

P. O. Box 323,
Damascus, Syria,
11th October, 1931.



ac Harte

Dear Friend,

At the time of my discharge as a Secretary of the International Committee of the Young Men's Christian Associations of North America I intended to write you a letter concerning my future plans. I was prevented by what I thought was unspeakable weariness but which turned out to be illness. I am now rested and feel that as soon as I get to work I will be fully fit again.

In seeking rest, I went to places which for a long time I wanted to see. In particular Patmos and The Cedars. Shortly after I arrived in Palestine, I became interested in The Cedars and year after year planned to visit the place but did not succeed until a few weeks ago. The Cedars, by the way, is the loftiest habitation in the Lebanons and is named The Cedars because there are still standing in a small park 400 gigantic cedars which are a thousand years old and more. It is marvelous that they should have escaped the woodman's axe, especially when one recalls that Solomon had ten thousand men at a time getting cedars from the Lebanons for the Temple in Jerusalem, and that elsewhere there are only a few cedars.

The nearest village to The Cedars is Becharreh which is about ten kilometres away and is the birthplace of Khalil Gibran who recently died in America. Gibran first left Becharreh for the United States at the age of 12 with his parents and returned at the age of 16 and lived in his native village until he was 20 when he and his mother returned to America. In America he was befriended by a good woman and so went forward with his studies in art and literature in particular and rewarded those who had been interested in him by being a success. When his native village heard of his death and his desire to be buried in his home town, they interviewed the French High Commissioner who responded splendidly. The Fabre Line brought the body to Beirut gratis and at Beirut the body was received by the High Commissioner, Army officials, boy-scouts, etc. The procession from Beirut via Tripoli to Becharreh was a triumphal procession. At every village there were ever-green arches and the procession tarried while village notables made speeches. The funeral procession was the joyous kind of funeral that one thinks one would like. The bedouin rode to and fro giving displays of horsemanship, banners were flying, bands were playing, and bells were ringing as as for the homecoming of a victor. There were constant accessions to the train of automobiles and the home village was crowded with delegations from villages as far as 50 and 60 miles away. One said, "It is a pity that Khalil did not come home and learn what we thought of him but we are glad to have him rest among us and we rejoice in his success." I found only a few who knew his book "Jesus the Son of Man", and only two who had read "The Prophet".

Some day The Cedars will be the greatest summer resort in the Labanons. Concerning Patmos I will write later.

For the third time in recent years I have had the experience which I can only describe as dying. However, since I have never died, I am not sure that the name I give to my experience is at all correct. I was reading when all at once I had a sensation which was as nearly like the sensation I had when the dentist administered gas as it could be. After a bit it seemed to me that I was passing upward out of my body and I was in great distress. I began to make agonized efforts to hold on somewhere and getting no hold cried out

whether audible or not I do not know, "Help! Help! Can no one help?" Then there came all through me and over me the answer, "Now only friends can help". In a little while, maybe only a few moments, I was fully conscious again and normal only my body was covered with cold perspiration and I said to myself, "Now for me there are two certainties, first, I know I have an existence apart from my body, and second, nothing else can be so important as to be friendly and make friends."

Part of the programme of service which is outlined herewith is the result of this desire to be friendly. After more than twelve months of quiet and study it seems to be that the best thing I can do is to organize a BIBLE LANDS AID, the annual membership to be 2 pounds or 10 dollars and life membership 200 pounds or 1000 dollars, membership to be open to anyone anywhere who desires to help solve the problems of these lands and in particular the following problems. A few examples of help given will be cited:

(1) There are 295 Russian nuns in the Russian Convents on Mount of Olives and at Ain Karem. Every nun has an income of 50 piastres or 2½ dollars per month in addition to shelter. This is hardly sufficient for bread and tea twice daily. Most of the nuns are old. They cannot return to Russia and the Russian pilgrims cannot come to Palestine to help them. Money is needed for underwear, medicines, etc. One American friend of the Russians has given a 1000 dollars for bread for this year, but more is necessary for their much needed food and for much needed clothing and medicines.

(2) The Sea of Galilee Medical Mission Hospital, usually called the Scotch Hospital, at Tiberias has urgent need for an extension which will provide:

- a) Two extra wards for patients;
- b) An isolation ward;
- c) Lavatories;
- d) Waiting rooms. One for private patients.
- e) Dressing rooms, in particular for the bedouin out-patients;
- f) Dispensary and accessory rooms;
- g) Laboratory;
- h) Mortuary Chapel;
- i) Porter's room;
- j) Entrance Gate.

This can be accomplished for 4000 pounds or 20,000 dollars but a first class job in every way would require 5000 pounds or 25,000 dollars. The Hospital does towards this purpose 1,500 pounds or 7,500 dollars. I know of no Hospital that has a greater work with the facilities available and I know of none anywhere that shows greater sympathy and kindness to the ill who are helpless and poor. If anyone desires a splendid memorial that will be of large and continual service they cannot do better than to finance this undertaking.

(3) Small amounts of money to assist self-respecting parents to send their children to school, and in particular funds from which grants can be made to young men seeking college and technical education.

At present help is given to a boy whose mother is a dope fiend and whose father is out of work;

A girl who stands second in her class whose parents through illness are financially stranded;

A boy whose father is blind and can earn only a pittance monthly.

When young men will be helped to secure a college education or a technical school education if money is available and their records are satisfactory, the loan must be guaranteed and will be payed into a fund for aiding other students in other days;

(4) Assistance during this time of distress for the very poor, as for instance:

a) One blind woman for whom a room is provided and one piastre a day;

b) A widow with seven children and a blind sister. The widow earns 3 pounds a month which goes entirely for bread. At present the family live in what some call an old cistern and others a cave;

(5) There is a great need for playgrounds for children. In particular in Damascus, Bethlehem, Nazareth, and Tiberias. This playground problem will only be undertaken if there is a fund that will provide for a trained and experienced Director, for a sabbatic period. Probably successful playgrounds at the places mentioned would hasten the coming of the day when in all of the cities and towns of the Bible lands there would be playgrounds. It would be great if someone would provide a playground Director for 7 years.

(6) A school for training Parish Clergy for the Holy Orthodox Church. At present the Parish Clergy are almost without any education. If the Parish Clergy could have some theological education and some training in bookkeeping and garden agriculture there could be a general village improvement era. The plan that presents itself to me calls for a bursar or treasurer who would keep the accounts, teach English, and at least set an example of practical house gardening. Money would be necessary for equipment and running expenses. The religious teaching would be provided by the Church. If anyone desires an opportunity to help a great historic Christian Church to a great and needed work here it is:

(7) Jewish organizations are doing splendid village improvement work but practically nothing is done for the Arabs and their needs are far greater. The Arab societies can easily adopt the Jewish plans which are proving successful provided there will be some one to direct the work.

(8) A city charity organization which will enter into real sympathy with the down and out, give advice, and when necessary for food or rest, give opportunities of work to secure them.

(9) Suburban communities founded by Hebrew organizations are making possible homes for Hebrew workers on small salaries. Similar opportunities should be given Christians and Moslems. Ten Jerusalem nationals have been sufficiently interested to agree to an investment of 200 pounds each provided a garden city can be undertaken for the poor and self-respecting Christians of Jerusalem. The plan calls for semi-detached houses of two rooms, kitchen, bathroom and verandah with electric light and running water and a garden of 400 square metres for each house. This, including the cost of roads, etc., can be accomplished for approximately 285 pounds per dwelling.

The Hebrew organizations turn over the dwellings to families who pay 50 pounds down and $1\frac{1}{2}$ pounds per month and agree to 8% on the balance until paid. I should like to make a demonstration of at least 20 if not 40 such houses in or near Jerusalem and in or near Damascus, and a demonstration of 10 or 20 houses at Tiberias where it would be possible to serve in one suburb Hebrew, Christian, and Moslem.

This is simply an outline of the things that seem to me ought to be done and that can be done. Will you kindly give thought to these problems and advise me?

If the response is at all favourable, a Committee will be organized and incorporated in Jerusalem or Damascus and an effort will be made to have Committees in other lands. There will be no expenses other than the expenses of an annual audit, special correspondence and printing, and if the playgrounds are undertaken a Director for the playgrounds, and if the Village Improvement Societies are organized a Director for the same. The garden suburbs must provide for the office expenses and 6% on the investment.

Thanking you for your kindly consideration, I am,

Ever sincerely yours,

A. C. HARTE.