The Arabian Mission

Field Report

Number Twenty-Six

April 1 to June 30, 1898
THE ARABIAN MISSION.

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NOTES.

The Rev. P. J. Zwemer arrived home on July 12. Ill when he left Muscat, his condition was such when he reached New York that he was taken immediately from the steamer to the Presbyterian Hospital, where he now is. On July 22nd his state was such as greatly to alarm his friends. Since that time, however, he has been slowly but steadily recovering, with the prospect of complete restoration to health. Mr. Zwemer went out in 1892, and has been most of the intervening time at Muscat. The extreme heat of the climate, combined with the total unsanitary conditions at Muscat, have told upon an unusually strong and vigorous constitution, and compelled him to leave the field a year earlier than he desired and expected. His friends and those of the mission should pray that he may be able, in due time, to return to his work under better conditions than heretofore.

On August 17, Rev. and Mrs. S. M. Zwemer, with little Amy, Rev. George E. Stone and Miss Margaret Rice, sailed from New York for Liverpool on their way to Arabia, on the White Star steamer "Majestic." Many friends were at the wharf to bid them God-speed, and the earnest prayer of the whole church will be offered for their protection and comfort by the way, and their safe arrival in Arabia with the message of light and salvation to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death.
MUSCAT.

Persian Gulf, July 1, 1898.

My quarterly letter this time is about Muscat, which I have just left for my return to Busrah, and where I have been for over two months. This is the longest time I ever spent at this station, and though May and June are here called the most disagreeable months of the year, yet as my former visits were during the cooler season I am pleased to have had an experience of the other extreme. That experience was much more tolerable than I anticipated, though I should say that a very exceptional storm of wind and rain early in June doubtless materially modified the temperature during the following weeks.

The main reason for my being at Muscat at this time was the impending departure of P. J. Zwemer on furlough, and although there was a probability that I could not remain very long away from Busrah, yet the needs of the station required that there should be no interregnum immediately after Mr. Zwemer's leaving. We had some days together before his sailing, during which I tried to learn something about the management of eighteen little black boys, and of the other features of our work in Oman. His farewells were as cheery as the circumstances permitted, seeing that he was quite ill from fever at the time, and had to be carried to the landing and down to his cabin in the Bombay steamer. It was a comfort to know that among his fellow passengers were the American missionaries from Mosul, who would be sure to give him all the assistance in their power. An unfailing remedy for our malaria has been a change of air, and our anxiety for Mr. Zwemer was relieved on return mail by the news of his speedy convalescence.

The improvements made upon the Mission house during the year past decidedly contribute to make the summer more endurable. The veranda on the sunnyside making a great difference in the temperature of the interior, and also proving a place of refuge at night, when one is driven down from the roof by the hot winds. But there are still other changes to be made in it before it approaches in comfort and healthfulness the usual European residence in the East. During Mr. Zwemer's furlough in America he will doubtless bring these points to the knowledge of our friends.
The dominant race, never very numerous at Muscat, was but little in evidence during the first few weeks of my stay, besides ourselves being only represented by the American Consul, himself at the time confined to his house. Afterwards the arrival of the English Political Agent, with his wife, and the visit of a gunboat gave occasion for more of the amenities of civilized society, such for example, as a dinner at the English Agency on the occasion of the Queen's birthday. A number of opportunities for sailing or rowing in the boats of the two English residents was also much enjoyed. Besides the bit of exercise it gives, it is a wonderful relief at sundown to get away from the superheated rocks of the town, and out into the open, purer air of the sea. A mission boat I judge to be a necessary adjunct to a continuous residence here. Some of the boys in the school are large enough to act as boatmen in an emergency. Several have a good remembrance of the lakes and rivers of Central Africa, and all are very fond of the water. I would take them several times a week to the sea for a swim, or on the occasion of the heavy storm, to the pools of fresh water among the rocks, where they could wash their clothes as well as their bodies. Since they have been with us they have learned to be cleanly, and we have no trouble with them on that score now. In their studies they have made considerable progress, and while I doubt if any prove intellectual giants, yet several would put to shame the average American boy of like age and opportunity. They all will presently have a working knowledge of the three R's, and as soon as possible should be taught to earn their daily "rice and fish." We missionaries, as a rule, are not very well equipped for teaching the manual arts, but I trust we can do something. During the repairs on the house two or three showed that they had an aptitude for making sawdust and chips, and a gift of twenty-five dollars from a friend at home for the purchase of tools has come just at the right time. As there are only eighteen of the boys, I am sure that something can be found for each one to do, several applications already having been made to us for house servants. But the present and future of the Freed Slave School at Muscat should not be limited by these eighteen boys! Just as I was leaving a captured slave dhow was brought into the harbor, but by express direction of the Board I was prevented from making further application for any boys of suitable age who might be on board. Our lads were quite excited at the news, and wished me to go at once to the English Consulate to see about
getting others. On my telling them that I had no extra food, they said that each would share his plate of rice with a new boy! The question of the extension of the Freed Slave School is something for its friends and supporters in America to decide for themselves. The opportunity is before us!

With the Bible work in and around Muscat during the first few months of the year, I was much pleased. In a place where so few know how to read, and so many of these are distinctly hostile to Christianity, it is a constant surprise that so many scriptures are sold. There must be a blessing, though to us unseen, accompanying all these portions of God's Word. Our colporteur in charge of the Bible shop has worked up from the humblest position, and has proved invaluable to us at Muscat, where the conditions are such as speedily discourage all but the physically strong and mentally courageous. There were no tours inland while I was there, but that feature was only awaiting a fresh invoice of books. I was sorry that I myself could not get up to the mountains. The Sheikhs of several towns visited by Mr. Zwemer called upon me, and were urgent in their invitations for me to come and see them, and I sincerely hope that the interior of Oman will soon become familiar with the missionary and his message. Aside from the preaching of the Gospel in regions beyond, to be able to spend the months of May and June in the hills, will go far to make Muscat the most desirable station of our mission.

Mr. P. J. Zwemer's departure has again left us with only two ordained missionaries for our three stations. We are doing the best we can for Muscat. I have been there for two months, and Mr. Barny will soon arrive to stay as long as he can, but we are not very certain of the future. Even with the good native teacher we have, the boys need strong and wise guidance; and it takes longer than a few weeks to gain their confidence and understand their needs. And at all of our stations, the system of rotation we are compelled to adopt, is not one calculated to best "shepherd the flock," or to give the missionary that sense of ownership which so contributes to success. And to ask a new missionary, not yet six months on the field, to leave his study of the language and to go off alone to supervise the work in the most trying of our stations, means a loss of time and risk of health which I trust no one after this will be asked to undergo.

You can see how earnestly and hopefully we are looking forward to our Autumn reinforcements, and how, while thankfully
recounting present mercies, we are expecting a richer blessing upon more zealous efforts to hasten the time when—

"The kingdoms of this world shall be made our Christ's dominion, And He, King triumphant, shall reign on earth!"

James Cantine.

BUSRAH.

How thankful we are to report that the past quarter has been one of uninterrupted health to all who are now on the field. Rev. Mr. Zwemer (P. J.), who had good recovery from his sickness of last January, continued to improve until a few days before his departure for the homeland.

A letter received from him, sent on his arrival at Aden, reads: "The fever left me while in Bombay, and I am getting stronger each day with good sleep and appetite." The helpers also have kept well, and so with pleasure we give thanks to Him from whom all blessings flow.

At the beginning of the quarter Mr. Cantine and Mr. Barny left Busrah, while we remained to do what we could.

Firstly—Medical Work.

This has, of course, occupied a great deal of our attention. Everything has seemed to move smoothly. Among the interesting cases have been: the amputation of the lower limb at middle of thigh for elephantiasis. To quote a remark of another, "The most interesting point in this case is that there is nothing to report." The patient being the wife of our colporteur, Yacob Sower, he came very frequently and read portions of the Scripture to her, and conversing on God's goodness. She left the house, having made what would have been a remarkable recovery even in the States. In another case—calculus—the operation was also successful.

Several cataract cases have appeared, the most of which have been sent off till the advent of cool weather, as eye cases especially do not do well, for some reason, in summer.
Several cases have been treated in the mission-house because of the better supervision which could be given them. One especially which is now here would not have done so well had the patient been compelled to be elsewhere. He is now doing very nicely, and I hope in a few weeks time he will be sent off with a probable prolonged existence of several years.

The following is the record for the quarter: Total, 1,137. Moslems, 972; Christians, 153; others, 12. Men, 565; women, 316; children, 256. Medical, 645; surgical, 269; eye, 223.

SECONDLY—BUSRAH STATION.

This has also gone on smoothly. Early in the quarter the colporteurs, Yacob and Daniel, were sent off to Abdul Kaseeb, a short distance below Busrah, that is about half way to Mahomerah. During their stay at this place the son of the Sheikh was killed, being accidentally shot. This caused intense local excitement, counteracting any good the colporteurs were able to do.

Our colporteur at Amara, Merad, reports that he has had several coming to him inquiring "the way" and discussing the difference between Moslem and Christian. Our friend, Ameen Effendi, the soldier, has been of great help to Merad in the discussions, taking active part therein, both in the book-shop and home of Merad. Merad also reports that he has eight or more coming to him daily at prayer time and joining with apparent interest in the devotions.

Colporteur Esa Abdul Meisieh has held the out-station, Nasariyeh, with faithfulness. During April he had the misfortune of having all his household goods stolen. We are thankful to report at this time that about half has been recovered, and with a little advance he is fairly comfortable again.

It was very pleasant to receive, as the mission has done during the quarter, a gift from Mr. W. A. Buchanan, formerly of Busrah, now in London. Also there has been received from the Bible Lands Missions' Aid Society a check for £30, ten of which is especially designated for the medical work.

During the quarter we have had numbers, both Moslem and Christian, call upon us, with whom we have had interesting conversations, having an opportunity of calling their attention to
a few of the differences between Christianity and Mohammedanism.

Again, in closing, we would say:

We thank God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, for his loving kindness and gentle forbearance to us.

H. R. L. Worral, M.D.

**BAHREIN.**

In my last I expressed the hope that there would be opportunity of making the tour down the Gulf. The thought was then that this might be done after some months, but after talking the matter over we decided that it would be better for me to go down immediately. I made preparations to leave on the 10th of April. Things were not to move in such a hurry however. The boat that came up from Bombay on that day had a record of two plague cases on board, in consequence of which the authorities forbade all communication with her. Quarantine regulations are enforced very strictly at Busrah, so much so, that one is often tempted to use harsh language about the much-abused, "unspeakable Turk." Yet when one considers the ravages that the plague would make, once having gotten a foothold in such a place as Busrah, moderation is required even here. Despite all quarantine regulations the plague has spread in other directions. Well may we thank Almighty God that He has not permitted the dread scourge in these helpless regions. After two weeks of waiting, most unprofitable ones, occupied largely in packing and again unpacking my impedimenta, because of reports of boats starting, which at the last moment proved to be false, we, i.e., the colporteur and I, at last got started, and after a quiet passage arrived here at the end of April.

The Bible-shop was soon opened and the dust that had been settling for months wiped from the Bibles and Testaments—a task which might have led some of those friends of missions who continually scan the records for "results," could they have been here and engaged at it, to meditation with possibly some benefits to themselves and the cause. During the first few days we felt that we were strangers. True, some of the friends of those who were
here before came and made themselves known. It was pleasant to note the evident satisfaction with which some of these said of one or the other of the fellow-workers: "He is my friend." But the great body of those passing by would stop a little and gaze with wide open eyes at the newcomers and go on, disregarding our invitations to come in, though urged by many *bismillahs*. However, this wore off and every day there were some who came in. The season of the year is not the best for work here, unless one goes off on tours to the mainland, for which undertaking, however, I did not feel myself equal. It is the pearl-fishing season when every available boat with the great body of men is off on the banks. At this village we have the bazaar, the only one on the island, which naturally brings people together. But in some of the outlying villages which were visited we found only a few old men, the women and children.

Weather so far has been remarkably fine. *Elbareh*, a cool north-wind that blows quite constantly at this time of the year, kept the temperature down to about ninety degrees. Health, consequently, has been good. In one of the gales to which this otherwise beneficent wind sometimes turns, a Turkish man-of-war went down near the island. Fortunately no lives were lost. According to accounts given of some of Mr. Abdul Hamid's war ships, it is a wonder that they do not seek their final resting place in quiet water; but this one had a hard struggle with the elements.

At present I am on my way to Muscat, and hope to arrive there in a few days, while the colporteur is staying on. The next months will be a time of expectation until the re-enforcements arrive on the field. I hope there will be at least one doctor among them. The need for one and his opportunities for good at Bahrein was impressed on me very strongly by my stay there. Barring a few native quacks he will have "virgin soil," free scope to manifest that Christ-like love that seeks to save the body as well as the soul. The recent good news from home about the ever increasing volume of prayer for this work and increased contribution is very cheering. My own prayer is that I may ever enter more earnestly into this soul saving work, which prayer may God abundantly answer. Then, being all workers together with God we shall at least, nay, soon see this part of the world field bring forth fruits to life everlasting.

Respectfully,

Fred. J. Barny.