The Arabian Mission

Quarterly Letters from the Field

Number Thirty • • •
April to June, 1899

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THE ARABIAN MISSION.

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NOTES.

A cablegram was received on the 29th of June, announcing the death of Rev. George E. Stone. We waited sadly through the weeks that followed for the particulars, which are given in the letter of Rev. Mr. Cantine, from Muscat, in this number.

The death of our dear brother after but a few months of devoted service, gives emphasis to the extract which we present from his letter of February 17, taken from the Auburn Seminary Review. He little thought when he wrote that the conquest of Islam would "cost lives," that his own life would be the next one laid down in the conflict. We commend the extract to the attention of all who look for the redemption of Arabia.

MUSCAT.

When I say that the last few days have been very sad ones, most of my readers will know that I refer to the death of Mr. Stone. So sudden and unexpected was it that it is hard to realize that he may not drop in upon me at any hour with his cheerful greeting. He came to Muscat in February on account of Mr. Barny's serious illness here, and these four months at our most trying station and under unusual cares and responsibilities must have undermined his health more than others, or he himself recognized. On my arrival in June I found him seemingly well, except for the lassitude which generally overtakes one in the summer. He had had no fever for a long time, and his only complaint was of the prickly heat and a series of boils, from which he suffered much. Everybody advised a change, and at the first opportunity he and his Arabic teacher went by night to a small village up the coast,
where amid the date gardens the air was said to be much better than at Muscat, though probably there was little difference in temperature. He would have taken a run somewhere by the mail steamer except returning he would meet with ten days' quarantine, which now is quite unendurable. After his arrival at his destination he wrote cheerily, saying that he was quite comfortable, and in some respects feeling better. Three or four days later he had an attack of fever and in a few hours was dead, the doctor here thinking that the end must have been hastened or due to heat apoplexy. What would have been done for him by one with more experience, who can say, but his teacher cared for him to the best of his knowledge, and afterwards brought his body back to Muscat for burial. His grave is near that of Bishop French, who was the first, as our brother is the last, to lay down his life for the cause of missions in this part of Arabia. Muscat, the youngest of our Mission stations, has thus a solemn yet glorious record of those who, leaving house and parents and brethren and wife and children for the kingdom of God's sake, have from here entered into life everlasting. May He who wastes not the smallest of his creation allow even us to see a glorious harvest from these precious lives, which, though they fall into the ground and die, yet abide not alone.

STATION WORK.

Of the work of the station I can say but very little this time, as I have been here yet but a few weeks. There is an annual summer exodus from Muscat which leaves the business part of the town nearly empty; and so our shop-keeper suggested that he go on a long tour up the coast to towns which have been visited with Scriptures only once.

There is a rumor of disturbance among the Arab tribes inland, and we have been cautioned against directing our steps towards the mountains just at present. We, however, have had several calls from Arab Sheikhs, and one, visited by Mr. Barny last year, has sent down to him a large basket of mangoes, with an invitation to come again.

THE FREED SLAVE SCHOOL,

which had caused my immediate predecessors much care and worry, seems now to have settled down into its usual placid
condition. Perhaps the boys remember my association with their old Sahib, whose memory they revere—at any rate they have given me much less trouble than I anticipated. Two of the largest boys have been found work at the English Consulate, and from all that I hear are proving satisfactory. Three others of the age of fifteen or sixteen have also asked to be allowed to graduate from the school room into active life, and I now am looking for suitable persons to whom they may be bound until they are eighteen. The boys have been in our school now for over three years, and many have gained as much book learning as they are capable of using to advantage, while their growing bodies and tough muscles need more exercise and manual labor than we in our little house and garden can give them. As the boys thus gradually leave us it may be possible to supply their places with others who are younger, for it is a sad fact that the slave trade in this part of Arabia shows no signs of decreasing. As to their health, they are as well as can be, with the exception of one poor fellow who a few nights ago rolled off from the roof while sleeping. He suffered some injury to his head, and is still in the Government Hospital. It is a great comfort to have thus at hand competent medical assistance to supplement our little stock of oil and ointment.

THE MONSOON

winds and currents will soon reach Muscat, and then for a few weeks this will be the coolest of our three stations, so there will be some compensation for what we have endured for two months past. As I have never before lived in Muscat after June, I will have a bit of uncertainty upon which to build my hopes of the approach of cold weather. There are two ladies here now, and with our three foreign consuls and always a gunboat or two, our society, though limited, is quite select. The thirtieth of June, the fourth and fourteenth of July have been appropriately celebrated,—only if there are any more foreign representatives to arrive, we hope for those whose anniversaries come in the cooler months.

JAMES CANTINE.
"You ask what I think of it now that I am on the spot. First: that the need has not been exaggerated, and that Mohammedanism is as bad as it is painted. Second: that we have a splendid fighting chance here in Arabia, and the land is open enough so that we can enter if we will. If a man never got beyond the Bahrém Islands he would have a parish of fifty thousand souls. Third: that on account of the ignorance of the people they must be taught by word of mouth, and, therefore, if we are to reach them all, we must have many helpers. Fourth: that I am glad I came to Arabia, and that to me has been given a part in this struggle. I do firmly believe that the strength of Islam has been overestimated, and that if ever the church can be induced to throw her full weight against it, it will be found an easier conquest than we imagine—not but what it will cost lives, it has always been so, but I do believe that Islam is doomed.

"One day the colporteur and I started early and walked to twelve villages and sold ten portions of Scripture, which was a good day's work, considering how few can read. We found no fanaticism and received as good treatment as the average book agent in America. More are indifferent and manifest a good-natured contempt of such weak-minded white people, who are so ignorant as not to believe in the Koran. When we go into the market places we only take a few Gospels in our hands and packets and then go all through the crowd. Sometimes we have sold a good many and at other times only one or two. It gives a good chance, however to talk with them and argue points at issue and to read the Gospel to those who cannot read for themselves."

**BAHREIN.**

Among the many mercies of the past three months we count the weather. Generally speaking, as soon as April is gone the missionaries in the Persian Gulf have to adopt for their motto the words in Isaiah xxiv:15, "Glorify ye the Lord in the fires"; but at Bahrein we have had such delightful sea-breezes up to the very close of this quarter that the heat has
not been a burden and we have all enjoyed health. July, August and September will doubtless be trying, but we are not worn out to waness and weakness at the start.

_Some Visitors._ Engrossed as every one is in the rush of the pearl season, the number of those who came to talk about the kingdom was not as large as we had last quarter; moreover, the few inquirers have become shy, and although we can see them in their bazaar or in their homes, they fear to come to the mission house. Among the number who came to talk on things spiritual was the Kadhi of a Turkish regiment on the opposite coast—a sort of army chaplain. He was well-informed regarding the Moslem controversy and we rehearsed the old arguments. "Sweet First Fruits" he had read, but he said the story was improbable and the argument not valid. I loaned him a book written in Egypt, a reply to the infamous Mohammedan attack on Christianity, published in India, which he said was unanswerable. The Bible he seemed to prize and I was surprised at his familiarity with its contents and character. One of our friends here, a Moslem of the straitest sect, has shown us exceeding kindness and comes to the house almost daily. He is a well-read man and very unprejudiced, but always asks, as a special favor, that the subject of religion be left alone. Last Christmas I gave him a fine Arabic Bible and occasionally he will look at a tract or leaflet. We want you to pray for him. He is known in Bahrein as an honest man, a wealthy merchant and a great peace-maker. Continually he is called in to settle quarrels and disputes. His father died some years ago in Hofhoof, the most learned Moslem of his day and a popular poet. One day a man came to the Bible Shop asking for a commentary on the New Testament. He bought other books also and said he first began to read the Bible four years ago at Busrah!

_New Bait to Catch Fish._ Although our dispensary is an attraction to the sick and the poor and we have no trouble to reach the women because of Mrs. Zwemer's attractive powers, yet we have long felt the need of some kind of bait for the men who were strong and well, not needing a physician. During the past months we have, for the first time, tried the magic-lantern. It is too soon to pronounce a verdict on its success. The machine is a splendid one and so are the views;
we tried it four times; twice in Moslem houses and twice in our own. The audiences were appreciative of the novelty, although some apparently thought there was something "uncanny" and satanic about it. Views of the cathedrals and churches give a good text on the subject of Christian worship, and Queen Victoria's portrait is a good one on the subject, "The position of women in Christian lands."

From Village to Village. During April and May our colporter, accompanied by Dr. Worrall or myself, visited Bideeya, Rifa', Yan, Asker, Zillay, Moharreh, Had, Sitrah and other villages on the islands with varying success. Sometimes we toiled all day and came back without selling a single gospel; and again we found good audiences to hear the Word and willing purchasers. On the island of Moharreh we have few friends and many enemies; the boys of the street delight to throw dust and dirt on our book-stand and to climb on some roof and deluge us with dirty water. At Had they first purchased the books and then, offended at something in their contents, tried to drive out our colporteur with stones. Bearing these facts in mind we are thankful to record a total sale of 123 Scriptures for three months.

Our New Bible Shop. After long deliberation and much difficulty in obtaining premises we left our old Bible Shop and entered a new location on May 10th. The place is not so near the bazaar and will therefore be less conspicuous; but it is larger, cleaner, cooler, and we trust those who come will be purchasers and readers rather than loiterers and wayfarers. Our stock of books is much as usual, but we have added a large assortment of the new controversial literature so admirably and cheaply published by the American Mission in Cairo. Strange to say that although these books are very outspoken and often call a spade a spade in dealing with Mohammed and his Koran, we find willing readers for the literature of this type. There must be a dissatisfaction with their own system or else they would never permit its defects to be laid bare to them without much opposition. The one great need is prayer that Moslems may have moral courage enough to live up to the light that they have; they confess that they are in the wrong, but still follow it.
On the other hand there are Moslems who are consistent and therefore as fanatical as their book. They scowl at us in the streets with faces worthy of the Koran. Once in a while there are threats more or less definite to kill us; but in nearly every case the would-be murderer shows a friendly spirit afterwards. A petition was prepared and addressed to the British Consul at Bushire, asking for my expulsion from the island on the ground of my preaching too much in public against Mohammed. Some of the merchants refused to sign the document, another one told me of it, and up to date we have heard nothing of the matter. On the night of June 15th, some one took the trouble to hack away a portion of the wooden-signboard over our Bible Shop which simply announced the fact that "Scientific, Religious and Educational Books" were on sale. And the same night a bullet was fired into the room occupied at the time by our colporteur Gilbrail—an elderly man, very quiet and inoffensive in his manner and the last man in the world to arouse any one's anger. We are ignorant of the direct cause or the culprit. It may be only a coincidence; and stray shots are often fired at night by the Arabs of Bahrein. The character of the bullet showed it was a match-lock and consequently belonged to a man who could not afford a modern rifle.

"Where two or three are gathered together," This is our promise at our services every Sabbath and it has been fulfilled. On April 9th we remembered the Lord's death and on May 7th Nellie Elizabeth Zwemer was baptized at the Arabic service by her father. Occasionally we have a visitor, but generally only the colporteurs and ourselves. On May 23d there came to us unexpectedly, the family of the soldier convert, concerning whom Mr. Cantine wrote some months ago. He is still a prisoner for the sake of the gospel and has been banished from Bagdad. His wife and three little children were threatened by the Turkish government. To escape the children being forced into a Moslem school and her own forcible marriage to a Moslem the faithful mother agreed to flee and came here. She is very happy to be among Christians, although away from all her former surroundings and Bagdad civilization. Our little house is crowded to its utmost capacity and there is no other place for them, at once safe and good. The mother is desirous
for baptism, and although still ignorant of many doctrines seems to have a living faith in Christ and great boldness to confess Him before men. The oldest child is a girl of eight and she is learning hymns and Bible portions very rapidly.

It is a great responsibility to train them in the nurture of Christ but also a great privilege. For a long time we have had no news from the father of this family. There was a rumor that he died a martyr on the way to Malatia, but we hope it is unfounded. This is the man who first heard the gospel at Amara when that station was just opened and who received instruction at Busrah.

S. M. Zwemer.

The work in Bahrein has been quietly kept up. Dispensary being closed on Sundays. Each day has Mr. Zwemer or a colporteur read and expounded a portion of the Word. Sometimes it happened that there were only Persians present. Perhaps only one or two Arabs among eighteen or twenty patients.

I have made four tours during the quarter, to Bedier, Rifa, Sitra, and Kateef. After seeing the patients in the dispensary we started for Bedier at 8 A.M., arriving in three hours. Here we saw some forty patients. Leaving at 2 P.M., we arrived in Mission House at 5. This was a long donkey ride and through the hot sun. The point of interest in this trip was the fact that we were entertained for a short time by the teacher of a school in the school room and then were shown to a mejlis (reception place) where I saw the patients.

April 27th, starting as before, after seeing the dispensary patients we took the long road to Rifa. On the way we passed many prominent Arabs going to Manama. These we found on our arrival were from Rifa, having left to be present at the wedding of Sheikh Esa's son. We saw several poor patients, and after partaking of the bounty of the people, we returned. We learned that day that the guests of a wedding sometimes arrive several days before its consummation. This wedding took place two days after our trip.

May 24th, Mr. Zwemer, myself and colporteur took a boat to the island of Sitra. We arrived about 10 A.M., and immediately sent a donkey to the boat for our medicines. After its arrival we went to a village some two miles distant and entered
the house of the Sheikh. The place being exceedingly warm we were invited to a mosque in the garden said to be much cooler. Here we found the breeze and a warm welcome. Tea, coffee and melons were offered and accepted. Mr. Zwemer began to tell the good news, while I prepared my medicines and the colporteur offered his books to those who would buy. The Sheikhs are supposed to be very fanatic and allow no one in their mosques. Here (in Sitra) a Christian minister was telling of Christ to the Sheikh, a Christian doctor treating the sick, a colporteur selling his books and six Moslem praying, all at one and the same time. We look upon this as a very wonderful experience.

On May 31st, Colporteur Elias Bakoos and myself started on our trip to Katif. Starting about eight, we sailed till about three a.m., when dropping anchor, we waited for daylight, for all about were dangerous shoals. After tediously drifting for several hours a breeze sprang up and at two p.m. we arrived at Katif. From the shore extends a long pier of clay and stones about 1,800 feet. Traversing this we reach the custom-house where, after a short and pleasant conversation, we left for the Mayor, or, as he is called, Kaimakam. We found him a pleasant man to meet, and exchanging the compliments of the day, I showed him my diploma (Turkish) and was given permission to practice. This, however, did not furnish us with a house or food for the evening meal. We called on one, a haggi, but he was in bed and would not arise till five p.m. or later. We next called upon the only Banian in the place who was supposed to have a kahn (hotel) but the accommodations consisted of a square room, no windows and filled with goods. We were offered a place on the roof for sleeping purposes but considered that the possessor would be slightly crowded and discommoded, as in a space of 20x30 fifteen people were supposed to sleep. Returning to the custom-house we met a person who offered us a native hut at R8 for one month. This we were forced to accept, and for a day or two. After becoming acquainted with the tax collector we found he knew of our work in Busrah, Dr. Riggs, a former physician, having treated in his family. He had a tent put up for our convenience and loaned us tables, chairs and various useful articles of daily necessity. Our native hut formed our dispensary and the tent the dormitory. While treating the patients
the colporteur, Elias Bacchus, sought to dispose of a few copies of the Word, which he was successful in doing. Before the erection of the tent we slept under heaven's canopy, but found dew the heavy and began to have touches of fever, aches and pains. This, however, improved upon sleeping under cover. The native huts are extremely hot. The first day of treatment one of the patients desired a tooth drawn. Putting on the forceps, a slight twist and a pull, and out it came. "What out," was the exclamation. "Look at the tooth." "Wonderful, wonderful, no pain, no blood," and away he went. The native tooth pulling is performed as follows: Wedges are put between the offending tooth and its neighbors. While these are doing their work the gums are cut, and after varying periods, usually about five minutes, a pair of forceps (I saw a pair of wire forceps) said to be blacksmith's, grasp the tooth and with gentle (?) taps of a hammer or by preference a stone if more convenient it is loosened from its bed and then with a strong and steady pull the tooth sometimes comes out whole. More often, according to my observation, it breaks off just at or above the gum's edge. That first tooth pulled gave us one or more nearly every day of our stay. We treated in all nearly 400 patients.

Katif is a Turkish possession and practically closed, open only to a physician with a Turkish diploma. Regarding its climate and hygienic surroundings, it is low lying and surrounded by hills. Date trees cover the country. The accumulations of filth of centuries are still found and seen. Uncleanly habits, closely comparable to those observed in Havana and Cuba, are found. Strong winds and winter rains and lack of baths, all these form a strong combination to cause pestilence and sickness of every sort. While digestive troubles may be caused by rice and melons, as one patient complaining of pain replied to the question how much do you eat? said: "two cups of rice and thirteen pounds of melon twice a day." We suggested half a cup and was told "that was not enough for a child five years old."

On June 15th we boarded our sailing vessel and early next morning, after a stormy passage of seven hours, we entered the mission house in Manama (Bahrein) thankful to return to a Christian bath and table.

H. R. L. Worrall, M.D.
The quarter has been uneventful, but I will tell you what we have been doing, hoping when my knowledge of the language and the season permits that I may take, with a medicine chest, a trip that will furnish experience profitable to the work and of which I can write.

Our time has been mostly taken up by language study. The language we find difficult, and we are often disappointed to find that the natives do not understand some of the words we have learned from our books. Then we have to learn other words which are, perhaps, corrupt forms of Arabic or Persian, and not to be found in the dictionary.

A short time ago a young woman told us that she wished to become a Christian. She seemed sincere, but we have not seen her since. We asked a native Christian, who knew her, about her, who said she was in earnest, but had some property she wanted to put in shape, so it could not be taken from her, before making a confession. She did not wish any one to visit her in her home, as other Moslems living in the same house might suspect her designs and thwart her purpose, leaving her penniless, to be supported by the Mission. We are praying for her, that her courage may not fail, and are anxious to see more of her and tell her of His willingness to strengthen and uphold.

A patient came to me in the later stages of consumption, offering to sell himself and father for money with which to pay me if I would cure him. I told him I would do what I could, for Christ's sake, without price. The same morning another patient who had been sick a long time told me his family were in need of food. I took some money from my pocket and gave it to him in the name of Christ.

Our dispenser is very good to speak words of cheer, comfort and promise from His word, and although the work has been done in a quiet manner, we pray that some seed may have fallen in good ground and will bring forth fruit in His season.

The hot weather began earlier than usual, and we have had several days in which the thermometer registered 111 degrees Fahrenheit in the shade. On some of these days the wind has been very hot and on others there has been scarcely
any breeze. Although these days have been very enervating, the nights thus far, with a few exceptions, have been cool enough to enable us to sleep fairly well on the roof. The various insects, such as mosquitoes, sandflies, etc., make it necessary to have a fine mosquito net over the bed, which keeps out the air, making it warmer than it would otherwise be.

The health of the missionaries and colporteurs at this station has been very good so far, and I trust I will be able to say as much in the next quarter's report, after the continued hot weather of July, August and September.

We had a plague scare here a few weeks ago, the Bubonic plague having broken out in Bushire, Persia (on the Gulf, less than half way from here to Bahrein). The report was more than the reality, although there were three deaths from the disease. Quarantine was made even more rigid than before, and our one hope was that the restriction that had so often harassed us and menaced our liberty would now be our staunchest friend. That scare has passed, but it led us to imagine very vividly the state of affairs should the dread disease gain foothold here, where there are practically no hospitals, no sewers, or sanitary precautions, and where the officials are greedy for gain. The natives, living as they do, hundreds practically in one enclosure, although in separate mat huts, segregation would have been practically impossible, especially when left in the hands of the Turkish soldiers, who are unpaid and not above petty bribery.

Sharon J. Thoms, M. D.

The beginning of April found us in the Convalescent Home in Khandalla, India, seeking to repair the ravages that enteric and Muscat fever had made in our health. The Home, an adjunct to St. George's Hospital of Bombay, is beautifully situated on one of the highest parts of the Ghaut range of mountains overlooking the Bombay Sea and is excellent in all its appointments. The good care we received and the cool breezes fresh from the Indian Ocean with God's blessing enabled us to start for Busrah at the end of the month, both in excellent health, ready and eager for the work assigned.

The journey from Bombay proved somewhat tiresome with its many stops while yet we were unable to go ashore
anywhere owing to quarantine regulations which were enforced very rigidly everywhere. We were, however, glad of the opportunity of seeing the brethren at Muscat and Bahrein, if it was but for a little while, to learn that all were in good health and spirits and to hear of the progress and prospects of the work. Hitherto we had been fortunate enough to escape quarantine in the Gulf, but this time we were compelled to take the full dose, ten days, and all of them on shore. It was not so bad as it might have been, as we reaped the benefits of complaints made to Constantinople, about the wretched condition of the accommodations, made by some sufferers before us. As a result of which a new house was built solely for the use of the sahibs. Quarantine is so common now that it might seem as though we could omit the mention of it. The experience is, however, impressed on us each time so vividly that we cannot forget it. We had to contend with the heat and a little insect called *Pulex irritans*, "a small insect of a dark brown color, surprisingly nimble and very troublesome by its bite," which irritated us day and night, giving us no rest, so that we were glad indeed when we were allowed to go our way and enjoy the comforts of the mission house.

Busrah has not changed much in the past year, the chief thing seems to be the change of residence of the Mission. When last year we were casting around for a suitable house the then "old khan" did not make a very favorable impression on us. However, the plentiful use of white-wash, together with sundry improvements, has greatly improved its appearance, and as we are making progress in furnishing it, we are getting a comfortable home. The time is approaching for renewing the house contract and we are making this an opportunity for pressing other improvements, that have long been promised, out of the landlord. He has broken his promises so often that we have decided not to pay the rent till he has fulfilled them. This will be more effective than all our reasonings.

Soon after our arrival Mr. Cantine left for Muscat and for the current month the care of the station has devolved upon the writer. Fortunately the station had not been without a missionary in charge. I was able to take it over in person and as everything is in working order and well arranged I trust that it will not be long ere we find ourselves at ease in attending to the various interests of the work.
We are at present a very scholarly (?) community, as all of us, missionaries and assistant missionaries, are busy with the language, and at almost any time of the day, if you could drop in on us, you would find one or all of us struggling with the subtleties of Arab thought and expression. The first part of the season, as far as weather was concerned, was very favorable and the time seems to have been well used. The high temperatures have begun early and interfere with the plans of missionaries and colporteurs. The monthly accounts of Scripture sales are not all in yet, so that I cannot give definite figures, but I believe they will make a fair total. The colporteurs from the out stations as those at work here all report increasing interest, having many callers at the shops with many opportunities of interesting conversation about the Gospel. I will quote from a letter of one of them an interesting incident which will show at once the stamp of men we are fortunate in having as helpers and difficulties in the way of inquirers. It is from Murad of Amara; the garden mentioned is a grove of date-trees outside of the town and was pointed out to me on a visit over a year ago and it is a pleasure to know that the place thus already hallowed by many earnest prayers for souls has by no means been neglected. "I spoke with the sayid one day and found in him a desire for religion. After speaking to him I prayed and when he saw this he said, 'This is the religion of Christ.' He hoped I would come to the garden every day to read and pray. Each day after closing the shop I went and found the sayid had gathered the fellow-laborers in the garden and I read and prayed with them and after prayer they all said 'Amen, Amen.' . . . One day while under a tree in the garden, praying, two soldiers saw him. Said they, 'Why is your face not Kiblaward when you pray? ' He said, 'God is everywhere and hears us whithersoever we turn.' Then they said, 'You are a Christian kaffir!' and began to beat him severely. He came to the shop afterward and I saw his condition, his beard was torn and his head and body covered with bruises and I sought to comfort him. . . . I hope you will pray for him and us." Reader, will you join us in heeding this request that liberty, political as well as that which makes us free indeed in Christ, may become the portion of Ishmael's seed?

Fred J. Barny.