The Arabian Mission

Field Report

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THE ARABIAN MISSION.

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THE CLIMATE OF THE PERSIAN GULF.

[Inquiries on the part of our subscribers and friends have been frequent as to the exact nature of the climate in that part of Arabia where our Mission is at work. No better or briefer summary of this really important question can be made than the following, taken verbatim from the "Persian Gulf Pilot" (Hydrographic Office of the Admiralty, London, 1890), and we, therefore, reprint it for the information especially of intending candidates at S. M. Zwemer's request.]

"The climate of the Persian Gulf is one of the most trying imaginable; tho' perhaps on the whole not unhealthy for Europeans. The intense heat of the summer is aggravated by the humidity of the atmosphere, and the dust raised by every wind; nor are there rains or clouds at this season, as in India, to temper the excessive heat. The Arab coast is hotter and less healthy than the Persian, and the southern end of the Gulf hotter than the northern. In the winter the winds are cold and cutting, and altho' the temperature is more suited to Europeans, it appears to be the less healthy season. During June and the first half of July the heat at the northern end of the Gulf is moderated by the almost constant shamal (northwest wind), altho' the air is generally loaded with dust; but from that time to the end of August it is most intense, and with a southerly wind almost insupportable, from the increase of moisture in the air. In the month of August the black-bulb thermometer rises on shore to 159° F. in the sun. In the shade on board ship its range is small; at Bushire from 90° to 93° at 4 A.M. to 96° or 98° in the afternoon. In the Shatt el Arab (near Busrah) the thermometer is said by Loftus to have risen to 124° in the shade. The intense heat of the night renders the weather more distressing. September is but little cooler than August, October, tho' still hot, is more favorable, toward the end the squalls which usually occur reduce the temperature considerably. November is generally a beautiful month; fine weather with wonderfully clear atmosphere; temperature pleasant. De-
December is often a fine cool month, similar to the last unless the bad winter weather sets in, which it seldom does before the middle of this month. January and February are cold and boisterous months. Gales of wind prevail with rain. The minimum of temperature occurs in the first half of February. March and April are pleasant months, and in May the weather again gets hot.

The following table from observations extending over four years on board ship shows the average range of temperatures; as the observations were spread over the whole gulf the temperature in the northern half would be some degrees lower and in the southern higher than this average:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Average Maximum 4 P.M.</th>
<th>Average Minimum 4 P.M.</th>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Average Maximum 4 P.M.</th>
<th>Average Minimum 4 P.M.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>July</td>
<td>91½</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>August</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>89</td>
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<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>69¼</td>
<td>September</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>83½</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>80½</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>October</td>
<td>85½</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>November</td>
<td>80½</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>89½</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>December</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lowest temperature observed 45° in February.
Highest “ “ 100° in August.

By an extract from the log of E. I. C. S. Psyche, on February 21, 1825, near Kuwait, the thermometer during a shamal fell to 35°. Snow has been known to fall at Bushire and Busrah.

The rainfall is small and variable. At Bushire it varies from 5 to 29 inches in the year. On the Arabian coast it is probably less; at Muscat 3 to 8 inches are recorded. . . . The dews are very heavy, particularly in the summer months, when the sails of ships appear in the morning as if a heavy shower had fallen. . . . In the cold weather fevers are most prevalent; the so-called gulf-fever of the remittent type is very dangerous and convalescence is often only possible by leaving the gulf. Cholera is not of frequent occurrence, and appears not to be brought by sea, but to travel down from the interior. Small-pox is common, but yellow fever is unknown. The hot weather is not absolutely unhealthy; altho' the men suffer from aggravated prickly heat boils, etc., provided they are kept out of the sun and ventilation attended to there will probably be little serious sickness."
BUSRAH.

With the exception of a few interesting cases at Nasariyeh, the quarter just closing has been a quiet one. During the first three weeks all who came to the dispensary were treated. On Jan. 21st, we left Busrah in a small boat for Nasariyeh. For four days we were either poled or pulled, then having a south wind the journey was completed in another day and a half, although we went further than in the former. Ramazan, beginning this year, Jan. 22, is a most unfortunate time in which to tour and treat, nevertheless, the patients, although not so many as last year, still came in fair numbers amounting to nearly two hundred.

The opening of the “Bible Shop” immediately following my former visit caused a great deal of opposition, and therefore we were not quite so pleasantly or cordially received as before. The little house on the river, had through gross negligence become very much weakened in the walls, and being only one story, we were compelled to seek a drier place than a ground and a brick floor, rain being one of the concomitants of this season of the year.

The necessity for a place to put patients was exhibited in Nasariyeh as well as in Busrah. One poor child suffering from Acute Brights died because through poverty she was unable to obtain the necessary warmth and rest.

A Sabean who came as a patient was found to be suffering from stone in the bladder which might have been removed had a clean place been guaranteed for a week or two after operation. He became much better under treatment but always risks an increase of the trouble at any time.

As an illustration of the difficulty under which one has to labor during Ramazan I would record the fact that an eye patient came for three or four times and then ceased. Upon meeting the patient on the street and inquiring “why do you not come for more eye drops?” replied, “Oh, people say that I break the fast. They tell me that when the doctor puts medicine in my eyes it goes back and drops down my throat. I must keep the fast, doctor. After Ramazan I’ll come.”

It was agreed that we be back in Busrah at the latest by the first of March, so on Feb. 22, we were ready to return but a letter from Mr. Cantine requesting an inventory of the Book Shop caused our delay for two days. The second day, being also second day
after Ramazan, the door was regularly besieged by patients. The boy said that there had been more than a hundred. But we hastened back to Busrah through necessity. The journey back required two full days and a half. The first night I remained at a place called Gormeh where I had the pleasure of treating several patients. One case in particular is distinctly recalled. That of a soldier who seemed to be only slightly ill, but on taking the temperature found it to be 105° then on further examination found he was suffering from a severe attack of pneumonia. At another place, Medena, also a camp, I was pressed to remain and treat patients, and although staying there about half an hour was able to tell one to stop drinking whiskey, another to anoint his head with oil, to loosen some scurf, still another that he needed glasses, and then as the boat was leaving another called out “please look at me before you go.”

Since our return to Busrah the dispensary has been opened with the usual run of cases. One patient I have given house room and am having the joy of seeing him recovering from his trouble.

The Mission house, however is limited in its capacity and so I cannot take in many patients. This patient stays in the room we utilize for the patients' waiting room.

Sincerely yours,

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

The quarter just passed has not been one full of events that make a report interesting reading. The weather was cool and invigorating, the kind well suited for steady work at the desk and advantage was taken of it in this way.

We began the year, as is usual, with the stated meeting of the Mission. Talking over last year's work, looking forward into the new, making plans for it, forecasting its prospects was interesting, especially to one comparatively new in the work. The Week of Prayer, which we observed, was a season of refreshment to us. Our meetings were small in numbers, but large numbers are never necessary for a spiritual meeting, and we realized the Lord's promise that where two or three are gathered in His name He would surely be in their midst. They were pleasant weeks those, saddened only by one thought. The members of the Arabian Mission were gathered, and we numbered four men, and the
Arabian Mission has a field with over a thousand miles of coast line, with millions of dying souls to be reached. It is needful that of all men a missionary be most hopeful. I trust that in faith or hope we are not lacking. But with so small a number, what results can we look for? Let no one answer with a reference to Gideon's Band. There were three hundred men necessary to make a noise loud enough to rouse the sleeping enemy. And shall the four of us here blow the trumpet loud enough to rouse a people from the death-like sleep of Islam? Nor is a reference to God's omnipotence in place. For we need never expect the Lord to work a miracle to supplement a lack of duty. Many and earnest were and still are our prayers for reinforcement. May God grant us a gracious answer.

A visit to our out-station, Amara, having become necessary, that pleasant duty fell to my lot. The teacher, Elias and myself left with the S. S. "Bloss Lynch" one night and arrived late the next.

The journey up the Shat-el-Arab, a noble stream, and the "swift-flowing" Tigris is rather monotonous, unless one gives play to the imagination and peoples this historic plain through which we pass with the great nations of antiquity, and pictures to himself the barren wastes transformed into fertile plains dotted with bustling cities. The reality is far different. From both sides of the river stretches out the desert, bare and barren, except for here and there a cluster of date trees, or a green field where, with great labor, some industrious Arabs dispute the desert's sway. The monotony is only interrupted when, because of the many twistings and turnings of the river, the boat runs aground or, when approaching one of the groups of miserable huts, the children, poorly clad or not at all, come to meet the steamer and run along with it, begging for something to eat, furnish amusement to the idle and material for reflection to those concerned in the spiritual welfare of these people.

The purpose of the visit was to make an inventory of the stock in the Bible Shop, so the stay was but brief. But what I saw of our work in the place pleased me very much. Former reports have told of our man, Murad, there. He has the gift, most useful for such as would be "fishers of men" of being able to get hold of people and interesting them in the Bible, and we value him for it. The days I was there were spent mostly in the Shop. There
were often four or five men in it and the subject of conversation was generally on the subject of religion. One is sometimes inclined to question the advisability of keeping a colporteur alone at one place for any length of time. The monthly records of book-sales sometimes have little that is reassuring about them, but a look at the work itself soon restores confidence. The disposing of God’s Word is indeed important and a mighty agency. But there is also another agency and that is the quiet, leavening, i.e., raising influence of a Christian life. I was glad to find that the "Beit Protestanti" (the house of the Protestant) is well known and well spoken of. During this last quarter there came to us here from Amara three men, who expressed their distrust in Islam and inquired after "the more perfect way." God, who is the searcher of hearts, knows their sincerity. May He guide them into the knowledge of Himself and of His Son our Saviour and theirs.

While at the place numerous inquiries were made for our doctor. But one man, even though he is a mission doctor, cannot supply the needs of several places at one time. What a joy it would be to us if we had but another doctor so that places like Amara could be visited regularly! What progress would we see, ere long, in the Lord’s work here!

As already said the trip was short, but much enjoyed. I am looking forward with pleasure to a tour down the Gulf in the near future. Bahrein has, of necessity, been left without a missionary for some months. I hope to stay there some weeks and after that to go to Muscat. Whether it will be the part of wisdom to do this is another question, viz., in view of health which has not yet been tested by a Persian Gulf Summer and of language study. But things that have not the show of prudence must be done when there is a scarcity of laborers such as we now labor under. However, our trust is in God, who has never yet failed us.

Fred. J. Barny.
MUSCAT.

It was once told me by an experienced Missionary in India that to establish a Mission station it was a matter of prime importance first to purchase a house, second to shelter its Eastern and Western sides with a verandah. A house had been purchased at Muscat the previous year but it still stood open and undefended against what for six months of the year is a common enemy—the sun.

This quarter, however, with rafters and stone and mud and plaster we erected bulwarks against his approaches and now, when in June shadows fall perpendicularly our Mission House is safe and comfortable. It was a pleasure to oversee eight Muscat workmen and initiate them into the mysteries of the perpendicular and right angle and when I showed them that measuring three on the horizontal, four on the perpendicular and five on the hypothenuse made the post stand plumb, they opened their eyes in amazement and said that the wisdom of this world had been given to Englishmen.

The boys of the Freed Slave School were a great help and at the same time learned a great deal of the mason’s and carpenter’s trades.

In their school work they have as well made fair progress and the examinations at the end of the quarter were with one or two exceptions satisfactory.

Although no tours were made the sales of Scriptures from the Bible Shop amounted to $155.

The following episode will illustrate how strong are the bonds of Islamic ignorance and superstition.

A Persian “sayid” originally from Hyderabad, India, arrived here on his way from Persia to Bombay. Although he had for some time past forsaken Islam and desired Christian instruction he still wore the distinctive dress of a Shiah “sayid” (lineal descendant of the prophet) and had not as yet confessed his change of view except in secret to missionaries. Arriving at Muscat he kept his religious views secret for a time and the Shiah of the place honored him as a descendant of the prophet and as their religion demands offered him free lodgings and gifts of money. On account of his poverty he accepted the latter, a matter which he afterward regretted.
Later he came to me... like and confessed his desire to be taught the Gospel. For some time he came to me daily for morning prayer with the colporteur and by the help of a Persian interpreter a Christian we explained to him "the one thing needful." It gradually dawned upon him that he must forsake all and confess Christ openly before men.

Altho' he knew this would bring upon him the intense hatred of the fanatical Shiahs who had formerly kissed his hand as a representative of their prophet, he did not fear, but was only at a loss just how to broach the subject to them. I advised him to identify himself with our Bible shop in the bazaar, and on inquiry to confess his belief that the Gospel was the true Word of God and Jesus the true Prophet.

This was quite sufficient. As one man the whole bazaar rose against him and threatened then and there to strip him of his sayids' costume and give "the dog of an infidel" a beating.

I feared this would happen and had followed him to our Bible shop, and on account of the presence of a European, their threats could not be executed, the "sayid" himself also having the protection of the British Government. The following day, however, two of the leading mullas of the place came to inquire into the matter. They found the "sayid" at my house. We were about to have our customary morning prayer. Seeing the "sayid" join with us they were convinced, and from that time plans were laid to persecute and even kill him. It was judged by these mullas that a sayid's wife was no longer his legal wife after he became a Christian, and an attempt was made to induce her to leave him. He was present, however, to prevent this, and a struggle ensued in which the mulla received a blow on his head.

This was an unpardonable insult to the Shiahs who now threatened the sayid's life. I informed the British Consul of the matter, and he was promptly given a guard of two men. As large numbers of Shiahs had pledged themselves to take his life regardless of consequences, the Consul advised him to leave the place and on the following day he sailed to Karachi, India.

Altho' still very ignorant, we believe this sayid is a true inquirer with no mercenary motive. His mistake was, of course, to receive honors and charity as a "sayid" when he no longer adhered to Islam. But just here is the difficulty, where could he make the change? Coming out of the blindness of Islam it may
be that "he saw men as trees walking." Is it strange that such converts stumble and fall often before they come into the full light of liberty?

For a "sayid" to become a Christian is a death blow to Islam for tradition has it that this is impossible.

The life of such a person must, therefore, be taken. A sudden and complete disguise is his only safety.

This incident has not been devoid of good result. Once more Muscat has heard the testimony of a living witness, one of their own number who found peace in faith in Christ.

P. J. ZWEMER.