John and Dorothy Van Ess

Salt and light in Basra, Iraq for 40 years



John and Dorothy with John Jr. and Alice

John and Dorothy belonged to the Arabian Mission and spent most of their long service in Basra, Iraq.

At the beginning of the 20th century Basra and the rest of Iraq were among the Arab provinces of the Turkish Empire. The Arabs were restless under the Muslim imperialism of the Turks. In World War I Turkey became a German ally and then a defeated power.

A new nationalist Republic sprang from the ruins. Her Arab provinces became the responsibility of the League of Nations. Under the guidance of the dying British Empire Iraq sought to take her place as a sovereign nation.

John Van Ess was born in the pine woods of Michigan on August 10, 1879. He was the 4th child of a country clergyman. His father, Balster Van Ess, had come from the Netherlands as a young adult. His first task was to secure a licence to be a preacher and pastor in America. He was asked if he preferred to take the exams in English or in Latin. He chose Latin!

The next step was to find himself a wife. He had made friends in South Holland, a country town south of Chicago that was populated almost entirely by families from the Netherlands. One such family was the Ravesloot family. Balster wooed and won their daughter Jane. She spoke no English. All church services were in Dutch. The children, including John, heard very little English before they started school.

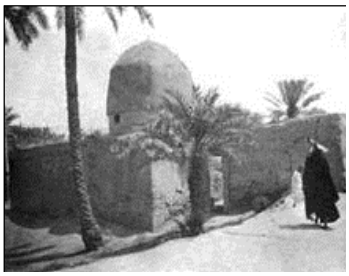
Sadly John's mother died when he was only four. Soon after this the family moved to Chicago where John's father pastored a large church [The First reformed Church of Roseland] where he remained for the rest of his life. After some time, John's father remarried a widow with one son a few years older than John. They were a very happy family. The children attended Chicago public schools as their father wanted them to be 'good Americans'.

After attending Hope College in Holland, Michigan, John seriously considered studying law as he had a keen analytical mind and was interested in politics. But he decided he was more interested in Semitic languages so he went to Princeton Theological Seminary in New Jersey and distinguished himself in both Hebrew and Arabic. He was set for an academic career when he heard an appeal from the Arabian Mission for someone to replace a young man who had died of smallpox soon after reaching the field. Here was a way to meet Arabs on their own ground instead of through grammar books. The call was irresistible. In 1902, aged 23, John began his lifelong career in the Arab World.

Dorothy was born in the quiet country town of Wakefield north of Boston. It was her mother's birthplace and she had always lived there. Her father came from Richmond, Vermont. His forebear, John Firman, had sailed to America from Ipswich, England in 1630 with what was known as the Winthrop Fleet. In the Suffolk village of Nayland, the parish church register bears witness to the births, marriages and deaths of long ago 'Firmyns'. Dorothy's mother's forebears sailed to America on the Mayflower in 1620.

Hers was a sincere and devout family with a great concern for the poor and the disadvantaged. Her father was a successful businessman. When Dorothy was 12, his business took the family to Chicago. Dorothy mourned for New England! She studied English literature at Wellesley College and was all set for an academic career. Her first and only job was at Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota. The plan was to teach there for a few years and then perhaps go to England to study for a PhD.

One morning she was sitting with her fellow faculty members in the college chapel listening politely to the speaker of the day. He was Samuel Zwemer of the Student Volunteer Movement – the founder of the Arabian Mission. He made an impassioned appeal for a young woman teacher to go to Basra in what was then Turkish Arabia to open a school for Arab girls. Dorothy wrote later,



Basra 1920

"Like a flash of lightning, the conviction came to me, 'this means me'."

She had read books about the secluded and mysterious life of Arab women. Here was her chance to invade their seclusion with modern education. It was an inspiration and a challenge! Her parents supported her decision and the Arabian Mission accepted her. So she set out for Arabia!

In the pioneer generation to which John and Dorothy belonged, God called out workers with the special skills needed to establish the work – linguists, medical personnel, teachers, builders and architects. Josephine Van Peursem learned Braille in English and then in Arabic as there were many blind children in the orphanage where she worked. It was a wonderful opportunity to help a wide circle of sightless people to independent living.

On his arrival in the Near East in 1902 John was assigned to the mission station in Basra – then part of the Turkish Empire. Older missions in the Near East had begun working with members of the oriental churches: Orthodox, Armenian, Coptic, Nestorian, Syriac etc. The goal of the Arabian Mission was to work with Muslim Arabs.

Basra, like the rest of the land between the two rivers (now Iraq), was an Arab country although it was governed by Turks who were alien in both language and culture. Both tribesmen and urban dwellers very much resented them. The first key to winning the friendship and confidence of the Arabs was a very good knowledge of Arabic.

In later life John wrote: **"My interest in the Arabs began when I started to study their language at Princeton. It has all the dignity of Latin, the variety of English, the beauty of Italian, the solidarity of German, the flexibility of Greek and the bewilderment of Russian."**

On completion of his language exams, John was given a roving commission based out of Basra. For months at a time he would leave civilisation and explore thoroughly the marshes and deserts of Lower Iraq. He considered the whole area his 'parish'. In a report to the mission he wrote, **"With life so short and such a large section entirely on my shoulders and conscience; with high water, cool weather and good health, now, if ever, was the chance to prove that an unarmed missionary can go further than an armed government. I took the chance."**

John's 'tours' often took him to the vicinity of Kerbala and Nejf – two of the cities most venerated by Shia Muslims. He met with the Mujtahids – senior religious leaders in Shia Islam. They were highly educated within the scope of their narrow and inflexible theology. Their spiritual and temporal power was tremendous. They were experts in debating. They found John a worthy opponent in theological discussion and he enjoyed pitting his wits against their keen minds. He found the intellectual exercise exhilarating and stimulating. But during these years he learned that this fascinating mental experience had little value from point of view of the Gospel. There were better and more effective ways to demonstrate what it meant to be a true follower of God. This phase of John's ministry came to a close when he went on furlough in 1910.

In January 1910 Dorothy arrived in Bahrain as a new member of the Arabian Mission of the Reformed Church in America. When Samuel Zwemer and Dr James Cantine set up this mission, they decided to concentrate on Mesopotamia and the Arabian side of the Persian Gulf. The CMS (Church Missionary Society) of the Church of England was working in the north in Mosul and Baghdad but there was no Gospel witness south of that. When Dorothy joined in 1909, their work was already well-established in Basra, Bahrain and Muscat (Oman).

Before the new recruits left the USA, Dr Zwemer had given the two single ladies a description of those on the field. Speaking of John Van Ess he had said, **"He has a parrot that swears. He is very independent and spends most of his time among Arab tribes in the desert and the marshes. He has a superb command of Arabic. I don't think you would be at all interested in him."**

John showed no interest in the young ladies till one day, during the annual conference in Bahrain, they were going by donkey to a beauty spot. Dorothy's donkey slid her off its back and she landed in the sand right at John's feet. She later commented, **"The cool detached young man who had taken no notice whatever of me for a week, kindly helped me up, dusted me off and our lifelong association began."** Their friendship developed and John soon proposed with the intention of them marrying on his return from his first furlough. He left to the USA and Dorothy started intensive language studies in Bahrain.



Basra Boys' School 1923

They were married in Chicago in June 1910. Dorothy had returned home from Bahrain because of the death of her father at the young age of 49. She had always been close to him and this was a devastating blow. She was so grateful that John was able to be with her in the weeks leading up to his death and that the two men had been able to get to know one another.

In November 1911 John and Dorothy returned together via England, Holland, Constantinople, Egypt and then on a cargo ship down the Red Sea, around the Arabian Peninsula and up the Gulf to the mouth of Shatt-al-Arab.

At last they reached the mission house in Basra to be warmly welcomed by their colleagues. A new chapter in their lives was beginning. Little did they know that politically the old world was about pass away and a radically new and totally different world was about to be born. Because of all the political cross currents of the first decade of the 1900s, the atmosphere in Basra was much freer in 1911 than it had been when John first went there in 1902.

The country was Muslim, but Jewish and Christian minorities lived there happy and unmolested. The Christians belonged to various branches of the historic oriental churches that had survived the great invasion of Islam. The economy of Iraq was agricultural as it had been for centuries. Basra was home to the world's greatest date plantation!

In the 13th century the invading Mongols had destroyed the ancient irrigation system. The Turkish government appointed Sir William Willcocks to draw up and carry out a scheme of modern scientific irrigation. The future looked bright!

Those who welcomed John and Dorothy to their new home in Basra were the Rev and Mrs James Cantine and Arthur and Christine Bennett. Dorothy had got to know the Cantines and Christine (née Iverson) on their initial journey out to the field together. Arthur and Christine were both doctors in charge of the men's and women's hospitals. There were no other hospitals in Basra and very few doctors. The mission hospital fulfilled a very real need and was visited by both rich and poor. It was a great asset for the prestige of the whole mission.

John and Dorothy settled into their home with a Goanese cook and the Afghan house servant who had been with John in his single days. The foreign community consisted of the consuls of Britain, Germany, Russia and Belgium with their families and staff. There were also representatives of shipping firms – mainly British. Dates and grain were the chief exports.

Once settled, their first task was to open the schools – known as **Madrassa el Raja' el Ali – The School of High Hope** – one for boys and one for girls. John had been working for years on the necessary permits etc. At last all was in hand. Arabic was the official language of both schools. There was opposition to the schools from fanatical Muslims. They held that Muslims must send their sons to Muslim schools and not to those run by foreigners who were really missionaries.

The girls' school opened in the autumn of 1912. Up to this point the only 'schools' open to girls were the Quranic schools where they memorised the Quran. Several of John's friends asked him, **"Why is your wife wasting her time and the mission's money trying to have a school for Arab girls? Everyone knows you can't teach a female anything. A man might send his horse or his cow or even his donkey to school, but a girl! Never!"**

The first day no girls came! Besides Dorothy there were 2 teachers – a Christian Arab from Mardin and an Armenian to teach sewing and lacework. On the second day an Armenian girl came. The next day the daughters of the Persian consul came and so enrolment slowly grew till there were about 30 girls. By the second year, the school had outgrown its building and they had to rent a larger one. This first period of running schools under the rule of the Ottoman Empire was drawing to a close faster than anyone realised.

The winds of change were blowing! In October 1914 Turkey entered the First World War on the side of Germany against Britain and her allies. Surprisingly the two schools continued to function through the chaos of the early months of the war. The British General Headquarters was established in Basra in November 1914. All Turkish senior officials had fled with the army and their posts had to be filled by British political officers. Local officials were rounded up and many returned to their jobs. Most people accepted the new state of affairs. John heard one Arab say to another, **"The Turks, the peace of God be upon them, were very hard on us, but these British, God curse them for unbelievers, they do treat you well!"**

In all of this change the schools were only closed for 8 days. The army needed interpreters and students from **The School of High Hope** were in great demand. Enrolment soared.

An urgent need was a reliable police force. The authorities relied on John's knowledge and expertise in selecting men who could be trusted. The Mission Hospital was running well and continued to serve all-comers. One of John's main contributions to the war effort was the rapid production of a grammar book – Spoken Arabic of Mesopotamia – at the request of the British government so that their officers could get a working knowledge of Arabic as quickly as possible.

John was also asked to set up a school system for Arab boys in the whole region. The greatest problem was finding teachers. John knew the region well and was eventually able to find suitable candidates. Eventually four government schools were equipped and operating.

In March 1916 tragedy struck the Mission Hospital. They had been caring for wounded soldiers and wounded Turkish prisoners. Some arrived suffering from what later proved to be typhus. It was highly infectious and almost every member of the hospital staff caught it. Local employees and mission staff were patients died. Some America never to be invalided home to and Mrs Bennett came able to return. Both Dr Christine died after a down with it and year-old Matthew. All few late days leaving 3- Christine's death. When Basra mourned at he left with Matthew Dr Bennett could travel, medical work of the never to return. The down in 1917. mission in Basra closed



Al Saud, Sir Percy Cox and Gertrude Bell

In the spring of 1916 Gertrude Bell came to Iraq and a lifelong friendship began between her and Dorothy. Before the war Gertrude had been an intrepid traveller in the Arabian deserts. She was intimately acquainted with Arab tribes and Arab personalities. This experience was very valuable to the British military administration. Her first task was to compile a gazetteer with all available information about the Arab tribes. John was very knowledgeable about Iraqi tribes and she often consulted him.

In this difficult period of the war when Turkish resistance in the north of Iraq was strong and the British were meeting with reverses, Gertrude was often sent to enlist the co-operation of the Bedouin sheiks in the campaign against the Turks and Germans. After one such visit the Sheikh thought for a few moments and then addressed his followers, **"My brothers, you have heard what this woman has to say to us. She is only a woman, but y'Allah she is a mighty and a valiant one. Now we know that God has made all women inferior to men. If the women of the Angleez are like her, the men must be like lions in strength and valour. We had better make peace with them."**



Faisal I – Lawrence of Arabia next to him on his left

There was great rejoicing in the Van Ess family in January 1917 when a baby boy was born – John Jr. This joy was shared by the wider family as Dorothy's mother and sister had come to spend the winter with them.

Baghdad was captured on March 11, 1917. In a public proclamation General Maude announced that Britain would give Iraq control over her own affairs as soon as possible. The Van Ess family left for furlough at the end of March 1917. In the autumn of 1918 they were at sea returning to Basra when they heard that the war was over. Another chapter was about to begin for them, for Iraq and for the mission.

Once while on furlough Dorothy had been asked where she had lived in the Near East. She replied, **"First in a province of the Ottoman Empire, then in an area under military occupation, then in a mandated country and I now live in the Kingdom of Iraq, but I have never had to move house!"**

From 1918-1920 Iraq was under military occupation. In October 1919 Dorothy and John welcomed baby Alice into their family – a sister for John Jr. In January 1920 the railway was opened linking Basra and Baghdad. John didn't believe Iraq was yet ready for independence. The mandate for Iraq was given to the British at the San Remo conference in April 1920. In the summer of 1920 there was a revolt in the Euphrates area. In 1942 John wrote summarising this chapter of the history of Iraq as follows, **"The rebellion of 1920 has been cited as a heroic effort on the part of patriotic nationalists to throw off the British yoke and indeed as the determining factor which finally induced the British to yield to the programme of early independence. As a matter-of-fact, the rebellion of 1920 began in the middle Euphrates region among tribes whom I know very well since I lived among them off and on for 7 years. They had been chronically in rebellion against the Turks and have been chronically in rebellion against the Iraq government ever since. The motivation was more that of Shia versus Sunni than anything else and was fostered by the religious leaders of the shrine cities who have always fished in troubled waters. No Tigris tribes and in fact no people of Basra, Baghdad or Mosul took part in the rebellion at all except Jemil Medfai and he only at a distance. There were disturbances in the Diyala region near Baghdad but they were in no sense part of the rebellion as such."**

Faisal bin Hussein bin Ali al-Hashimi reached Iraq in the early summer of 1921. He was to be the first King of Iraq under the British. He and John began a personal friendship that grew and strengthened as long as Faisal lived. T. E. Lawrence and Gertrude Bell had persuaded Winston Churchill – then colonial secretary – to plan a new throne for Faisal in Baghdad. He was crowned King of Iraq on August 23, 1921. A number of the leaders in the new government, including the Prime Minister Nuri al-Said, were well-known to John and Dorothy as they had stayed for longer or shorter periods in the Mission Hospital.

Faisal remained King of Iraq until 1933. He died in Bern, Switzerland reportedly of a heart attack but many suspected poisoning. Iraq had achieved complete independence and membership in the League of Nations in 1932. Faisal was succeeded by his son, Ghazi, who reigned from 1933-1939 He was killed in a mysterious motor accident. The throne passed to his only son Faisal II (1939-1958) who was only 4 yrs old. His uncle, 'Abd al-Ilah, ruled as regent until he came of age in 1953.

The 14 July Revolution (or the Iraqi coup d'état) took place in 1958, resulting in the overthrow of the monarchy in Iraq. King Faisal II, the regent and Crown Prince 'Abd al-Ilah, and Prime Minister Nuri al-Said were all assassinated during this coup.

The Van Ess family returned home for furlough 1925-26. In 1929 the Arabian Mission experienced a tragic loss in the death of Henry Bilkert in a tribal raid in the desert between Basra and Kuwait.

On their return to Basra, life continued on happily for the Van Ess family. Many years later Dorothy wrote, **"The Arabs have a saying, 'The ornament of the house is the guests who frequent it'. It was indeed a pleasure and a privilege to have so many kinds of people in our home for shorter or longer periods it was a wonderful experience for our children."**

Under the British military occupation and the mandate the mission schools were free to develop along lines that best suited their needs. The girls' school had expanded to the point that it needed two full-time workers with no family responsibilities to run it. For three decades it was in the capable hands of Charlotte Kellien and Rachel Jackson. In 1930 a beautiful new school was built in a large date garden on the outskirts of the city.

The boys' school moved to the former hospital premises. A library, a new recitation building and sports facilities were added. The curriculum led to a high school diploma that was accepted by most American colleges. Arabic remained the language of instruction, but English was very thoroughly taught. The majority of students were Muslims, but Bible classes were required for all and John's classes in Christian ethics were among the most popular courses.

In 1921 the school adopted the idea of bringing an American teacher just out of college for a three-year term. He taught English and sports and was in charge of the boarding school. The first of these was George Grosselink who later succeeded John as principal of the school.

In 1927, the Silver Jubilee of John's coming to Iraq, leading members of the community wanted to commission a painting of him to be placed in the school. He objected to this, so they chose to set up a science lab – the first in the country. The inscription on the brass plate read:

"As a memento of self-effacing service and loyalty
Presented by the people of Basra in token of the services which
Dr John Van Ess, American missionary in Basra,
rendered in presenting knowledge and virtue for 25 years
and they have presented it to him for the use of his school
on the occasion of his Silver Jubilee that it may be our
Witness in the days to come of our appreciation thereof."

In 1932, at the request of the minister of education, Dr Paul Munroe, principal of Teachers' College in New York visited Iraq to draw up a plan for the whole education system of Iraq. He inspected the School of High Hope. John asked him for a frank appraisal. He said, "***You have a unique opportunity to develop a progressive school under ideal conditions. I find nothing to criticise and everything to praise.***"

Students came from every class of society. Since there was a boarding department, sons came from other ruling families in the region.

At the end of the First World War, there had been a realignment of mission work. A number of mission groups were co-operating together and work was carried on in Baghdad, Hillah, Mosul and for a time in Dohuk, Kurdistan.

After independence, all schools had to conform to the standards set up by the Iraqi government. In the 1936 law governing conscription for military service, exemptions were introduced for young men only if they were pupils in schools and if, in due course, they passed the examinations scheduled by the Department of Education. This meant that the mission schools had to follow the government curriculum exactly.

The sons of the well-to-do flocked to these new government schools. These schools had no room or appeal for boys of the under-privileged classes who were the majority of the population. So the Arabian Mission decided to specialise in that group. Many came from the villages. They were eager to learn. Some well-to-do Arabs continued to send their sons to the School of High Hope because of the superior teaching of English and good moral atmosphere.

In 1940 the schools experienced a crisis. Nationalism was developing a definite anti-western bias and restrictions were being introduced that greatly affected the schools. Finally it was possible to reach a working agreement through the help of John's friend, Nuri al-Said, who had been Prime Minister of Iraq several times.



Personnel in Basra Christmas 1925

The schools were registered in the name of **The Protestant Arab Evangelical Congregation**. Relationships with the government were good and enrolment continued to increase.

In the autumn of 1938 a new short-termer joined **The School of High Hope**. It was John Van Ess Jr. He had graduated from Princeton in the June and was eager to return to the Arab World where he had grown up. He had studied Arabic at Princeton and his fluency soon returned on his arrival in Basra. It was a great joy to John and Dorothy to have their son with them in the eventful years that were to follow. He re-organised the English courses in the high school and built up a strong athletic programme.

The years of the Second World War were very uneasy years in Iraq. The political climate was increasingly anti-British. Events in Palestine in 1936 saw many leaders of the rebellion seeking asylum in Baghdad. In January 1941 Dorothy left the two Johns to look after each other and made her way back to America for the graduation of their daughter Alice from Mount Holyoke College.

At the end of the summer John Jr. stayed in the Arab World – briefly in Saudi Arabia and then with the American Military Mission in Iraq – while John travelled to America to join Dorothy and Alice. They spent the winter in Princeton and were there in December when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor.

Late in January of the following year the State Department asked John to make a trip to the rulers of the Arab countries as a special envoy of the President to "foster mutual understanding" – in other words to try to get the Arabs to stay on the allied side during the war or at least to remain neutral in spite of German pressure and German successes. In fact this plan was never carried out owing to what the State Department said were "insuperable difficulties".

John and Dorothy moved to New York City in May 1942. John was busy writing and lecturing and in conferences with the State Department.

In January 1943 a great blow fell on John and Dorothy. John Jr. was working with the American Military Mission in Baghdad. He was the recruiting officer for local labour. His knowledge of Arabic and of the people made him invaluable. He died suddenly within a few days of his 26th birthday seemingly from a combination of tropical diseases. His father's health had not been good for some time and he never recovered from the shock of losing his son. His faith was strong and the borderline between this world and the next became very faint. His great affirmation was that time and eternity are one and life is continuous and progressive.

It was a great comfort to John and Dorothy to have Alice with them at this very difficult time and to have work to concentrate on. Dorothy was executive secretary to the women's department of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Reformed Church in America. They were very involved with the war effort and things happening all around the world. John embarked on a writing project that his son had urged him to undertake for some time. It was a book about the Arabs. For some time they had been struck by the fact that there was a great deal of propaganda in America for the Jews but practically nothing for the Arabs. Few people knew anything about them. They had no organisation and no spokesman. So John set about this task. He called his book **Meet the Arab**. It was published in October 1943.

He gave a brief history of the Arabs with a chapter on their religion and another on their language and literature. The Bedouin, the Marsh Arabs and different minorities were all vividly described as well as the leading personalities in the Arab World at that time. The book had very favourable reviews and in later years the United Nations organisations put it on their list of recommended reading for all going to the Near East. The book was published in England and was well received.

John and Dorothy were longing to return to Basra. The Axis forces in North Africa had been defeated in May 1943 and the tide seemed to have turned. The Middle East felt reassured that the outcome

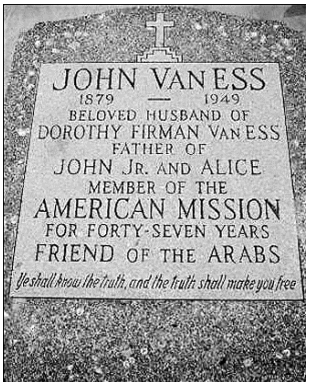
of the war would be victory for the allies. The State Department was anxious to have John back in Iraq but for a time no American civilian women were permitted to travel in that area and the Mission Board doctors would not allow John to go without Dorothy to look after him. Finally they were both able to get passports in the autumn of 1943. In November they were able to return to Basra by a very circuitous route!

They were warmly welcomed by colleagues, old boys and many Arab friends. Basra was truly home to John and Dorothy. She had lived there for 33 years except for furloughs and John had been based there as a single man for 5 years before that. John resumed teaching Arabic classes in the school while George Grosselink carried on as principal. Both John and Dorothy were mainly involved in personal work visiting many friends from earlier years and making many new friends.

By 1948 John had reached retirement age and they were preparing for their retirement. John's main concern was the future of the School of High Hope. He was glad to know it was in very capable hands and would be able to adapt to the changes needed to prepare leaders for the future in Iraq.

For some years John had suffered from cardiac asthma and now this condition was greatly restricting his movement. Two days before they were to leave Basra, in the early hours of the morning, John stopped breathing. The response from his students was, **"It was never meant that he should leave us"**. They carried his coffin from the house to St Peter's Church where his Thanksgiving Service took place and again to the corner in the British War Cemetery where civilians were buried. His body was laid to rest close to that of his son John Jr.

The ruling passion of John's life is expressed in the verse, ***"You will know the truth and the truth will make you free"***. One of his friends at Princeton wrote of him, **"He had a razor-like mind, a hatred of sham and a passion for reality".**



Shortly after John's death Dorothy returned to America via Turkey and England. It was hard to adjust to life without John and she longed to be with her daughter Alice who had married Bill Brewer. At that time Bill was taking a course in Arabic and the Near East at the Foreign Service Institute in preparation for going overseas as an area specialist. He was soon assigned to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

Dorothy made her base with her sister Helen. The mission urged Dorothy to return to the field as she was not yet retiring age, but she confided to Helen that she felt it would be a great anti-climax to go back to Basra without John. Helen's reply was a very wise one, **"All the rest of your life is going to be an anti-climax without John!"** So Dorothy prepared return to the Near East in the summer of 1950. She found her place again working with poor and underprivileged girls, setting up a literacy programme and giving them skills that they would be able to use in the future.

In 1955 the time came for Dorothy to retire. It was hard to leave Basra again. The parting was made a little easier by knowing that Bill and Alice were going to be stationed in Kuwait so she would often be in the area with her family. Her colleagues had asked her to write the history of the Arabian Mission for the last 30 years. The previous history had been published in the 1920s. This was an ideal task for her. There was much material to gather and many colleagues to consult. She finally left the Near East to return to America in the spring of 1956.

The Iraqi Revolution in 1958 was a terrible shock. No mission personnel were in immediate danger, but many of them had to leave the country – especially those in the north. All of the mission property there was confiscated. Curiously the schools in Basra and Baghdad were never disturbed by the new regime.

Dorothy spent the academic year of 1959 in New York. For some time she had wanted to write a book about Arab women. She felt it would be repaying a debt of gratitude for her rich experiences in their world. She worked under the close supervision of the great anthropologist Margaret Mead who was keenly interested in the project. She chose as her title **Fatima and her sisters**. This was also the

title John had used for his chapter about Arab women in his book **Meet the Arab**. Her book was published in 1961 and she commented, ***"The general public seem to enjoy reading it as much as I enjoyed writing it."***

At the end of her life Dorothy wrote, ***"I have had a good life. As it draws to its close my feelings are well expressed by the traditional 'Old Age Prayer'. This has been used by Sunni and Shia Muslims from the time of Abd Al Qadir al Jilani (1166 A.D.):***

"O Lord, may the end of my life be the best of it.
May my closing acts be my best acts,
and make the best of my days the day when I shall meet Thee".

John and Dorothy were living examples of the early vision of the Arabian Mission:

"Our motivation as missionaries is basically to put ourselves in harmony with God and with His purposes for the universe. This is achieved by obeying the command to go into all the world and preach the Gospel and to show the relationship of man to God expressed in Christian service."

