the two families of missionaries that inhabit it. Having no verandah it is extremely hot in the summer. Lack of water is also another drawback; that for drinking purposes having to be brought from the village fountain all through the year, and in the dry season every drop of water required for house and garden has to be fetched. This entails much labour and expense.

The Mission household consists of Mr. and Mrs. Warren, and Mrs. Ross, her two children and helper. Mr. and Mrs. Warren have been in residence since October, 1911. Mrs. Ross came to Djemâa Sahridj with her late husband, Mr. D. G. Ross, in the autumn of 1904, and for more than six years they laboured together. Early in 1911 the latter was struck down by fever, thought to have been contracted in his ministrations among the sick of the village, and he passed away on February 27th. After a few months



Photo by Mr. Young

THE PREACHING HALL.

On the right is the entrance to the house of one of the native Christians.

rest in England Mrs. Ross bravely returned to her post, leaving her eldest child at home and taking the two younger ones back with her.

The work carried on may be divided into four sections:—Sunday Services (including Sunday Schools) Meetings, Visiting, and Medical Aid.

The Preaching Hall, which is used for the Sunday Services, is situated in the main road from Mekla, at the commencement of the village, quite close to the "Home for Girls" and a group of houses belonging to three native Christians. The Hall itself belongs to one of these converts, and is rented from him. The owner's house stands close by. Unlike most native dwellings, it possesses windows. This apparently trifling difference is typical of the change wrought by the Gospel. Light—physical and spiritual—has entered the house.

The Hall itself is a simple, square room, having three windows, one on each side of the door and another a little higher up in the wall at the farther end. It has a tiled floor, whitewashed walls and wooden ceiling. On the right-hand of the building, stand chairs for the women and girls, and on the left benches for the men and boys. Here, every Sunday morning, a small company of believers (about thirty, including the workers) meet together for praise and prayer and the study of God's Word. In the evening there is a Gospel Meeting, and another is also held every Thursday, at which the numbers average over thirty. The Sunday School attendances average about forty, and at the neighbouring village of Mesloub, about a mile distant, Mrs. Ross gathers nearly as many at an early hour. There is a Bible Class for men on Sunday afternoon, and during the week classes are held for lads, infants, and beggars. These are all fairly well attended.

Visiting. visits, when circumstances permit, are made to adjoining villages. Mrs. Ross and Mrs. Warren call on the women in their houses, whilst Mr. Warren and the native evangelist go to the Mosques and public gathering-places to talk to the men and to read to them the Word of God.

Five mornings in the week the sick of the neighbourhood come to Mrs. Ross for advice and medicine; and a meeting is always held at which the message of salvation is proclaimed. By this means an entrance has been found into many homes and hearts. Even now, the recollection of the



Photo by Mr. T. J. Warren Visiting the Villages.

help Mr. Ross afforded them in this respect is fresh in the minds of many; and, quite lately, Mrs. Ross was referred to as "the wife of the one who cured me when I was ill." During 1912 and 1913 the total number of attendances of patients amounted to 9,908.

There have been sixteen men converts

Converts. and eight women (or girls) baptised since
the North Africa Mission started work at
Djemâa Sahridj. Of these there are now three men
in fellowship and five women (or girls). Two of the
men are employed by the Mission. One of them acts
as handy man at the "Home for Girls," and also
assists at various meetings; the other, as native
evangelist, preaches the Gospel twice a week in the
hall in the village, speaks at the Sunday morning
service for men and women, helps in the Sunday
School, assists Mrs. Ross in her medical work, and, in
company with the missionaries, visits other villages
once a week.

It is, of course, impossible to follow all those who, after professing conversion, have left the neighbour-

hood. Occasionally, the workers are saddened to hear of some having gone back into sin, who at first seemed



BELKASSEM WITH HIS WIFE AND SON standing outside the house he has built on the outskirts of the village.

to run well; but they have also had the joy of hearing of others who, in distant lands, are still bearing witness

to Christ and His saving power. There is comfort in the thought that "the Lord knoweth them that are His."

At Moknea, a small village some five The hours' distant by mule, there stands a Sub-Station. little out-station owned by the North Africa Mission. Unfortunately, the premises are out of repair, so that no missionary could reside there, even if there were one free to do so. If the staff at Djemâa Sahridj were strengthened, it would be possible to undertake regular work there at stated intervals, but, under existing circumstances, only an occasional visit can be managed. The following account by Mr. Warren of a journey to Moknea, taken by himself and his wife, may throw light on one side of a missionary's life.

"Our last journey to Moknea was made A Visit to in the summer. Our party numbered four— Moknea. Mrs. Warren, myself, and two natives. On account of the heat we decided to travel at night, but as a fierce sirocco was blowing and the moon at first was obscured by clouds we did not get away before 3 a.m. The first part of our journey was down the rough, rocky road leading to the ravine which bounds Djemâa Sahridj on the east. On the way we passed a number of men and boys who were returning from the harvest in the plains, and were passing the night by After crossing the ravine our road the road-side. improved, mounting gradually until we reached another ravine. We soon left the path and journeyed across the fields. An hour's travelling brought us to the first river, a tiny stream in a river-bed a quarter of a mile wide.

"The party of men before mentioned joined us at this point, and also a native butcher going on his weekly round from market to market. After crossing the river we mounted again, skirting another gorge and passing several threshing-floors—flat prepared places where the gathered ears of corn are trodden by oxen as in Old Testament days. Heaps of 'chaff which the wind driveth away' were lying about at these spots.

Travelling.

"We were now crossing rough, uncultivated ground—pasture-lands broken up by numerous water-fissures which large river, and at that moment the sun rose over the mountains in front of us. How many times during the journey I had turned round to look for the sun which had not yet risen! It was the bright light of



Photo by Mr. T. J. Warren Native Cattle among the Rough Esparto Grass.

the moon, and the hot south wind blowing on our backs which produced the feeling of sun-rays. We found it a welcome change to wade through the cold waters of the river which at this spot is about a mile wide. After crossing, we soon arrived at a very rough bit of road—a rough staircase of rocks up which we clambered. Some parts of the route were overhung by trees, so that one had to be continually bending the back in order to avoid Absalom's fate, for the stubborn animals persisted in going their own way, obstacle or no obstacle.

"We soon came upon a native market, and then our way led along narrow paths, which are in reality the beds of mountain streams and are quite impassable during heavy rains. Here we found the rocks piled up, and had to pick our way in and out, carefully and laboriously. Over to our right, hidden in the thick undergrowth, was a shallow cave, on the walls of which may be seen inscriptions of a geometrical character, which are supposed to be the writings of the ancient Berbers. Near by is a spring, to which we made our way for a drink of water; but, alas! it was neither clear nor sweet, and we sighed for the waters of Djemâa Sahridj as David did for the well of Bethlehem.

"From the high ground which we had now reached, we could see for many miles the rivervalley stretched before us, and could distinguish Djemâa Sahridj and Tizi-Ouzou. The Kabyle lad, who was accompanying us for the first time, cried out: 'Behold the land of my fathers!' Our road now ran over the level, grassy uplands, where the shepherd boys wander with their sheep. Ahead of us could be seen the rocky summit where, hidden away, lies the village of Moknea; but before reaching it we turned off to the right, and there, nestled in a hollow below us, lay our little Mission Station."

It will be evident that a journey of this character cannot be often undertaken when the station itself is under-manned. One of the advantages of a stronger staff at Djemâa Sahridj would be that all the villages around could then be systematically visited from time to time, and thus many more would be brought into touch with the missionaries than is possible under existing circumstances.

Foremost then, among the needs of the present time, we will place the need of more labourers. A married man speaking French would find a ready sphere of service, as most of the young men and lads have a speaking

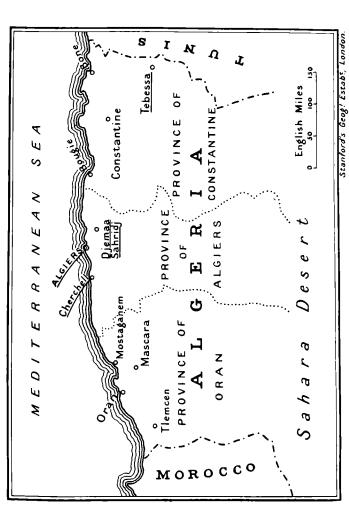
knowledge of French, and several of the meetings are held in that language. Then again, much would be gained if it were possible to provide some form of industrial work for the converts, thus keeping them in the village under Christian influence. Another plan would, if practicable, be a great help; viz., the establishment of a small orphanage for boys, who could thus be brought up and trained from their early days in the fear and admonition of the Lord, and thus be spared the terrible struggle with deep-rooted Moslem habits and customs which must follow the conversion of every adult Moslem.

Another need is further accommodation for the workers. There is not sufficient room for the convenience of the two families that at present occupy the premises in the village, and if the staff were recruited the situation would become impossible. The Hall is also too small and its situation is not a good one.

But for all these plans, funds are necessary. The North Africa Mission seeks to look to the Lord alone, being confident that if it should be His will that this, the earliest station of the Mission, should be strengthened and its borders enlarged, He will, in His own time and way, provide the requisite means. This booklet is written with a view to the information of the friends of the Mission, that they may learn what the Lord is doing by His servants who have gone forth in His Name and for His sake, to preach to the poor ignorant people of Kabylia the gospel of the grace of God.

LONDON 1914:

# The North Africa Mission, 18 John St., Bedford Row, w.c.



MAP OF ALGERIA.

Djemaa Sahridj is in the centre of Kabylia. N. A. M. Stations underlined.

## The North Africa Mission.

It was founded in 1881 by the late Mr. George Pearse, assisted by the late Dr. Grattan Guinness and Mr. Edward H. Glenny. It was at first called "THE MISSION TO THE KABYLES," but gradually extended its operations to all parts of North Africa, work among Mohammedans being its main business. At the present time, the most easterly station of the Mission is Shebinel-Kom in Egypt, and the most westerly, Casablanca in Morocco.

Its object is to make known the Gospel of God's grace to those among whom it labours, and then to instruct them in the way of God more perfectly, that they may be intelligent and devoted witnesses to others.

Its character is Evangelical and Evangelistic, embracing Christians of various denominations who seek to be loyal to Christ and to the inspired Word of God. It seeks to encourage dependence upon God in all things.

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