The

Arabian Mission

Field Report

Number Fifteen

July 1 to September 30, 1895
THE ARABIAN MISSION.

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REV. HENRY N. COBB, D.D.,

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25 East 22d St., New York.
The quarter just closed has been rather barren of those things that make mission reports interesting. Heat and fevers and discomfort belong to merchant and missionary alike at Busrah during the summer months, and what is cheerfully put up with for the sake of gain ought not to count as a cross to those who deal in better merchandise. With one or two exceptions, all of our colporteurs and helpers, as well as ourselves, have been unable to put in a full quota of work on account of sickness. Our best colporteur was ill the whole month of July and a large part of August, and this has necessarily decreased the sale of Scriptures for the quarter. On July 12th Doctor Worrall was taken seriously ill and became so weak that a change to Bagdad was imperative; Mr. Zwemer accompanied him. This enforced absence closed our dispensary work for the time, and since the doctor's return it has not yet been re-opened.

On the other hand two new colporteurs were engaged on trial during the quarter, and one of them, 'Isa bin Abd el Messiah is now at work in Busrah with us. We trust that with training he will become as efficient a helper as we lost in Kamil Abd el Messiah, our “first brother in the Gospel.”

One phase of our work is developing very hopefully. The harbor work of which we spoke in our last report has been successfully prosecuted all summer. Markus, an Armenian Christian, now in our employ, visits all the shipping and finds a good demand for Christian books, English and Arabic. As English ships are scarcely Turkish territory, we have not hesitated to sell books on Islam, such as Muir’s and others, so far without any interference. English and Arabic services were held every Sabbath, but one, throughout the quarter.

Our Book-Shop

in the new location is proving the wisdom of the change by increased numbers of visitors and more prominence given to our work. We have made it a sort of public reading-room and now
keep a few Arabic papers and magazines on file. If more of these could be subscribed for it would greatly increase the drawing power of this Gospel-net. Arabic newspapers and weeklies are, however, very expensive, and some of the best are "prohibited."

Two cases of books imported from the American Press, at Beyrout, were promptly seized on arrival, and nineteen of the books, although they bore impress of the Government's permit, were confiscated. Most of them were geographies or atlases, and the reason assigned was the Armenian uprising! It is a cause for devout gratitude that God's Word has free course everywhere, and not a copy of it can be legally seized anywhere in Turkish Arabia. Aside from education, however (and where is there so great a need of it as in dark Arabia?) our experience is that the sale of religious and educational books greatly aids the sale of Bibles. And this "mixed method" is often the only possible way to enter a new village or district. Only a few days ago a learned Moslem, after purchasing an Arabic Euclid and Astronomy, was persuaded to buy a large Bible as well.

TOURING was interfered with, but also occasioned by the sickness of missionaries and colporteurs. On the way to Bagdad and return there were opportunities for witness and also for selling Scriptures. Salome Antoon intended to make the usual semi-annual journey to Kut, and across to Nasarieyeh, and so back along the Euphrates to Busrah, but was stopped by the war between the Ottoman Government and an Arab tribe north of Kurna. Such warfare is so frequent between Arabs and the Dowla, and all news in regard to the cause and issue of their quarrels so exaggerated and unreliable that even here on the spot one gets only a faint idea of what really took place. Only all these troubles undoubtedly end disastrously to the country at large. Ubi solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant.

A tour was also made to Fao and the date-gardens, where large numbers of Arabs are employed packing the fruit for shipment. At Mohammerah our work has been interfered with by the new regulation of the Persian Government regarding passports.

In September, Razouki left for Amara, the large town up the Tigris which we have long contemplated occupying as an out-station. With a population of 9,500, among whom are 600 Catholics and over a thousand Sabaeans, this town is the centre of trade for the whole district of Amara. The total population of the dis-
trict is given by Cuinet (1893) as 150,000. Here certainly is a large enough field for continual Bible-distribution, and being north of Busrah its climate is considerably cooler in the summer season. Razouki left with instructions to obtain a Bible-shop, or at least rent quarters in a Khan and locate. We hope by God's blessing that the coming quarter will see our work firmly established there; although there will probably be opposition at the outset.

YAKOOb YUHANN

and his family are still at Bagdad. During our short stay there both of us met them once and again, but with little satisfaction as regards the possibility of his leaving Bagdad and coming to work at Bahrein or Muscat. It is hard to realize and harder to describe the difficulty of his position. Watched on every side, he visits the C. M. S. missionaries at Bagdad, only stealthily as it were. The whole family is put to continual annoyance, and his poor wife frightened by the threats of her people and the fear of other Moslem neighbors. They could easily get away from Bagdad, but fear they would be stopped at Busrah and turned back, or not allowed to proceed to Muscat. Were Yakoob alone the matter would be easier, but, with his family, difficulties suggest themselves on every side. While we await God's leading and pray for increased faith in them to venture all for the love of Christ, it is encouraging to know that both he and his wife are faithful to their profession and happy in it. When Mr. Zwemer was at Bagdad, they requested the baptism of their youngest child; but it was postponed for various reasons. As the wages of a "reserve-soldier" in the Turkish army are small and uncertain, Yakoob is trying to find better employment. Meanwhile our mission still aids him in a measure. He never receives the money without saying that he considers it a loan to be paid back in mission-service when he obtains his liberty.

OUR DISPENSARY.

Doctor Worrall's illness during the quarter and that of his assistant dispenser make the report a trifle disappointing, but still we have many things for which to be thankful. The dispensary was kept open under difficulties until August 9th, when the doctor was too ill to attend. By Doctor Dobbyn's order he left for Bagdad for change of climate, and, beginning to improve on the journey, he has kept on improving ever since. But, although the dispensary was thus open only two months, 394 cases were attended
to, of which 190 were new patients. We have been forced to use the mission-house as a sort of hospital and have accommodated four patients (Christians), an average of eight days each. When the dispensary was closed we were having from 15 to 25 patients daily. Religious services and reading of the Scripture was carried on by Mr. Zwemer, or one of the assistants every day without opposition except in the case of one fanatic patient who left without taking treatment. This golden opportunity for witness to Moslem and Jew was the main reason why we tried to keep the dispensary open as long as possible, although the doctor desired to give most of his time to the study of Arabic. Both of these plans were interfered with seriously by his illness.

Of the total number of patients (394), 294 were medical, 70 surgical and 30 eye cases. The medical cases included ear and skin diseases, neuralgias, two cases of leprosy and one of exophthalmic goitre. The greater number of surgical cases were indolent ulcers of the lower extremities as well as cuts, bruises, etc. The eye cases were particularly interesting, but of these many were hopeless, because they came for treatment too late.

Of all the patients treated, two-thirds were Moslems, and there was an increase in the attendance of women and children above last quarter.

It was decided to close the dispensary for a short time that the doctor might give all his strength and time to Arabic the coming quarter.

**BOOK SALES, THIRD QUARTER.**

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Busrah.

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**BAHREIN.**

The work at Bahrein has been carried on in the same way as last quarter by Ibrahim. Mr. Zwemer made two short visits to the islands, one in July from the 1st to the 10th of the month, and again in the latter part of September. The latter visit was occasioned by ugly rumors that reached us by letter and by a fugitive from the islands, regarding the fear of an attack by the Bedouin Arabs similar to that made on Muscat. A colporteur sent early in September to assist Ibrahim, was so much frightened that he, too, came back to Busrah. On his arrival Mr. Zwemer immediately left for Bahrein. The whole disturbance is the outcome of the Zobara trouble spoken of in our last report. Arabs to the number of a few thousand, well armed, had collected on the mainland at this place and threatened daily to attack the islands. They were secretly or openly reinforced by the Turks of Kateef and Hassa, and a panic of the fearful and unbelieving naturally followed. Great Britain claims the protection of the islands and a gun-boat was in the harbor early in July to overawe the Arabs of the coasts. Rumor, however, exaggerated the forces of the Arabs; even the Hindoo-traders put their valuables in boats and prepared to leave; and the general fear was that the English would allow the Arabs to do pretty much as they pleased as they did at Muscat last spring.

Circumstances altered, however. Three gunboats were sent to Bahrein; Zobara was visited and fired upon; over two hundred boats of the hostile Arabs were captured; and last, but not least, the Turk was made to understand that Bahrein was under English protection, not merely on paper. It can easily be understood how all this interfered with the pearl-fisheries and the general peaceful trade of the islands. There was also some strong feeling against the English (and Christians in general) because of
their hesitating to attack Zobara. But after the shells were fired and the flashlight had terrified the savages, opinion changed for the better. So much so in fact, that the Kadhi was called to account for remembering the English vice-consul in the Mosque-prayers on Friday! This incident gives an insight into the relation of Independent Moslem Arabia to the Sublime Porte. No prayers are offered for Salisbury at Constantinople.

The Bible-shop was open and sales of Scripture were up to the average of last year, but touring on the islands was rendered unsafe by the general disturbance, and to the mainland impossible. The record of sales at Bahrein, as well as at Busrah accompany this report. It is interesting to note that controversial books, such as Mizan el Hak and the little Egyptian catechism on Islam find free sale in our shop. Ibrahim is very hopeful of the results of our work in the future, and has proved faithful in the midst of many difficulties. He desires to have his wife and children, none of whom are yet professing Christians, come and stay with him. Arrangements are being made to bring this about.

During Mr. Zwemer's short visits he was able to help a few of the many patients that came to the mission-room on his arrival, but, for the rest, this branch of the work has been at a standstill ever since Mr. Cantine's absence from Busrah. It is not possible to give particulars in a general report, but the past six months have proved that no matter how faithful a native helper may be, it is unwise to leave work like that at Bahrein in his sole charge. We must have reinforcements and a missionary must be stationed at Bahrein, or the open door so hardly obtained may again become closed to us. Moreover, as far as advancing into the interior is part of the plan and purpose of the Arabian Mission—as far as that plan has also been urged upon us in God's Providence by the grant of the American Bible Society for the express purpose, so far the supporters of our mission and the missionaries are responsible for its vigorous prosecution.

Arabia can be entered from the East only through Bahrein; and unless we have a missionary there, no native helper will ever venture to go beyond the islands.

S. M. ZWEMER,

H. R. L. WORRALL, M.D.

BUSRAH, Sept. 30, 1895.
For this quarter we are able to report a comparatively large sale of religious and educational books, although Sunday-school sales have been few and the opposition to the Scriptures seems to be increasing. The Bible Shop has been open daily, and steamers carrying Moslem pilgrims visited whenever quarantine regulations permitted. A large number of native sailing craft visit Muscat during the date season. These bugalows were also regularly visited and supplied with the Scriptures by sale or by gift. During the quarter our colporteur was Merâd, an Armenian Christian who deserves praise for his faithfulness in spite of the severe heat.

The tour to Sur and along the coast south, which in February last was prevented by the outbreak at Muscat, we were able to make during this quarter. Hiring the very convenient and comfortable native sailing craft called a “bedden,” we left Muscat on August 26th, planning to sail along the coast, stopping at the towns and villages that lie sheltered under the rocky mountain range that forms the coast line. Letters of introduction from H. H., the Sultan of Muscat, to the Walis of the several places had been obtained, assuring us of the protection and hospitality of these Sheikhs.

After being becalmed for a day under a tropical sun, we arrived at the first large village south of Muscat, Kuryat. Here the mountainous coast line gives place to a wide, fertile plain, where dates and mangoes grow in rich profusion, and cattle are grazing in the long grass. A large old banyan tree is pointed out to us whose trunk measured nearly fifty feet in circumference. Abundant wells, from which bullocks draw water by means of a long rope and creaking pulley, irrigate the plain, and make it an oasis in the midst of barren mountains. Kuryat has perhaps 2,000 inhabitants, all loyal subjects of the Sultan of Muscat, and difficult mountain passes render attacks by the Bedouins rare. The Wali received us with much hospitality. We lodge at his fort, are given a guard to conduct us about the village, and on leaving a musket salute bids us farewell. We find our boat is liberally supplied with presents of fowl, eggs, dates and the fruits of the season. Kuryat has very few people who are able to read. Even the Wali sends for his hired secretary to read the New Testament I gave him. It would not be impossible, to live here for some length of time during the cold season, and medical work especially would be practicable.

A short distance south from Kuryat we find and explore the
ruins of a well known ancient Persian city. The village on the site is called Kalhat. Here was once the centre of a large Persian colony and the Emporium for South-eastern Arabia. The best preserved ruin is that of a tomb, evidently built in the time of the Moguls.

An all-night tack against head-winds brings us to Teewe, a double village nestled on both sides of a Wadi, through which runs a stream large enough to admit the small coast craft. The two villages are inhabited by two different and hostile tribes. They are not more than two hundred yards apart, yet each is protected against the other by a complete wall, gates and forts. Another illustration of the truth of the prediction, "His hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him." We remain here a day on our way down, freely reading and explaining the Scriptures in their primitive bazaar and coffee shops.

Another night of sailing, and we arrive at Sur, an import town second only to Muscat in importance. Sur proper is a large, scattered village, a short distance up the Wadi, protected by a large fort and numerous watch towers. Sehal, lying on the bleak table-land surrounding a small bay, is its port. The people are largely illiterate, and their trades and professions being largely questionable, they are suspicious of Europeans. It is at Sur that the owners of the date plantations procure their slaves. A large number of negroes are still imported "sub rosa" from Africa. Although slave importation as a trade is no longer carried on, yet the method of supplying the Arab with free negro labor is very simple. Africa is the supply, and transportation is easily effected under the tricolor, which defies British inspection. Sur is the terminus of several routes to the interior, and therefore often the scene of a Bedouin raid.

We continued our tour to Ras el Hadd, beyond which the monsoon rendered travel in small boats impossible. Ras el Hadd is the Sandy Hook of Oman. A long arm of sand, cast up by the monsoon surf; a lonely fishers's village, and a strong fortification, held by a garrison of the Sultan. The people were interested in a European visitor, and we gave away several portions of Scripture.

Returning, we called again at each village, seeking out those who even with difficulty could spell out a chapter of one of the Gospels, and speaking of Isa el Nebi—Jesus the Prophet—whom they believe to be a prophet, but will not receive as their Saviour and King.

Yours for Arabia,

Muscat, Oct. 9, 1895.

P. J. Zwemer.