WHY I WANT TO GO TO ARABIA

Mary V. Bruins

Wanting to go to Arabia as a medical missionary is a natural result of my home and church life. As a child, I was deeply impressed by the strong Christian personalities of missionaries who visited us, of outstanding men and women in our own Church and of my parents. I developed an intense admiration for them especially for my parents, because I knew so intimately their sincerity, faithfulness, and affection for Christ and the church. I would have chosen to follow the pressing of my father as a minister but decided that the sex was not correct for that office. By impressions gained in family worship, at Church and Sunday School and from the missionary stories my mother told, the idea grew that I might be of service in missionary work. Helping less fortunate people, carrying on the work of the men and women I admired so much, introducing others to Christ because He meant so much to me, was the appeal this work had for me. The career of Ida Scudder of India seemed most interesting to me and I hope I could study Medicine as a preparation. At college I met Dr. Dame and Dr. Harrison of the Arabian mission, and at medical school, Dr. Mylrea, Dr. Calverley and others from Arabia. Their thrilling stories of service in Arabia made me wish I could work in that difficult field.

Arabia is an attractive field for a physician to begin a practice of Medicine. Comparatively, the U. S. has an oversupply of practitioners. Because there are so few educated doctors in Arabia, one could be of relatively much greater service there. Many people have no one but quacks and ignorant midwives to help them in illness. The results of their treatment of patients rivals the shocking details related in K Mayo's book, "Mother India." The ignorance of the people concerning ordinary cleanness causes tragedies we rarely see here. There is every kind of Medical work to be done—sanitation, surgery of all kinds, feeding and care of babies and young children, treatment of the many blinding eye diseases of the tropics, relief of real suffering and the prevention of the epidemics which occur so often in the warm climate. A woman physician finds a special appeal in women's work. Islam tends to make women's lives hard and unhappy. Early marriage, seclusion in the home, lack of education, illness accompanying and following childbirth, lack of medical care combined with polygamy and easy divorce for the husband cause tragedies which a woman physician could alleviate for men physicians usually may not attend women patients. Under the care of ignorant midwives, women often remain in labor for days and easily contract the most virulent infections—even tetanus is not rare, and their barbarous practices frequently leave the mother with a chronic illness. The large numbers of women who attend the clinics of our hospitals in Arabia testifies to the fact that we are needed. Often the doctor must see from 100 to 200 patients in a single morning, perform operations, care for the hospital patients,
and then make out calls in the homes. And now three of our women's hospitals are without a doctor. When medical skill and science can do no more to relieve human suffering, we can offer as a Christian, a faith that enables a person to stand anything in the universe.

Arabia has a strategic position in the world. It lies on one of the greatest trade routes - between Europe and Asia. The countries bordering it have great commercial possibilities. Iraq has rich oil fields and fertile lands which once supported a population of 40 millions of people where now only one million live. Arabia, desert though it is, has produced men which have had more influence on history than whole continents. Its people are hardy, independent, and hospitable with acute minds which are clear and positive. They are a people with whom we can be real friends. Recently Ibn Saoud at the head of the Puritan Wahabi tribe has succeeded in uniting most of Arabia. He aims at a revival of Islam and Arabic culture. What Islam has done in the past it may do again. We can only speculate what may be about to happen there but we can take an active part in leading them to higher things---to give them Christ instead of Mohammed.

So I want to go to Arabia because there I can be most useful to others because the work of the great men and women who began the work there should be carried on, because the presentation of God as given by Jesus Christ is the only successful foundation for a full life for man and the only solution to the perplexing problems of life. Above all, it is His command that we, having been convinced of this "Go and tell" others.