

July 17, 1926

Dear Mother:-

According to the last letter that I have from you, you should be sailing to-day. I certainly hope that nothing has come up to interfere with your plans and that this letter will find you safely on Irish soil and having your visit with all the friends and relatives of that part of the world.

My own vacation this Summer is going to be very brief and I will be lucky if I can get any at all. The teaching in the Camp and other affairs in connection with it are keeping me pretty busy for a Summer. Then there are conferences and committee meetings that occupy a good bit of time for the writing of reports as well as attendance at the meetings themselves. We are having a Christian workers conference of the missionaries of all Persia in the first week in August. It will bring together the English missionaries from the south of Persia as well as the Presbyterian missionaries from the West of Persia from whom we are almost entirely disconnected although they are of us. I am sorry that the meetings are going to be in the city and it will be awfully difficult for us to get to any of the meetings. For us to go it will mean a long trip in town and the dismissal of classes that at the present time do not feel like dismissing. Dr. Zwemer will be the main attraction at all of the meetings and I hate to miss the opportunity of seeing and hearing more from him, but at the present time I cannot see the opportunity for more than one day in town to meet and know the people who are in attendance.

In addition to this Christian Workers Conference we have a meeting of the Committee on Religious Education, of which I am a pseudo member at the present time. The general idea of the committee is that it should outline a program of religious education for the whole Mission. That will mean considerable work, by way of preparation before hand and certainly plenty of work for four or five days during which time the committee will hold its meetings. At the present time it is the plan to hold this conference before the Christian Workers Conference, from July 27th to Aug. 1st.

Up to two or three days ago I thought that I was going to get the opportunity to go off for four days this week with the boys on one of their long hikes, but with this Religious Education Conference on the way it means that I will have to use the four days that the boys are away in getting ready for the conference. It will be a change, however, from teaching and a rest from the boys that will give me a kind of a vacation even though I am working.

The four of us, the Dutch's and ourselves had planned a two or three weeks camping trip for this month but we gave it up because Teddy was leery of getting a weekly journey away from a doctor or even of tackling such a proposition. The Dutch's went off on a trip of their own for six days this past week, returning on Thursday, i.e. two days ago. Dutch and I next thought of taking a week's jaunt without the girls to Mt. Damavand which is about fifty miles away. We were going to start on Monday, day after to-morrow, but that was given up when the plans for this Religious Education Conference were finally settled and now we are going to take the week after August 6th, "Insha'allah", which is the Persian for "God Willing" and which they use invariably in connection with every plan that they make and every desire that they express. It is a very useful phrase in this land where there are so many possibilities of interruptions and change in plans. It prevents many an excuse afterwards for not accomplishing the purpose desired, and prevents any "I told you so's". It is also an excuse for laziness and lack of effort at



other times.

I am extremely anxious to take this trip to Demavand, not that we will try to climb the 4th highest mountain in the world, although I am told that it is comparatively easy and a number of the missionaries have done it. Even little Mrs. Jordan got within a half-hour's climb of the top, though she had to give up at that point for the thin air was becoming too much for her constitution and she was unable to stand the pressure that was placed upon her heart. Dr. Jordan and a number of the boys went the rest of the way and the only affect on them, apparently, was that they all wanted to sleep all of the time. Dr. Jordan and one ~~other~~ boy out of about 16 in the party were the only ones that could stay awake. Every fifteen minutes, the other members of the party stopped for a ten-minute nap, at the end of which Dr. Jordan awakened them and they went on for another fifteen minutes and in this way they reached the summit.

Well, I am making another start on this letter with the hope that it will get finished this time. I have a fair chance inasmuch as the boys have started on their four-day hike and we will not be pestered by them for this time. I still have a few notes of the things that I intended to write about the other day.

I may have mentioned the little fellow that the Boyce's adopted or rather whom Mrs. Boyce brought back from one of her evangelization trips to the west of the city. There is a village district about 70 miles west of the city to which Mrs. Boyce tries to make at least one trip each year, and two if possible. The district is 70 miles from the city where there is a veritable nest of small villages all within walking distance of one another. These visits of Mrs. Boyce are absolutely the only opportunity which the people have of hearing about Christ. This little boy belonged to a Christian family in that section, at least the father was Christian, and as far as I know the only Christian in his village, or possibly in all of the villages. The district is poverty stricken as many of the villages of Persia are. In fact, one of the members of the League of Nations Opium Commission which visited Persia in the Spring had spent twenty years in a government agricultural school in India and in his work he had become well acquainted with Indian village life, and this man said that he believed that the poverty of the Persian villager was far worse than the poverty of the Indian. That is saying something when one recalls the many statements that come from India of people living on 3 and 6 cents a day, etc. and the manner in which they get the last straw from the wheat fields there because nothing dare be wanted. This district that Mrs. Boyce visited was especially stricken during the bread shortage. When she returned she said that the people were all in a condition of starvation and that bread of a dirty black variety was being sold for 3 kran, about 30 cents, a loaf. 3 kran represents a day's wages for a workman in the city of Teheran and it probably represents two or three days wages for the ordinary villager when he can find work. You can picture the rest for yourself. In addition to its poverty the district is a malarial infected region, which means that the people develop all kinds of diseases and internal disorders from the malaria which they contract and from which they have no medical relief. Malaria in Persia is only a mild form, but even that, when not checked develops all kinds of kidney and liver troubles. The result in these villages, according to Mrs. Boyce is that the oldest people in the ~~district~~ district are about 40 and 45 years of age, although they look like 70 and more. This little fellow's father was about 45 and on one of his visits to the city I saw him and he certainly looked 55 at least. This little boy was the only child left to him of about 12, and the child's mother had already died. Shortly after the visit of the father to the city, about a year ago, we received word that he had died and when Mrs.



Boyce went there this spring she found the little fellow running around in a half starved condition, dirty, ragged, and full of sores with the probability that he would live about one more year under existing conditions especially since he had no one directly interested in him. He had some relatives there but they were not particularly friendly because the father had become a Christian, and, moreover, they were poor and had their own children to care for. Mrs. Boyce accordingly bundled the little fellow off, with the permission of the relatives, and brought him to Tcheran where he got a change of clothing, a bath, and some food, and within three weeks you would not have recognized him as the same boy. His sores healed up, the bugs left, his little brown cheeks filled out, and his clothes were washed with the result that he looks like a little "eddy" bear, with fat cheeks, big brown eyes, and long lashes, olive skin and black hair. He is really one of the prettiest youngsters I have ever seen and as quick as a whip. He has picked up none of the traits of lying, etc., which the children of any people learn quickly and well enough, and while he is a little rascal, his mischief is just that of any child four and half years old. The Boyce's brought him to Tcheran to try to find a Christian home for him with some Persian Christian family. I am afraid that they have become so attached to the child, however, that they will take him themselves in spite of the fact that Mrs. Boyce recognizes all of the difficulties in the way of adopting a Persian child. The gravest danger is that he will grow up and be neither fish nor fowl, neither a Persian nor an American and that in itself is sufficient to make the Boyce's hesitate. I wish you could see the little fellow, for if you should I am sure that you would have much more sympathy for the Persians and like the Persian people.

This letter was just interrupted by a short visit from Mr. Philip, the American Minister. He rode over from their place on horse-back and wanted to know if we were going to see the signs of Ashurram. You will remember that I described Ashurram last year as the celebration of the death of Hussein, the son of Ali, the great prophet of the Shiahs Moslems. It is the affair when they cut their heads with swords and otherwise give utterance to a faked up grief over a person that died more than a thousand years ago. Of course among the more devout the thing has a real meaning but the leaders of the show are simply religious charlatans who play upon the superstitions of an ignorant people. The whole thing is supposed to be a work of religious merit. I cannot say that I am very anxious to see the thing, and am only going as a matter of duty to see what the most famous religious celebration of the year is like. I think that I shall not go a second time from all the descriptions that I have heard of it. Having seen some of the barbarous methods of the Moslems in Constantinople and their practices I am not anxious to repeat the performance although this is a different affair.

Mr. Philip was just telling us that in Morocco they have an even more revolting custom of engaging in a religious dance in which they work themselves up to a fury, at the height of which a live sheep is thrown in their midst and these human beings tear the live animal to pieces and eat the bits, all the while continuing with their dance. As you separate these things and understand them it is certainly most sickening and makes you wonder at the indifference of the people who think that the world does not need Christ to relieve them from all of this revolting superstition which keeps its people in the position of wild beasts.

Speaking of superstitions this little fellow of the Boyce's gave us one to laugh about the other day. He had a wart on his hand and we asked where he got it. He said that he had thrown some water



on a cat and as a result the wart came. Mrs. Boyce then asked him how he was going to get rid of it and he said that he must put some grains of rice on it, after which the rice had to be put in water and planted. Dr. Zwemer, in speaking of superstitions and traditions had mentioned to us that if we wanted a very fruitful source for traditions in any country and among any people, just make a list of all the remedies and causes of warts. Here is the typical Persian tradition about them.

Many of these traditions and superstitions open the way for the message of the Gospel. For example, the Moslems of Persia have many traditions, I have learned, about John the Baptist. Of all the prophets mentioned in the Koran and their other religious books, he receives more honor than any other. Many an oath of the common people is taken upon the name of "Yahyah", which is the Persian name of John the Baptist. The Persians and Arabs distinguish John the Baptist and John the Disciple by giving them different names; John the Baptist is "Ya-hyian" (a better translation than the above) and John the Disciple is "Yohannan". But the fact that the Persians give such respect to John the Baptist enables one to tell them how he announced the Messiah, etc., etc.

In the way of missionary work one of the most interesting things about our camp is the M.C.A. meeting which we have been holding on Friday afternoons. At the last meeting we had 24 boys present, Persian, Armenian and Jew, who all claim to be Christians. Some of them are baptized some are inquirers, and some of them are an uncertain quantity, but at least they are willing to make some sort of a claim of Christ as their Saviour. Some of them are real thinkers and their consecration would be hard to match in an American High School or College. You may understand that when you know that one of them comes from the fanatical home of a Persian Mollah, or priest, who would probably slay his boy if he ever learned that he had become Christian. That boy is keeping his confession secret from his father, though he makes no bones with his about his interest in Christianity and in their discussions is trying to accomplish two things: (1) that his father will lose his prejudice and let him be a Christian, openly, in his own home, and (2) that his father may also become as staunch a Christian as he is no a Moslem. I should say that the boy could find no harder test for his own Christianity than the second task which he has set himself to do.

There are no other comments to make now. We are all well, even Harriet, this summer, and that is all the more remarkable when we take account of stock among the rest of the missionaries of the Station. During the past week the sick list has included two babies, four adult men, and four or five adult women, out of 23 adults and 7 children. In only two cases has the sickness been of a serious nature, or rather three, and in all 3, call it the fault of the persons involved. One woman the Board let come out with two grown children, when she had had something like 13 major and minor operations in America, and 2 nervous breakdowns before she came. Needless to say she is suffering from a very severe breakdown and it is a question now of when the best time will open up for her to go home. The second case is another where the Board permitted a married woman with 2 grown children to come to the field, and her case is one of absolute lack of regard for her own health in addition. She is suffering from that severe intestinal trouble, the sprue, and in addition is expecting a child in a month or two. No other comment is needed. The 370 had rheumatism in America and was told that the one place in Persia she go to was Rasht, a place below sea level on the Caspian Sea, and exceedingly damp. The Mission sent her there because she never told them of the doctor's advice. She is now in Teheran with the worst attack of rheumatism that she has ever had, probably. It isn't a constitution that is needed in Persia, just an ordinary supply of "horse sense" and the ailments will few and far between.