

**Safe in His Hand**

**Hannah Coombes**

**Bath: Echoes of Service**

**ISBN: n/a price £6 (including postage)**

**Triumphs and Trials in Trinidad and Tobago: the memoirs of Annie Spencer**

**Annie Spencer**

**Newtonards Co. Down: Ards Evangelical Bookshop**

**272pp. ISBN: n/a £4**

These two books are of missionary interest. In *Safe in His Hand* Hannah Coombes tells her story by talking into a tape recorder, then from this recording, her husband Malcolm has turned her account into a book. Hannah does not have a Brethren background, but relates how her great-grandparents, with their three young daughters, fled from the Turkish massacre of the Armenians, during World War I, and reached the coastal city of Latakia in Syria, before they both died, leaving the girls orphaned. By the time Hannah was born, the three sisters were married and living in an Armenian village in the mountains, and she gives a fascinating account of life both in the village and in the city of Latakia, where the family worked during the week, moving up to the village at weekends, and living in peace in both places with their Arab Moslem neighbours.

She describes her schooldays, her first job as a teacher of Arabic in an Armenian school, where during her last year of teaching she began to question what the future might hold for her, and so began her search for God. After a time of deep conviction, through praying and reading the Bible, she accepted the Lord Jesus as her Saviour and became a new person in Christ. One is reminded of the postman in Ireland who told the elders of his assembly that he had been saved while pushing his bike up a steep hill on his round. "Wasn't there anyone else there with you?" his elders asked. "No," he replied firmly. "There was no third party."

In the same way Hannah was led to work with Gospel Literature Service in Beirut, Lebanon, receiving only expenses and living by

faith, and in an amazing way, God confirmed every detail of her plans, which included baptism, and a two-year period of study in the Bible College of Wales, where she had just enough money for her fees, working for her keep during the holidays, before returning to her homeland.

Still asking continually for God's guidance, she found fellowship in an evangelical church and asked the Lord that if marriage was in his plans for her, that he would send someone; and indeed the events leading to her marriage to Malcolm Coombes are almost biblical in detail. From then on, her account becomes imperceptibly happier. She now has someone to share her pilgrimage

The book continues, giving an account of a spell in Wales worshipping at Treboeth Gospel Hall, their commendation to the Lord's work in Lebanon and the birth of two of their children, and then their work in Zahle until the start of the civil war, when, after disruption in Lebanon, they moved to Orange in the south of France, where Hannah was able to use her own Arabic dialect and accent, speaking to the many Lebanese and Syrians who had moved to Europe. They continued with Emmaus coursework, and when Malcolm received a colporteur's permit, they began a book table outreach at open-air markets. A second daughter was born to them during a few months' stay in Wales before they returned to Orange to carry on with the work.

In *Triumphs and Trials in Trinidad and Tobago*, Miss Spencer describes some of the history and geography of the islands, and gives an overview of assembly work there from 1922. She writes in an entertaining way with a gentle humour and gives many instances of individual conversions and baptisms, referring to fellow missionaries and their wives and several visiting evangelists and teachers from Britain, Canada and the U.S.A., many of whom were entertained by her parents. She lived happily with her parents, Henry and Henrietta Spencer who had been commended from Birmingham and Cardiff to Trinidad in 1922, and in Trinidad a little sister Eileen was born. Her father was not only a preacher and teacher, but was a man who

seemed to be able to turn his hand to anything, including planning and overseeing the building of several gospel halls in the island.

After she left school Annie worked as a librarian, as a postmistress and finally was commended to the work of setting up a Christian Day School by the Ebenezer Assembly in Woodbrook, Port of Spain.

These two books, although completely different in background and customs, still have many similarities. Each author gives a vivid account of ploughing the ground and sowing the good seed of God's word. Material possessions were minimal, the wives cooking with primitive stoves etc., and these things were only mentioned in passing. When money was needed each gives instances of the faithfulness of God. Each worked to eke out meagre incomes while at college. Each emphasises advantage of the gift of humour to any missionary life. Each author has her own story to tell, and her book is well worth reading.

Ella Jack