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.
We are thankful to be able to report progress in every line of effort.

Our Bible and evangelistic work centre largely around the Bible shop in the bazaar. At the Mission House, it is true, Mr. Cantine, who was with me for more than a month, and myself, have had large opportunity for conversation with Arabs of every class, but such callers always have some underlying motive, and one sometimes very remote from religious. At our Bible shop, however, we meet them literally on their own ground. In this work I cannot speak too highly of our present colporteur, Jusef
Micha. Educated in the Catholic schools at Mosul, later he became a Protestant, and he knows both the Scriptures and the Koran, and ably presents to the Moslem his great inconsistency in neglecting the Old and New Testaments. Besides he is a faithful witness to Christ as a Saviour.

For the first time in Muscat he has suffered persecution; a fanatical Wahabee, defeated in argument at the Bible shop, threatening an assault, and only the bystanders saved him from a severe beating.

The matter was brought to the attention of the Sultan, and the man duly punished. Nevertheless it shows that there is a change from the Moslem's attitude of absolute indifference to our work. It was encouraging also to find the Wali of Matrah coming personally to the shop to purchase a Bible for investigation.

We are able to report a double tour into Oman. The colporteur accompanied me to the foot of the Gebel Achdar (or Green Mountains), he to return by a circular route to Muscat, and I crossing the principal mountain range of Oman, and reaching Tenoof and Nezwa on the other side.

We left Matrah on Wednesday, March 17th, and after a day and a half on donkeys (a mode of travel not quite so swift but much more comfortable than the "ship of the desert") we reached Birka on the "Batina" coast. "El Batina" is one of the three sections into which Oman may be divided. It consists of a fertile strip of land, almost one continuous date plantation, between one and three miles broad, from Heel to Sohar, 120 miles. Between the "Batina" and the mountains is a wide desert tract called "Seekh," sixteen to twenty miles broad, inhabited by roaming Bedouin herdsmen. To the west of this "Seekh" lie the large towns of Oman, where verdure is secured by the perennial mountain springs. On the eastern side of the mountain range lie the important towns of Rastak, Nachel, and Someil. On the farther side the same feature is found, and we have Tenoof, Behilah, and Nezwa—all large towns richly watered by the copious mountain springs. Between these fertile oases one travels sometimes an entire day through stony wady or over volcanic rock, climbing a difficult mountain pass, or crossing a wide sea-like desert, without seeing a habitation or meeting a fellow creature, except an occasional caravan. The rifles are swung over the shoulders of the riders, and their wild song keeps time with the slow tread of the camels.
Armed only with letters of introduction to the Sheikhs we were able to reach, on the further side of the mountains, Tenoof and Nezwa, the ancient capital of Oman.

Continuing our journey from Birka, it is a half a day's ride over the barren "Seekh" before we reach the fertile Wady Meanel. A stone aqueduct brings water from the wady for some twelve miles, and at short distances there are tanks and rest-houses for the convenience of travellers. Wady Meanel boasts of four prosperous villages—Wasit, Hubra, Afi, and Musellemat. Besides date-plantations there are large wheat fields, and the laborers were gathering an abundant harvest after the rainy season.

At Afi we were entertained by the Sheikh, and arriving on Saturday evening spent Sunday in his well built house.

The "Siblah" or Travellers' Room, an institution of incalculable convenience in Oman, was given for our use, and on Sunday a large number of Arabs called to see us. A real Sunday service it was, as we read and discussed with perhaps fifty Moslems the Scriptures, which they profess to accept but have never read.

From Wady Meanel it is but a short distance to Nachel, where I left Jusef Micha, our colporteur, to canvass this rather large town and return to Muscat, while I continued on to the mountains.

I translate his report of the return trip:

"After remaining in Nachel for a day and a half, where I sold a few Scriptures and distributed a large number of portions, I returned to Hubra, and in Sheikh Ali's house the Lord gave me opportunity to witness for Him to a large number of intelligent Arabs. At Wasit, the small village we omitted on our way up, I remained all night. The Sheikh was able to read, and I gave him a Bible.

"Returning to Birka for a supply of books, I took a round about way in returning to Muscat, passing through Fellage and Halban. Fellage, as its name indicates, is only a single spring, watering perhaps a hundred date trees, and at six hours distance from its nearest neighbor. Here I found only one man able to read, and I added to his one book—the Koran—a copy of the Gospels. Halban is a larger place and I sold ten portions.

"At Khoth several roads from the interior unite and form the caravan route to Matrah, but instead of continuing on to Muscat, I returned to Finga and Seroor, remaining a day at each place."
"From Seroor I passed through Gefar and Wady Gibba, both very small places of no more than thirty inhabitants.

"I am thankful to God that at each place He gave me opportunity to testify for Him, and pray that the seed sown may bring an abundant harvest."

Yours in Christ,

JUSEF MICHA.

From Nachel it is a long day's journey to Lihiga at the foot of Gebel Achdar (or Green Mountains). Two other beautifully situated mountain villages are in close proximity—Owkan and Koiia.

Here, as well as on the mountains, dwells a tribe of hardy mountaineers, the Beni Ryam. In features and habits this tribe is quite distinct from other Oman tribes. Ruled by a powerful Sheikh, Soliman ben Leif, separated from hostile tribes by difficult mountain passes, they enjoy an independent life. All over the mountains these people lead a peaceful life; and the absence of firearms was noticeable in comparison with the valley tribes, where each man carries his rifle, often of the best English or German pattern.

From Lihigar we began the ascent, and after half a day of most difficult climbing, reached the top of the pass at noon-day, my barometer registering 7,050 feet. Here on a level projecting rock, which afforded us a splendid extended view of the Wady Mestel, where dwell the Beni Ruwahah, we had our lunch, and were glad to slake our thirst out of the goat-skin the guide carried on his shoulder.

There are mountain donkeys which bring down in very small loads the products of the mountains, but the roads are so steep and precipices so threatening, that it is more satisfactory to climb up by oneself. From the top of the pass we descended to the level table land at a height of 6,200 feet, and at sunset reached the ideally beautiful village of Sheraegah. Sheraegah is a circular ravine several hundred feet in depth, and like a huge amphitheatre where grow in terraces, apples, peaches, pomegranates, grapes, and other temperate products, in rich profusion.

We remained two days at this place, and found the people friendly and hospitable. Although rather difficult of access, it would not be impossible to live here during the hot months. Ice and snow are frequently seen here during the winter, and in summer the temperature registers no higher than 80°. In March
we had a temperature of 40°, and enjoyed a huge fire in the Siblah, where a hundred Arabs came to visit us, and entertained us with the recitation of Arabic poetry. Such an opportunity was not to be neglected, and they, as agricultural people, were interested in the parable of the Sower and the explanation.

Sheraegah and Seek are the two largest towns on the mountains. In both I sold nearly fifty portions of Scripture, and promising to accept their urgent invitation to return we pressed on over the most difficult mountain roads to Tenoof at the foot of the mountains on the further side. This is the home of the Sheikh of the Beni Ryam, in whose well built fort we remained for two days.

Nezwa, the old capital of Oman, is but three hours journey from Tenoof, and one-half of the large date plantation belongs to its Sheikh. The other half is nominally in possession of the Sultan of Muscat, although there is suspicion on all sides and hostile outbreaks are frequent. As we were always accompanied by some fifty armed men we were not able to do as we desired. A number of Scriptures were sold, however, and at a more favorable time we will visit this place again.

We intended to return to Muscat along the valley road via Someil, but the state of affairs at Nezwa made roads through hostile territory unsafe, and we decided to recross the mountains, enjoying again their cool climate, and the friendliness of the people.

By riding long stages and taking short rests we were able to reach Muscat from the top of the mountains in four days, having been absent twenty-one days.

Although residence for a length of time would perhaps not be advisable, yet at opportune seasons all Oman seems to be accessible, and our regret is that we are single handed in this work. It is our purpose and plan, God willing, to supply every village in Oman with the Word of God, but we need reinforcements to assist us in this work.

The pupils of the Freed Slave School have made more rapid progress this quarter, as they gained a larger grasp of the language. Their teacher, Mr. David, is experienced and trustworthy, and is left in entire charge when we leave on tours or to go to our other stations.

Our Printing Press is slowly gathering materials, and at some future day will prove its efficiency in our work. The delay in securing
type and supplies from distant places where there are government restrictions, and the difficulty in securing an assistant who understands Arabic orthography, have handicapped us so far, yet at some future date it will prove to have been a good investment because of the freedom we enjoy here in printing controversial literature.

P. J. Zwemer.

BUSRAH.

This time my quarterly letter is written in quarantine. Indeed, one gets a surfeit of quarantine now-a-days. Fifteen days for every boat coming from India, even though a month may have elapsed since leaving the last infected port. The delay and inaction of a long quarantine are quite suited to an Oriental country, and are probably the only sanitary measures of which most of them are capable. It is troublesome enough in many ways, but when one sees how the Indian Government with all its resources, is nearly powerless before the present plague, and then considers what may be its ravages should it once gain a footing within the domain of the Sultan, it is easy to be resigned to all efforts, however grotesque in their exageration, to keep it away. Our traveling between stations is done on the steamers of the British India Co., and we share in the supposed infection of these boats, so that during the three months I have been away from Busrah, I am afraid that the question of quarantine, how to avoid it, and how to meet it when unavoidable, has occupied a disproportionately large share of my thoughts. But I will try to mention it as little as possible in this letter.

S. M. Zwemer, at Bahrein, was planning to start for America in February, and as it was necessary for us to be some little time together before his departure, I found myself leaving Busrah shortly after the New Year, although it was only a month and a half since I had returned from my long furlough home. As I also had had no opportunity for visiting Muscat since I first came to Eastern Arabia in the Summer of '91, my trip was finally extended to that point.

Two weeks at Bahrein passed very quickly. It was the only one of our stations blessed with the presence of a woman, and you may see that it had possibilities of entertainment far above those of less fortunate Busrah and Muscat. While I was there P. J. Zwemer also came up from Muscat, and together with S. M Zwemer and his wife, we had a busy and withal pleasant time
looking over reports of work done during the year past, and in planning for that to come. The mission house of Bahrein is pleasantly situated on the seashore, comfortable, and I think, well adapted to our needs. I could not help contrasting my surroundings with those we endured in '93, when, during a bad epidemic of cholera, we were quite shut off from communication with the outside world, with only one room to live in, and that wholly unprotected from the August sun. Since then, our work has given many signs of progress and permanency, perhaps none more evident to a casual glance than the better housing of our missionaries at all our three stations. In facing the many uncertainties of missionary life in the Persian Gulf, it a great satisfaction to feel reasonably sure of a comfortable home. Moreover, in our houses are our chapels, our dispensaries and our schools, and here we find a liberty of action which oftentimes is denied elsewhere.

From Bahrein I accompanied P. J. Zwemer back to Muscat, where I had the opportunity of renewing the acquaintance made six years before. It was a great joy to see and recall what God had wrought in that time. Then I was the only missionary in all Eastern Arabia (Bishop French had died at Muscat a few days before my arrival); now our mission and its workers are known by name or sight in many a town between Baghdad and Aden. Then there was met an almost universal skepticism as to our ability to accomplish anything, or even to live in Arabia. Now, not to speak of our other stations, we have at Muscat a school, a printing-press, a Bible-shop and an accessible "hinderland" large enough to satisfy the most ambitious. The hand of the Lord has indeed gone before us!

It had been my hope to make a short tour into Oman either with P. J. Zwemer or with the colporteur, but in this we were disappointed. My visit was just in the midst of the Mohammedan month of Ramazan, when all good Arabs fast during the day (sleeping also if they can), thus making overland travel by camel or donkey uncertain and vexatious. Moreover, their prejudices against unbelievers are at this time more easily aroused, and they are more apt to resent an attempt to approach them on religious topics. And so it was thought best not to handicap any attempt to enter the open doors of the hill country. But as I was nearing Muscat on my return up the Gulf, Mr. Zwemer also started on tour, and we trust he has been able to realize the hopes we have of occupying the cooler and more healthful uplands of Oman.
The freed-slave school is a very interesting and promising feature of our Muscat work. I was quite surprised and gratified to find so little ground for my preconceived ideas of the stupidity of these African lads. It may be the result of the nine months' training they already have had, but they certainly are more active and more ambitious than most Arab boys of their age. If they continue to progress in knowledge and in morality throughout the more critical period still before them, and above all, if they receive the gift of the Spirit in their hearts, those in America who are sustaining our efforts in their behalf will have no reason to be disappointed.

While I was at Muscat the weather was all that could be desired; it was comparatively cool and we even had a few showers by way of variety. We were glad that there were not many, for where there is only one room having a proper roof, a rain is not an unmixed pleasure, at least to us. At the first patter of raindrops the slave-school below would be hastily adjourned (if at night it took a great deal of shouting to arouse them) and the boys, like a crowd of black ants, would swarm around and under beds and boxes and the various "impedimenta" incident to housekeeping, and, with a rapidity which practice was beginning to perfect, would soon have them carried in from verandas and roofs, and piled up in the aforementioned "one room." Their enjoyment of the occasion was quite in contrast to our disgust. Before I left, plans were perfected for purchasing the house and making some repairs, which will render the long and hot Summer more endurable.

The future of Muscat is most promising. School fees and Bible-shop are on a good footing, and the only question is, will the same fate overtake Muscat when Mr. Zwemer leaves for his home furlough, as has now befallen his brothers' station at Bahrein?

I stopped again at Bahrein on my return, but only for a few hours, as I felt as I should not remain longer away from Busrah. Daniel, our colporteur in charge, was very glad to see me, but dismayed to learn that I could not stay. He had already been alone over three weeks, and with the limited resources of an Oriental, and amid a population more or less hostile, it was hard to ask him to stay on longer. But there was no choice, especially so just now, when the Busrah quarantine allows no natives from the South to enter. I am greatly in hopes that Mr. Zwemer, from Muscat, will be able to come up in April and spend some time on the
island; but it is about certain that during the Summer the work there will have to be given up. Bahrein has been such a promising station, and so much has been done amid so great difficulties, that it will be a great grief to watch our work there retrograde. Our need for men was never so great as now. May the Lord of the harvest send them forth to us!

There is little to be added to this rambling letter. The fifteen days' detention I am now undergoing within sight of Busrah offer nothing of missionary incident, and the monotony and fatigue are not mentally stimulating. I shall be glad to get back to my own work once more, though I am sure that the progress of the work has been sustained, under the careful management of Dr. Worrall.

James Cantine.

MEDICAL REPORT.

The "first quarter of 1897" has passed without striking incident. Rev. James Cantine left Busrah January 7th for Bahrein and Muscat and has just returned. He left Dr. Worrall to look after affairs in Busrah.

Naturally, clinical work occupied the greater amount of attention. Many have attended the dispensary for relief. Each in his or her turn was examined and relieved to the best of our ability. The end of the quarter has arrived and the record gives a total of 1,025. Many patients, however, were treated after dispensary hours, and consequently, the names were not recorded; 713 were treated for medical ailments exclusive of the eye cases, which numbered 162. Surgery claims 150 cases. There were 470 men, 386 women, 169 children under 13 years. Of the above number 760 were Moslems. Among the interesting cases was one, a double amputation at the wrist-joint, caused by an explosion of fireworks. The explosion occurred while the containing box was being opened. The patient suffered from the afternoon of one day until the next day in the afternoon before he reached the dispensary. The arms were dressed and now the patient is travelling about the city practically well.

An incident occurred which was very pleasing. A little child, a boy of perhaps 7 years, who a year ago was brought to us with a compound fracture of the right leg. In order to quiet him at the time and to make him willing to have his leg dressed, we gave him a number of picture tracts at different times. A few days ago, after being healed for some time, the child came to the dis-
pensary to get a few of the pictures. He received them with great joy and returned to his Bedouin home carrying at least the printed story of the goodness of God. We trust and hope these small tokens may indeed be of seed sown on good ground.

The health of all in Busrah, i.e., the colporteurs, has been fairly good. A slight attack of influenza caused the Doctor to feel unwell, but the only sequel was a slight trace of neuralgia, for a few days. This, however, did not prevent the dispensary work from going on as usual, except one morning when the work was cut off at 10:30 A.M. instead of 11:30. Now, April 1st, all are in good health, including Rev. James Cantine, who is now in harbor.

Each Sunday Arabic service has been held in the Mission House. One of the colporteurs usually reads the Scriptures, prayers are offered by one or two others, and the singing of hymns with frequent comments on the Scripture selections, cause the time to pass with profit to all.

A Turkish soldier has, with few exceptions, been calling every night and, having read a portion of the Word of Life and a prayer, would return to his humble quarters.

Faithfulness has in general characterized the work of each colporteur during the absence of Rev. Mr. Cantine. Esa, in charge of the book shop here, was given an opportunity to break the monotony of his work by going on a trip to Amara to cheer Merad, the colporteur there in charge. Merad and family have been unmolested, comparatively speaking, considering the fanaticism of the place. They were reported in very good health by Esa on his return to Busrah.

Markus, the dispensary assistant, has been quite faithful during the quarter. The last three weeks, however, he has been feeling weak, and does not seem to gain strength, but does his work to the best of his ability.

Busrah has been having, in general, beautiful weather, but with the Spring-time comes the long fast of Ramazan, in which there is "No eat in day, big feast at night," and the corresponding corollary, "All sleep in day, fanaticism and carousing at night." As at home Spring brings with its opening blossoms "that tired feeling" which is akin to malaria.

The new quarter opens with bright prospects, and looking to Him who giveth power to the faint, and to them who have no might increaseth strength, we press forward into the work, trusting in Him for strength and guidance.  H. R. Langford Worrall,
When this quarter began we were on a tour to the main land, sailing from Bahrein in a small native boat for twelve weary hours with a gentle south wind. Now at its close we are steaming eighteen knots in the Caledonia with four hundred and fifty fellow passengers, of whom a score are missionaries. But aside from a few inconveniences and discomforts I am sure we both enjoyed the sail to Kateef as much as we do our present journey on furlough.

It was over two years since the main land had been visited, and therefore our purpose was to ascertain in how far and what way this door was open for our work. We spent two days at Dareen, a village on the island of Taroot, near Kateef, under the hospitable roof of our old friend, Mohammed Abd El Wahab, and then proceeded to the main town. Kateef has a population of perhaps 10,000 with its surrounding villages, and is in the midst of a fertile strip of coast rich in hot water springs and palm orchards. From here the caravans go to Hassa, and a fortnightly overland post to Busrah. Of course the Turks have erected a custom house, and maintain a small garrison to enforce their rule on the despised natives, who are, strange to say, mostly of the Shiah sect and of Persian origin.

We went from our boat immediately to the house of the custom-master, and were soon lodged comfortably, after the usual disagreeable cross-questioning as to our errand, our passports, and our books. What was our surprise, however, to find one of the Christian books in question, a Turkish New Testament, on the shelf in the very room where we spent the night. It was bought from our Mission some time ago, and was well thumbed. The host had questions ready on the book, some of them puerile enough but still showing that he read and thought. On the following day we sold some Scriptures in the bazaar and to passers-by on the road. Mrs. Zwemer visited the principal women of the city, and was visited by others, to their astonishment; everyone showed us genuine hospitality, and we had the best Kateef afforded, which is nothing to boast of.

The return journey to Bahrein was tedious. Rising and falling on the swell of a smooth sea in the hot sun, without any breeze for several hours; then riding at anchor during the greater part of the night, with the whiff of strong Arab tobacco always in our nostrils, and their allahs and monotonous chanting wearing
our ears; at last, after morning light, a strong breeze sped us homeward, and we reached the mission house on January 7th, a little before noon.

Daniel, the colporteur, was faithful, not only during our absence, but throughout the whole quarter. The record of book sales was large, and the number of Moslems who came to the Bible shop greater than last quarter. Some of the Scripture sales were to Turkish soldiers from Katar and Hassa, and one of them bought several portions to take away with him.

Once and again Daniel and I went together to Sook El Khamis, a village where a large market is kept every Thursday, and preached to the crowds collected from every part of the island. The villages were also visited, and Moharrek where the ruling Sheikh lives.

In January we received Mr. Cantine and P. J. Zwemer at the mission house, and spent some very happy days together in consultation and prayer about our work. It is so seldom that we meet in one place because of the isolation of our stations, that when we do come together it is the more appreciated.

Medical work was not very large during the quarter, for two reasons. First, competition; and second, a stagnation in trade. The former caused by Ibrahim Saeed, who, since leaving our employ, has sought to make his living as a hakeem; and the latter by the Mohammedan fast and the rainy season. At any rate we can safely hang the key on a nail after the door is opened, for future use on other doors. Medical work, such as it was, gave us entrance among the people at the outset and opened their hearts to us in spite of Moslem prejudice. With a fully qualified medical missionary on the spot greater things are possible.

On February 21st we left Bahrein on furlough for America. Passing Muscat and meeting the brethren there, we reached Bombay on the 4th of March, and sailed on the 6th for London. Even on board of this steamer we cannot escape the burden of Arabia. All the coast from Muscat to Aden unoccupied; Makallah which we promised to revisit in 1892, never since visited; Yemen without a missionary in all of its many cities and mountain passes, except the two missionaries at Sheikh Othman; all the Red Sea Coast, Jiddah, and Mecca, and Medina, untouched by missionary effort; and even in this very steamer a hundred Arab firemen! Arabia pleads for our return even as we leave it; God hasten the day through your coöperation and prayers. S. M. Zwemer.