The

Arabian Mission

Quarterly Letters from the Field

Number Twenty-Nine —
January to March, 1899

I. Rev. George E. Stone.—Rev. Mr. Barny’s Health.—School for Rescued Slave Boys.—Book Sales.

II. Dr. and Mrs. Sharon J. Thoms.—Voyage and Arrival. Language Study.—Annual Mission Meeting.—Visitors.


IV. Rev. S. M. Zwemer.—Bible and Dispensary Work.—Mrs. Zwemer’s Diary.

V. Dr. H. R. L. Worrall.—Health of Missionaries.—Medical Work.
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.
Muscat station has been unfortunate this quarter. In the first place Mr. Barny was taken sick with typhoid fever about January 1st, which prostrated him for more than a month. The house was torn up for repairs, making it necessary for them to live in one small room. We have great cause for thanksgiving that with so many things to prevent, his life has been spared and that his recovery has been so rapid. February 25th, Mr. and Mrs. Barny sailed for India and our last news is that they expect to be back at their work in Busrah, in May. Under the circumstances too, it seems unfortunate that none of the more experienced missionaries were at liberty to take Mr. Barny’s place, but that I had to fill the gap as best I could, after four months study of the Arabic. It serves to illustrate how small our force is in spite of the reinforcements of the past year.

February 14th, Mr. Zwemer, returning from Busrah, gave me three hours’ notice that I must go to Muscat. February 18th, I arrived at Muscat and found the little harbor filled with British war ships which the day before had blocked the plans of the French to secure a coaling station in Oman. I found Mr. and Mrs. Barny convalescent, and one week later they sailed for India as before stated.

This report, therefore, covers but six weeks, but very busy ones I have found them. There are some results apparent. The repairs begun by Mr. Barny have been finished. The work has been well done and at reasonable expense. We now have two good rooms upstairs which with the verandah make very comfortable quarters. The school-room downstairs has also been repaired and
new black-board prepared. New reading and copy books have been bought and now both teacher and boys can work to better advantage. My Arabic teacher from Bahrein has been added to the force at this station, making an extra helper for emergencies and one who can teach the boys Arabic if so desired. We have attempted no tours into the interior as this is not the best season for that work. The Bible shop department has been continued and report of sales is enclosed. The frequent visits of Arabs to the house which has been one of the characteristic features of the work here, has continued though my limited knowledge of the Arabic has prevented me from telling them the whole truth.

The rescued slave school has required my constant attention. The older boys are about fifteen years of age, just old enough to be easily led astray. Whether the Christian influences of the last three years are to triumph must soon be determined. The daily Bible study and family prayers and the Sunday services have been continued and they have shown much interest in them all. The discipline and general behavior of the boys has left much to be desired, but there has been a noticeable improvement of late which I hope will prove to be permanent. In school they are attacking the 4th Reader and Long Division. In geography and grammar, they have had little instruction. They read the New Testament quite readily. They do nearly all the work about the house, cooking their rice and fish, drawing water for the date trees and sweeping house, yard and surrounding streets.

The placing of the older boys in positions where they can live usefully and independently is the problem before us now and one which will require wisdom to settle satisfactorily. More than ever we need the prayers of God's people for this school. God has richly blessed us through this troublous quarter and our trust is in Him for the future.

Mr. Cantine has been assigned to this station and will take charge in May.

Geo. E. Stone.

BOOK SALES.

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BUSRAH.

Although it seemed a long three months from the morning of October eighth, when Dr. Cobb bade us farewell on board the Menominee, until the evening of January seventh, when we reached Busrah, it does not seem possible that three months here are so nearly over, and that it is time for our first quarterly report.

Our journey was instructive, and pleasant too, notwithstanding a stormy Atlantic voyage, and storms in the Mediterranean and Red Seas and Persian Gulf. Hearing, as we have, of so many disasters on the sea, makes us grateful to the kind Father who brought us here in safety. Our trip across the Atlantic and across Europe was made doubly pleasant and instructive by our traveling with Dr. and Mrs. Barnum of the American Mission, Constantinople. Although unable to prevail upon the Turkish authorities at Constantinople, by any reasonable means, to give us a medical examination, we feel that our stay of three weeks was not
without present, and we hope future, good to us and our work. We saw much of the mission work there, as well as having glimpses of the work in London, Smyrna, Cairo and Karachi. With the exception of Cairo, of the last three named places, the work is done for others than Moslems, though surrounded by Mohammedan influences. Not until we reached Bahrein did we see the whole work of the mission planned and carried out for Mohammedans.

The year began with the most dismal day of our whole voyage. However, the next morning the skies were clear and the sea calm. We reached Bahrein Harbor and, in spite of quarantine regulations to prevent the landing of passengers from Bombay steamers, we soon made arrangements to go ashore. We went as far as the water was deep enough in a sailboat, and then the boatmen called for donkeys. With much amusement we seated ourselves upon these and rode through the shallow water to the shore and into the courtyard of the mission house before Mr. and Mrs. Zwemer were aware that we were within hundreds of miles of them. We spent two nights with them, and were refreshed and encouraged to go on to our destination. The work there was of especial interest to us because, having no certificates allowing us to practice here, we knew that in all probability Bahrein would be our permanent location.

After reaching Busrah, we still had ten days to spend in the harbor in quarantine. We remained on the steamer the six days it was in harbor, as the quarantine station is very poor. Mr. Cantine and Dr. Worrall sent us some furniture and saw that the place was made as comfortable as possible for us. They also sent us a cook and food from the mission house. With plenty of good reading, the time was not as long as we had anticipated. We came ashore in quite a heavy rain on the seventeenth and, as a refuge from storm, the mission house possibly seemed more attractive than it otherwise would have done. At least, afternoon tea by a grate fire cheered us and, glad that our long wanderings were over, we began at once to unpack our trunks and feel at home.

A day or two later, we had our first Arabic lesson and have taken two a day ever since. We find the language hard and are not making rapid progress, but we believe it can be mastered in time. While we remain in Busrah our time will be devoted chiefly to study. We know we need to have a fair knowledge of it before beginning active medical work, as after that study will be apt to
be neglected to some extent. We were glad indeed to reach here in time for the annual meeting. As newcomers, it was most interesting and helpful to hear the work of the past and present discussed, and work for the future planned. It gave us an insight into the working of the mission that it otherwise would have taken us a long time to gain. It was the decision of the meeting that we stay here until October and then go to Bahrein to begin our medical work.

Soon after reaching here we entertained at the mission the whole C. M. S. mission of Bagdad, consisting of Miss Phillips, Miss Martin and Dr. Sturrochs. Miss Phillips was being sent home invalided, and Miss Martin was accompanying her to Bombay. The doctor came to see them safely on their boat, which left several days later. He was taken sick and required an operation in which the three doctors participated. He remained with us three weeks and, though we regretted his suffering and his enforced absence from his work, we were glad of the opportunity of knowing him. Three weeks ago Miss Martin returned from Bombay, and we had the privilege of helping her through quarantine and of entertaining her until the Bagdad boat left. The mission meeting and these visits have been all that have varied the everyday life of the mission family.

Thus far we have been very well. Of course, the weather has not yet been hot, but by following the advice of those who have spent the hot season here and taking the best possible care of ourselves, we hope to avoid serious discomfort or illness. We are a little sorry to think we can only plan to stay here such a little time, but believe that it must be for the best, in some way, that we did not obtain the Turkish diplomas.

During Dr. Worrall's absence we have treated his old patients and a few new ones. Not being able to talk to them makes it rather unsatisfactory from a missionary standpoint to treat them.

Realizing the need of these people as one never can realize it until he lives among them, we are longing for the time when, besides giving them medicine for physical needs, we can give them something better for their spiritual need by telling them of the Great Physician and his love for even this dark, Mohammedan land.

Dr. and Mrs. S. J. Thoms.
THE ANNUAL MISSION MEETING.

The most important event of the past quarter was our mission meeting in January. We had hoped and planned to have all our missionaries present, but sickness and quarantine interposed and it was only a bare majority of our number that finally met late in the month. Bahrein was represented only by Mr. Zwemer, and Muscat not at all. Our growing interests give us more objects to consider, and our increasing number, both of missionaries and of native helpers, necessitates a more personal and definite understanding on various matters, so that the six days we were able to be together seemed all too few for our needs. Mornings given to meetings with the native brethren, afternoons to business, and devotional services in the evenings made a busy, pleasant, and we trust a profitable week for us all. The hardest nut we had to crack was the formulating of a code of rules for our colporteurs, but even this gave way before a careful study of conditions, and mutual concessions. The increased number of our Missionaries enabled us to do what has been impossible for a few years back—plan for the thorough working of all our stations. And when another annual meeting comes around we expect to have even more cause for thankfulness than was graciously given us at the present.

NEW HELPERS.

We were glad to receive at about the New Year important additions to our staff of native helpers. We had long felt the need of having thoroughly equipped language teachers for our new missionaries, and when at last we obtained from the American Board Mission at Mardin two young men highly recommended by the brethren there, we considered ourselves very fortunate. They are proving invaluable, and our late arrivals on the field are having the best of instruction at the time most needed. We were also hoping to get another man, who had had some experience with Armenian orphans, for our boy's school at Muscat, but government interference has up to the present prevented his departure. The Mission at Mardin has been very good in allowing some of their most promising men to come to us, and as this is practically the only source from which we can get trained helpers, we are very sorry, on our account as well as theirs, to hear that their school work has been sadly hampered through the necessity for retrenchment.
THE BIBLE SHOP.

We have lately spent a little money and considerable time in improving the looks of our Bible shop. Fresh paint for the bookcases, and the old broken walls covered with cheap calico have made a very attractive place of it. Our scripture sales there have never been very large, but it has known a great many earnest conversations about things spiritual. Lately a Mohammedan doctor, a Russian, has been a constant visitor. I have also seen him at our house and have given him books which may enable him to more clearly see the divergence between Islam and Christianity.

AN EXILE.

The enquirer of whom we have spoken from time to time in our letters has at last been exiled from Baghdad, and sent under guard to some town in the far north. The brethren at Bagdad were able to write in advance to the places through which he passed, and some little help was given to make his lot more endurable. He writes that his heart has been greatly cheered by this kindness shown him on his way. After his destination shall have been reached we trust that he soon will enjoy a greater measure of liberty.

COLPORTAGE.

Our colportage from Busrah has not been very extended this last quarter, the winter's cold and rains not making it a very desirable season in which to travel. Several short trips have, however, been made with varying success. At one place lately visited our book-seller was driven out, the only objection being that he was selling Protestant books and therewith corrupting the people! We are glad to know that the term "Protestant" is always understood to mean an aggressive Christianity, and that we are the people who are accused of turning the world upside down! One of our colporteurs lately told an experience which shows how the good seed sometimes springs up in very unpromising soil. He had sold nothing all day and finally was resting in a coffee shop. A moolah sitting by called out, "You are the people who say, 'In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost,'" and then began to blaspheme the Gospel. A rough soldier passing along heard, and stopping, said to the moolah, "Why do you not accept the book of the prophet Jesus?" The moolah replied, "It is not the book of the prophet Jesus." But the soldier said, "It is, for I
read it at Bahrein; you don't know it for you haven't read it, but I have and I can tell you." And the colporteur said, "I sat still and rejoiced greatly to hear the soldier teach the teacher." Again in the Bible shop two men were talking and one was overheard to say to the other, "Surely this religion will be the final one in the world, I have been in Calcutta and have seen how zealous its teachers are." The above incidents are not very important but they give us faith to believe that more is being accomplished than we are able to report, and that it is still true that "the Kingdom of God cometh not with observation."

James Cantine.

BAHREIN.

Variety is the spice also of mission-life; and so instead of telling the usual story of book-sales and dispensary work and preaching to hardened hearts, I will quote this time from Mrs. Zwemer’s diary. Not that the usual lines of work have not progressed. On the contrary our Bible work has broken the record of all previous quarters at Bahrein. One of our colporteurs traveled over a thousand miles on his journeys and sold three hundred and forty-two portions of the Word of God. Inquirers too have come to us and a large number of controversial books been sold.

The home-dispensary passed into more efficient hands when Doctor Worrall came from Busrah, on March 14th, and we trust he will draw many to hear the gospel message. It is, however, the work for women which especially seemed to us all important and fruitful during the past months. A great door is opened. The problem really is not how to get access to their homes, but how to find time to enter the many places where a welcome is sure. Not "how to reach the masses" but how to get them to come at reasonable hours and in reasonable numbers.

Let the diary speak for itself: "Jan. 1st, four women called; talked with them about Christianity and played the little organ. Jan. 5th, I visited the house of Sheikh S—; had a good time reading and talking to the crowd of women about Christ. May the Holy Spirit use His own word. Jan. 6th, took Katharina for a walk. Some rough boys and men followed and tried to throw stones at us, but by skillful manoeuvering I avoided their missiles. Jan. 8–18th, women came in numbers day by day, some to visit,
others for medicine. Jan. 20, called at the house of S—and read Luke fifteenth to them. At eight p.m. messengers came asking me to go and see a poor woman who was burned while baking bread in a native oven. I told them what to do for the woman, but did not go. I was alone and it was too late to go out with strangers. Jan. 21st, this morning went with the people who came for me. Such a sad case, the whole body and limbs very much scorched and blistered. Her clothes caught fire while she was baking bread and her friends, instead of throwing something around her, ran with her to the sea and plunged her in. After that they covered her burns with indigo. It must have been awful agony to her. However she was afraid to let me put on any more medicine to ease the pain and so the poor thing died shortly afterwards. Jan. 24, visited two houses and saw and talked with seven women and many children. They are all fasting and so I had a conversation about the true fast. Fasting from sin is more pleasing to God than to fast for a month from food. Jan. 25, visited three new huts. The owner of the house and of the women came in while I was there, such a gruff man, they seemed very much afraid of him and of having me there. I talked cheerfully to the gentleman in answer to his questions, but was half afraid of him myself. In these three huts I met ten women, none of whom could read. Attended to one sick woman, fever and eye-disease, and she seemed most grateful.

Jan. 26-28, five women came; visited six others. Had an open-air meeting on the desert sand, sitting on the low wall of a small mosque. About ten women and half a dozen children. Spoke of the evils of the veil and the love of God.

Feb. 6, Treated a poor mite of a child who had dysentery; recovered speedily, praise God. Feb. 8, visited the girls school (Moslem) and had another talk with the children. While I was there the blind girl said the afternoon prayers. It was a most pathetic sight to see the sightless eyes uplifted to heaven and then the little child going through the prescribed gesticulations until finally the forehead touched the earth and closed the devotions. Visited two houses, several women in each. Feb. 9, one woman came, read and explained. She seemed to understand. Feb. 11, six women called and after some talk one of them asked me to sing and play an Arabic hymn which I had sung before. I was glad they remembered even a few of the words. Feb. 22, visited eight houses and saw forty women and children as well as some of the
men. Had a most interesting time. Oh, how I long for an eloquent tongue to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ to these people. I am afraid my preaching is very harmless. Still they nearly always ask me to read to them and that is an encouragement altho the words are sometimes hard for them to understand as well as for me. Read Arabic for two hours with teacher, Feb. 23, seven women came this morning. Visited a village in the afternoon. March 1, small boy in the dispensary with triple fish-hook caught through his lower lip. Assisted at the operation. It was removed by S—, with success. I held the boy's head and prayed all the time, it was such a nasty looking case and difficult for amateurs. March 4, went for a walk and gave away a dozen baby garments to poor Baloochee women who have come to seek a living at Bahrein because of famine in their country. March 11, went to call on the ladies of the British agent (Persians). A great feast prepared in the way of sweetmeats, etc. It is always more difficult to speak to these people because they are so taken up with the things of this world. March 13, four women came, spoke of the Light of the World. They were most interested. Eight came in the afternoon to call. With all of them I had a talk on the things of the other life. March 14, two women came for me to go and help in a complicated labor. They had done everything they could and ought not to have done and then came for "the infidel." I helped her and gave medicine and then left for an hour; it was such a dirty little hole of a room it made me feel quite sick. I was sorry I left her, however, because when we went back the men of the house objected to my doing anything for her, evidently on the advice of some Mullah. Mar. 17, in the last few days some thirty-three women and children came. Most of them cannot read. Some of the women asked me why I left my native land if it was as good as I told them? They cannot understand our motive. There is no all-overpowering love in their religion. Unselfishness is not found in Islam.”

S. M. ZWEMER.

MEDICAL REPORT.

The end of the first quarter of 1899 finds me in Bahrein with Rev. and Mrs. Zwemer. March 10th I left Busrah on board the British India Steamer Kahndalla. All patients absolutely needing treatment I left in the excellent care of Dr. Thoms.
Regarding the health of the missionaries for the quarter, we have reason to be thankful to the Ruler of all Good that: Those in Busrah, when I left, were in excellent health and on my arrival in Bahrein I found Mr. and Mrs. Zwemer and Kathrina in like condition. Reports from Muscat give information of Mr. Stone's good strength and spirits. The last news from Mr. and Mrs. Barny was their sufficient recovery to leave Muscat for India for a period of convalescence. Mr. and Mrs. Barny have no doubt written home concerning their sicknesses. We are all expecting their early arrival in Busrah.

The medical work of the mission has been carried on as usual. During my stay in Busrah I saw each morning all that came. Several came from a great distance needing operations and constant oversight, so that we made room for them in the mission house, performing several operations in the open court. The result has been "relief only" to a few, and "complete" recovery to the rest. I do not now recall any day during the quarter in which there was no patient within the four walls.

Although we are always sorry that others should suffer, still we were glad to reciprocate in kind to members of the Bagdad mission their great kindness to us during my first summer on the field. Dr. P. S. Sturrock, of Bagdad, being invalided, remained with us until he recovered sufficiently to resume his labors.

Reaching Bahrein March 14th, I immediately began to see patients. I came with the idea that there was but little sickness on the Island and that I should not be kept occupied, but, beginning with five, the numbers soon ran to twenty. The average to March 31st being about ten.

The weather in Bahrein has thus far been exceptionally comfortable for this time of the year. The thermometer not having been observed to ascend higher than 90° and with North wind every day excepting two we have been enabled to comfortably exist.

At the end of the first quarter, March 31st, am glad that I am able to report all in Bahrein well. Mr. and Mrs. Zwemer and their two daughters being in excellent health.

Faithfully yours,

H. R. L. Worrall, M. D.

March 31, 1899.
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