

## ARABIA'S DESOLATE QUARTER

ONE of the greatest deserts, until recently untouched by the foot of the Westerner, is calling to the adventurous spirit of the West. The great empty or desolate quarter of Arabia (in Arabic, Ruba al-Khali) has of recent years been broached three times. Some four or five years ago it was crossed for the first time by Bertram Thomas along its relatively easier eastern length, where by digging one may usually obtain some sort of water. Some two years later H. St. John Philby crossed it in the more difficult east-west direction in the northern half. Philby's book, *The Empty Quarter*, as well as Bertram Thomas' book will be known to many of our readers. Philby sought for ruined cities, but found none. Instead he found what the Arabs considered ruined city walls but what turned out to be great craters caused by the fall of tremendous meteorites. This is of particular interest to Chicagoans because, as Mr. Henry Field and Mr. H. W. Nichols inform us, the Field Museum of Chicago is, beside the British Museum, the only place outside of Arabia which possesses a meteorite from this region.

Early in March 1934, there appeared in the Chicago papers the astonishing but garbled news that French aviators had actually discovered from the air the towers and battlements of a great city somewhere in the northern section of this desert. The news prints were quick to call this the capital of the Queen of Sheba. This is alluring but quite certainly false. If the French aviators saw something other than a mirage, the truth is probably much more astonishing. Philby was led in his search by legends quite other than those of the Queen of Sheba. It remains to be seen whether the desert will reveal to us the truth of some of those ancient Arabic legends of which the story of the Queen of Sheba is a mere detailed incident.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The discovery of the alledged capital city of Sheba has been heralded by the daily papers. According to the reports, it is said that on March 7, Captain Edouard Corniglion-Molinier and Andre Malraux made an exploratory flight by airplane to the desert Ruba al-Khali. Starting from Djibouti as base, they flew over the straits of Bab-el-Mandeb, along the coast of Yemen, over Sana towards Mareb. Here they saw the ruins of but two columns and a pile of stones. They went on to the desert, where, after flying over a volcanic valley, they came upon the ruins of a great white city, with storied buildings and towers, lying upon a hill of black volcanic stone. Near-

by they found a city of tombs, some small, some large, arranged in rows. In order to make sure that what they saw was no mirage the aviators dropped to 300 meters and took both photographs and moving pictures.

Inside the city, and here and there in the neighborhood the aviators report having seen Bedouin tents, and Bedouins who fired at them as they circled about. Luckily the airplane was not damaged and they returned safely to Djibouti on their last drop of fuel.

On March 23, the photographs of these ruins were exhibited in Paris.

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## BOOK NOTES

*The Path of Prayer.* By Dhan Gopal Mukerji. New York. E. P. Dutton and Co., Inc. Pp. 18. Price \$1.00.

The author of this booklet, a companion-piece to his *Daily Meditation*, recommends prayer as a means of reaching that high level sought by man "to live above the battle of doubt and fear," and to attain realization of the divine. His definite suggestions for the practice of prayer, make the book well worth the attention of those who would live fully and "replenish their life on earth day by day with Divinity."

*The Herald Wind. Translations of Sung Dynasty Poems, Lyrics and Songs.* By Clara Candlin. New York. E. P. Dutton and Co., Inc. 1934. Pp. 113. Price \$1.20.

An anthology of delightful poems collected and translated by Clara Candlin who has lived many years in China. This is the first collection in separate form of the poetry of the Sung dynasty, which represents the zenith in the history of Chinese art and culture. The poems are short and in general of the lyric type. We offer as a sample:

### THE ORIOLE SHUTTLE

A golden Oriole, treading in and out of willow bloom,  
With chatter, chatter, chatter like a weaver's loom.  
In spring the flowers resemble gilded gay brocade,  
When will this happy bird have all its fabric made?

*The Message of Krishna* by A. S. Wadia. The Message Series No. 5. New York E. P. Dutton and Co., 1934. Pp. xiv 146. Price \$1.50.

The fifth volume of the Message Series, whose purpose it is to further the understanding of the common truths of the great religions of the world, thereby creating greater spiritual comradeship among nations, deals with the teachings of the great Krishna. Professor Wadia finds in the *Bhagavad Gita* the highest expression of Hindu religious thought and in Krishna the noblest fulfilment of Hindu manhood. In straightforward and brief exposition he explains the tenets of Hindu religion as expounded and interpreted by the educated classes. The Hinduism of the uneducated masses, however, must dispose of the "accumulations of decayed traditions and base superstitions" before it can realize the nobility of this old and great religion. The book is valuable for its direct and simple treatment of Hinduism.