The

Arabian Mission

Field Report

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THE ARABIAN MISSION.

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Please draw checks and send remittances, or requests for information, to "THE ARABIAN MISSION," 25 East 22d Street, New York City:
My letter this quarter has the opportunity of containing more of variety and of taking the reader over a broader field than usual. From Baghdad to Bahrein is not more than six hundred miles in a straight line, but in my zig zag journeys more than thrice that distance has been covered. Baghdad was visited only in the way of a vacation. The objective point, when I left Busrah in October, was our out-station at Nasariyeh on the Euphrates, which we try to visit at least twice a year. The route is two days or more up the Tigris to Kut, and then southwest by horse or boat to the Euphrates. At Kut I expected to meet our colporteur Esa, who is in charge at Nasariyeh, to which place we would return together. But not finding him on our arrival, nor any word as to his movements, I went on to Baghdad, and by telegraph learned that he was ill and not able to travel. I returned to Kut by the same steamer, losing a week, but having had a pleasant visit with our C. M. S. neighbors.

At this time of year the rivers are very low, and the Hai, which is a sort of overflow from the Tigris into the Euphrates, was dry in most places, so that I had to make the trip on horseback. There are three good-sized towns between Kut and Nasariyeh at about equal distances apart, so that the journey was divided into four stages of from seven to nine hours each. In the Spring of '94 there was plenty of water, and I made the entire journey by boat, so now I was glad to see, at least once, what the real desert was like. It surely was interesting for awhile, but I shall not be eager to again spend four days in viewing the bare, dusty plains of Mesopotamia from the back of a horse. Our missionaries have never taken to horses as do the Englishmen resident in this part of the world, so that I was not "broken in" beforehand,
and as a consequence, date trees were never so welcome to the sight as were those bordering the Euphrates as they rose above the horizon towards the end of the fourth day.

I had a few opportunities for speaking with Moslem fellow-travelers on the road, and in the evenings, after we were settled for the night in some "khan," there would be a time for conversation, but I generally was too tired to do more than eat the one substantial meal of the day and then stretch out on my blanket until the call to pack up, an hour or two before sunrise.

At Nasariyeh I found our colporteur Esa just able to walk, but under the stimulus of my presence, or of a promise to take him to Busrah where he could get good medical treatment, he soon was able to accompany me on my visits to the officials and to the few Christians in the place. As Dr. Worrall has written, this little company of Christians is very cosmopolitan in its character as well as very cordial in its welcome. There are not enough of any one religious body to warrant them in having a priest of their own, and as a consequence, they all are entirely without religious instruction and care. They truly seem as sheep without a shepherd. One man, a Russian, was very anxious to send his children to a Christian school, saying, that now in the Moslem school they were learning the Koran and not the Bible. He also wished me to baptize the youngest of the family. And all, Armenian, Syrian, Roman and Greek, were anxious for us to open a school and station a missionary there permanently. It was quite refreshing, after having experienced so much hostility from the native Christian churches in other places. Of the Sabians I did not see much at this time, perhaps because I was staying in a "khan," and they did not dare to let it be known publicly that they had much interest in a foreigner.

Our little Bible-shop I found in a good place and neatly kept, and I cheerfully endorsed Esa's plans for making it more attractive by a bit or two of simple furniture, and the subscription to a couple of Arabic journals for public reading. He seems to get on very nicely with the people, both Turks and natives, and has been remarkably free from molestation. In this out of the way place it may take time to make enemies as well as friends. I was quite amused to hear that the leader of the Turkish military band had begged an old Arabic hymn book, and that now a familiar gospel tune might occasionally delight the ears of a Protestant listener.
There are always a large number of Turkish troops quartered at Nasariyeh, as there also are at present in Busrah, and their need of the Gospel, and our obligation to supply it is being laid more and more upon us. Fortunately Esa has a fair knowledge of Turkish, which he finds very useful. In fact the language of the bazaar seems to be more Turkish than Arabic.

I could not stay very long in Nasariyeh, as I still had a visit to Bahrein to make before the end of the year. The six days I allowed myself passed very pleasantly though perhaps more quietly than is the custom of aggressive missionaries in other parts of the world. Irenics before polemics is the best policy in Turkey. A favor or two done to the Turkish commander with my camera may bring returns some day; and something of the Word was sown here and there which the Spirit may bring to the harvest.

I had a good look around the town and can endorse our former opinion of the desirability of having some little place of our own to which we can go when we visit Nasariyeh. Life in a “khan” is not pleasant, nor to our work advantageous, nor would it, I think, be a difficult thing at present for the authorities to freeze us out altogether should they be so minded.

My return down the Euphrates was passed comfortably enough in a roomy “bellum,” but was a bit tedious owing to contrary winds, which prevented us from making much use of the sail. Most of the way we were towed along by means of a rope from the top of the mast, or else pushed forward with long poles, though sometimes there was a call for oars and paddle. This stretch of river has been described several times, and it will suffice to say that I reached Busrah much browned, rather hungry, and in general feeling better for the change and for the life in the open air.

At Busrah I had to wait nearly two weeks for a steamer to take me to Bahrein, which made my stay there much shorter than we had planned. Our colporteur Daniel, who has spent much time on the island, accompanied me, and it was our purpose to leave him there for two or three months, but at my return he seemed so unhappy over the prospect that he was allowed to take passage on the steamer for Busrah. However, while there he did faithful work at the shop and in two or three short tours to neighboring villages. Our past experience leads us to question
the expediency of leaving one of our native helpers alone on the island, and there is not much prospect now for our work at Bahrein until Rev. S. M. Zwemer returns from America. I found our house and shop in good condition and a hearty welcome from many of the people; especially were there inquiries about Mr. Zwemer and the hope expressed that he soon would be with them again. I mentioned our plans for having a fully qualified medical man there, and the response was immediate and cordial. I myself was asked several times to see very sick persons, but could only tell them to get the doctor from some passing steamer, or to go in person to Bombay or Karachi. We have now a good number of influential friends at Bahrein, and humanly speaking, the work only needs the reinforcements which we trust the autumn will bring us. While I was there the roof of our hired house was thoroughly repaired, and with a few changes it would be well adapted to our mission requirements.

Bahrein has several advantages over Busrah and Muscat, and while the same comparison might be drawn to the advantage of each of our stations, yet as one travels through this land, each place seems to open so many doors, great and effectual, that one longs to see a more determined effort to enter in and claim possession in the name of our Lord.

JAMES CANTINE.

MEDICAL.

How quickly and how very often are we called upon to write of the past and tell of the present. It seems but yesterday when I wrote of my return to Busrah. Nature has put on a different dress since then. Then it was hot, now cold. Then vegetation dry and withered, now, such as has not been touched by the severe frost of the past few days, green and beautiful. With change of weather came improvement in all our physical natures. Appetite which waited to be coaxed, now brooks but little delay in times for food. Nevertheless we have all had our downs this quarter as well as ups. That is in way of health.—One suffering with a slight attack of rheumatism, another severely, one with chill, fever and sweat, and still the other being badly stung by a dormant wasp. But at present all are in good spirits and health except one. The Rev. P. J. Zwemer who reached Busrah last Wednesday suffering from a severe attack of rheumatism. Improvement has
set in and advanced to such a degree that we are hoping in a few days he will be about again with little or no pain or discomfort.

Physically the colporteurs are all well. During the quarter just ended our colporteur Esa at Nasariyeh came to Busrah with rheumatism, and returned in a week without pain. My assistant who was suffering from fever in Bombay has also fully recovered.

Dispensary work still keeps on with the usual great variety of diseases, fevers, small and large pox, diseases of eye, ears, stomach, etc., surgical and medical. Quite a number of the patients are quite small. Babes in arms some of them. One little girl had quite a severe attack of malarial fever, besides which she was unable because of pain to bear the light. When attempts were made to relieve the eye condition she struggled violently. The second time she struggled less, but the third time on being told that the doctor was ready to put medicine in her eye lay back in the arms of the slave and in that way asked to have the remedy instilled in the eye. The same child was the first patient in the doctor's experience who cried for more after drinking the first dose.

I would with reverence speak of an incident or two which happened during the quarter. My assistant left me for a day and being short-handed, prayers were omitted. The third or fourth patient when his turn came asked: No prayers this morning doctor? He answered, yes, to the question whether he enjoyed them. After talking to him for a few minutes it seemed as if he could not be very far from the kingdom. He was asked to join us in our Sunday afternoon Arabic prayer service and we were glad to see him when he came. He also came one morning when he was distinctly told to omit coming for a few times. On being asked if did not so understand it answered yes, that he had not taken a number but had come for prayers.

Another who is necessarily present nearly every day, to our surprise and happiness one morning joined in repeating the Lord's prayer. One day the idea came to remove some stray portions of scriptures which had found their way in the waiting room when this Moslem asked me to leave a particular portion (St. Matthew). Asking him why? Was answered that he had read nearly half already and desired to finish it. Needless to say we were very happy to grant the request.

We are full of joy that we are able to report even these small movings of the Spirit as occurring in the last quarter of 1897.
dicating that God is honoring the work in the dispensary. Oh, 
that in the year to come He would baptize the medical arm of the 
service with His abundant blessing and gather from the efforts 
there put forth an harvest of souls. Oh, ye men of God pray for 
the “Power of the Spirit” that it may be on and in Arabia.

H. R. LANKFORD WORRALL, M. D.

FROM OUR NEW MISSIONARY.

I never was in better health than at the time of my arrival, 
and with slight exceptions, which are regarded here as almost 
necessary, have continued so. An evidence of the advance made 
by the missions here is the great difference in the circumstances 
of the coming of the first missionaries and of my own. Then 
there was no comfortable mission house to go to, no one to greet 
the stranger with that cordial welcome which forbids any feeling 
of loneliness that may threaten to arise; but there was hostility 
and opposition and much of it. All this is different now and from 
the first I was made to feel at home by the brethren here. As for 
difficulties in coming into the country, there were none; the 
authorities not even as much as demanded my passport.

This is to be a record of work done and as I have done but 
one thing, the record will be brief. This one thing has been 
language study; day after day it has been Arabic. By the aid of 
the teacher and by “keeping at it,” some advance has been made 
and “we report progress.” One of the great difficulties in 
language study here is in getting a good teacher. I was fortunate 
in having one from the start, who though not a “teacher,” has a 
good knowledge of the Arabic and speaks English fairly well. 
During Mr. Cantine’s absence from the station, it fell to my lot to 
conduct the Arabic service on Sunday when an interpreter was 
employed. Glad of the opportunity of speaking the Word, I yet 
felt each time how unsatisfactory it was both to audience and 
speaker, and this has acted as a spur in the language work.

The routine work this quarter was several times agreeably 
interrupted. We were fortunate in being able to entertain the 
Rev. and Mrs. J. F. Parfit and P. S. Sturrock, M.D., C.M.S., 
workers at Baghdad, who were waiting here for the river-boat to 
take them to their field. Their society was much enjoyed and the 
exchange of ideas found helpful. Mrs. Parfit and Dr. Sturrock
are new accessions for the mission at Baghdad and we rejoice with our brethren both for their sake and Arabia’s that laborers are coming to this neglected part of our Lord’s vineyard.

Thus have passed the first months in Arabia. What has been done is simply preparatory as this year at least will be. May the Lord continue his blessings and make me more faithful, that when larger opportunities come I may not be found wanting.

Fred. J. Barny.

Muscat.

October 1st found me in Arabia though not yet in Muscat. Coming from India where I had spent a short vacation, I had to undergo a six days’ quarantine.

Oman is well named “Rocky Arabia”—a more barren rocky spot than this quarantine station could scarcely be found. Yet in a distant wady appeared a few green trees cared for by the fifteen or twenty villagers of this miniature place, showing that even in the most rocky places sowing seed is not hopeless.

So it is in our work; although difficult and on seemingly barren soil, the signs of a future harvest are, we believe, not lacking.

Arriving at Muscat I found all in good order. Jusef, the colporteur, was in charge of the Bible-shop, and had, during my absence, made two tours along the coast. The freed slave boys were in excellent health. An effort was made this quarter to give them some kind of industrial training. A room was set apart for a carpenter’s shop, and the use of tools was systematically taught to the older boys, and work required to be correctly done.

The regular school hours were not encroached upon, however, and the boys have made fair progress in their studies as well.

Before I left Muscat for Busrah, the boys had their Christmas festival, and were initiated into the juvenile mysteries of the Christmas tree, and a real live Santa Claus presented each boy with a copy of the “Story of the Bible,” and—a boy’s delight—a jack-knife, besides an unusual allowance of sweets and fruit.

In regard to their progress in reading, suffice it to say that the majority of the boys read with little help the book given them, and had learned fully the story which makes this a season of joy. It would interest their friends in America to hear their eighteen negro voices sing;

“O come, all ye faithful.”
With the moneys appropriated for repairs a new room was built on the Mission House, and, with exception of doors and windows, completed. Even as it is it proved a great convenience to have a second room.

Our printing press had for some time been waiting for suitable Arabic type. Finally we have a font of the Beyrout Arabic type and its 959 pieces arranged in eight huge cases, with almost as many for a larger capital font.

Some time ago a tract written by Dr. Rouse entitled, "Jesus or Mohammed," had been translated into Arabic, and we succeeded in printing 600 copies. The tract speaks plainly of Mohammed's sinfulness in contrast with the sinlessness of Christ, and quotes the Koran in proof of the same.

We were careful in distributing the tract to give them only to the more liberal minded. But it proved too hard a blow for the fanaticism of some Shiahs and Wahabees.

A copy of the tract was taken to the Sultan and read in the "durbar" and on the plea that the tract would bring me in danger the Sultan requested the American Consul to prohibit its distribution and burn them. We were bound to accede to the former demand and its further distribution was stopped. Naturally a great interest in the contents of the tract was awakened and perhaps no book or tract sold in our shop has been so universally read in Muscat and Orman as this brief proof of Dr. Rouse by the superiority of Jesus over Mohammed. Perhaps it was not prudent to let our first publication speak so plainly but we have no doubt the incident has accomplished good.

We were pleased this quarter with an unusually large number of visits by people from the interior who had entertained us so hospitably on our tours in Oman.

On Dec. 20th I left Muscat for Busrah to attend our annual missionary meeting. Fortunately a London steamer called en route to Busrah and by taking passage by this boat I avoided the quarantine imposed on the mail steamers. This "tramp" steamer came with a large invoice of rifles and ammunition for the Gulf ports. The Shah of Persia on advice of the British Government having just prohibited the import of rifles into Persian ports, all of these thousands of rifles were landed in Muscat, already overstocked yet at present the rifle mart for all Arabia as it once was the slave mart.
I have myself seen the old Portuguese Church built in the 16th Century, and now used as a warehouse, filled up to the ceiling with hundreds of cases of rifles of the newest style. The Arab loves his rifle as he is said to love his steed. He covers it with gold and silver bands and inscribes on it the sacred words of the Koran and never allows it to leave his side. He carries it for safety on his long journeys across the desert but it is, alas, also often used in their almost endless tribal feuds.

Truly, "the way of peace they have not known." Let us pray that speedily the Prince of Peace may rule in their hearts.

P. J. Zwemer.

50 x 100 = 5,000.

The time has come for the Arabian Mission to hearken to the wise counsel of Solomon (Prov. xxiv: 27), "Prepare thy work without and make it fit for thyself in the field; and afterwards build thine house." For seven years the missionaries have dwelt in hired houses. Some of these were very small and comfortless, all of them leaky in the rainy season, and all were hired for a rent not always reasonable. This summer the Board acquired by purchase a mission-house at Muscat to serve as a dwelling for the missionary and a home for the rescued slaves. At Bahrein the need for a comfortable dwelling is still unsupplied, and the mission-house at Busrah, although large and well planned, is only ours at the cost of a high rent and at the mercy of a landlord. In view of these facts the Board, at its last meeting, passed the following resolution:

"That in view of the great need of better houses for mission work at cheaper rates than it is possible to secure by rent, the Rev. S. M. Zwemer be authorized to raise, if possible, the sum of $5,000 for a building fund for the Arabian Mission. This sum to be raised not from the churches or through the churches, but by individual shares or pledges of $100 each, and to be expended solely for the purchase or building of a mission-house or houses at such a time and in such a way as shall hereafter be determined by the Board of Trustees.

All contributions for this purpose should be sent to "The Arabian Mission," 25 East 22d Street, N. Y. City.

Cor. Sec.