

120, and we were having five or six operations in our operating-room. One half of the hospital beds here were full.

About this time a smallpox epidemic broke out, while the late rains were causing an unusual amount of fever, pneumonia and other sickness. In April, bubonic plague appeared, in a virulent form, and people were dying everywhere like flies. Many were taken with fever, and, within twenty-four hours, would be carried to their hastily dug graves in the cemetery just back of the hospital. The people were panic-stricken. Each night was a long death wail, and each day a long funeral procession. Whole families were exterminated, and the people turned to their religious leaders, or mullahs, for an explanation of this scourge.

Now these mullahs are the people who have opposed us from the beginning. They saw their opportunity, and used it with a vengeance. They told the people that they knew something would happen to the land when these Christian dogs were allowed to build a hospital, and they had seen us on the roof at night throwing something into the air, which the wind carried over the city, and they believed this to be the poison that was causing the diseases.

As the plague was confined to the portion of the island in which the hospital was located, it was easier for the ignorant people to believe this, in spite of the good we had often done them, and the kindness that had gone forth from the mission-house to themselves and their families. The people turned against us in a body. Some of our old friends did not believe these stories, but dared not come to us for fear of others. Some were too intelligent to believe these stories, but saw this as their opportunity of hurting a work they knew to be directed against their religion. As at such a time a Moslem always becomes fanatical, these were ready to join in the opposition, and the attendance at the dispensary dropped to almost nil.

The mission had planned to send a doctor to Kuwait at some time during the year, to open up work there, and we thought that this would be the best time. So, in the fore part of June, I started with Ameen and Salome, two of our best colporteurs, for Kuwait.

We hoped to gain the good will of the Sheikh by our medical work, and rent a house, if not a book-shop and house, for two years.

Kuweit was to have been the port and southern terminus of the projected Baghdad railroad, you know, and it seemed to us an important and desirable place to occupy.

We reached Kuweit harbor one very hot morning. After a nine o'clock breakfast on shipboard, we hired a native boat and went ashore, amid the usual amount of confusion and singing by the sailors. We went directly to the Sheikh's house, where we were given a cool place to rest until he should finish his noon-day nap.

Finally the Sheikh came with his retinue into the reception-room, where we, with others, were waiting to see him. We all arose until he was seated, when I was bidden to be seated by his side.

After the usual exchange of salutations he conferred, in turn, in whispers, with several of those who had been waiting with us, receiving a couple of letters from one of them. One of these, from what I saw and heard, I concluded was from our arch enemy at Bahrein, warning the Sheikh of our coming, telling him of the scourge that had come to the people by our means, and prophesying a like calamity upon Kuweit if we were allowed to remain.

After a few gruff questions about our work, our reasons for coming there and our plans, the Sheikh and followers departed and we were shown a room. We unpacked our bedding and prepared some food, for it was now the middle of the afternoon, and we had eaten nothing since morning.

Just as we were ready to partake of our melon and tea, a servant came from the Sheikh to tell us that a native boat was about to leave for Fao, a Turkish port, perhaps twenty miles distant, and we were to go aboard at once and leave the place. I took Ameen with me and went to see the Sheikh, leaving Salome to guard our things. We found him sitting in a coffee-shop surrounded by a number of the most fanatical class of Moslems,

viz., Wababi mullahs. He seemed ready, several times during our conversation, to admit the injustice of his demand, but each time these fellows had so much to say against us that he finally decided against us and sent us away. When we reached our room we found it empty, they having borne our possessions and Salome away to the boat, to which they took us by the nearest road, put us into an open boat, and we put out to sea. During the night a storm arose, and the sailors pulled down the sail and cast anchor. For forty-eight hours we were tossed about with scarcely anything to eat or drink. We finally reached Busrah, and got back to Bahrein by steamer on July 3d.

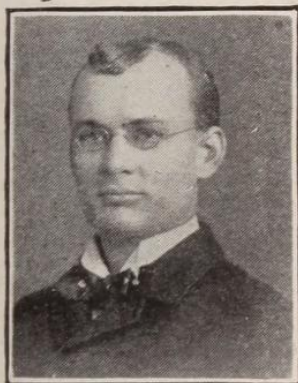
The poison story spread up and down the gulf, and our men were beaten or imprisoned, or both, at several places. But the plague died out, and a reaction in our favor came, as it has come in China and in many other fields after trouble, and the work looks more promising than ever before.

Dr. Zwemer writes that Salome has rented a house at Kuwait and is there selling bibles.

We have been greatly disappointed in our search for a suitable volunteer for the medical work, and we are earnestly praying that some young man or woman, fully qualified and strong in body and purpose, may volunteer and be sent out very soon. All of us who know the conditions just now, feel very keenly the urgent need of a doctor being sent at once.

COLPORTERS' WORK IN OMAN.

REV. JAMES E. MOERDYK.



The bible shop in Muscat is in the busy bazaar, on a very narrow street, perhaps three or four feet wide. On each side of this lane are shops of about ten by six feet, entirely open and right upon the street, so that people in passing can look right in and see everything without entering. Our shop is quite the largest on that street. Its furniture consists of two cases of books, two benches for visitors, a table, and a chair. The colporter also has a very low sort of stool upon which he displays copies of Scripture, and places it right upon the street front so that passersby may examine the books without leaving the street. Although we have Scriptures in some ten or twelve different languages, yet Arabic is the language usually spoken in the shop.

There are men in Muscat who visit this shop almost daily, usually with the purpose of passing the time of the day; but our faithful colporters almost always give them something to think about besides the news. One day last week we had a group studying an Arabic scroll. It was a text from the Bible, and after they had mastered it and learned its meaning, they began a discussion as to whether the text was true or belonged to the "forbidden." Two days afterward a Kathi from a town in the mountains entered, and before he left the place he had read and listened to an explanation of the commandments.

But the colporters very often close the shop for a part of the day, when they visit smaller towns in the neighborhood. Muscat has four of these towns not far away and easily visited by land or by sea. Matrah, the largest of these, is almost as busy a place as Muscat itself. It is the door or gate to places inland.

There all the people congregate, bringing their camels laden with produce for shipment by sea, and from there they return home with such stores as their own towns do not afford. The colporters sometimes spend whole days at that place, selling Bibles and talking with the people in the market place.

Almost every ship which enters Muscat harbor is visited, and many Scriptures are sold to be read upon the voyage, and eventually taken home to places where the Bible has never before been read. Ships belonging to the Royal navy are also visited, and sales are encouraging. Two weeks ago a colporter boarded one of these men-of-war and sold forty-seven Scriptures. There were sailors who asked for Bibles in English, French, Portuguese, Hebrew and Arabic.

Again, in order to know the colporters' work in Muscat town one must visit their home just outside the city wall. The door is always open to any who wish to talk with them upon religious topics, and many there are who there hear the Gospel of Christ. So many visit this house that the missionary very often makes it his business to call, feeling quite sure that he will meet somebody who, for many reasons, will not come to the mission-house. All Arab friends from the mountain country are sure to call there whenever they visit Muscat.

Just as the missionary does not confine his labors to Muscat city and surrounding towns, but claims all Oman as his field, so, too, the colporters spend a large part of their time in traveling in the mountains and districts back from Muscat, visiting the Arabs there who so much need the Gospel of Peace. There are times during the year when life in Muscat becomes so monotonous and the heat so intense that the men are glad to get out and away from the place. But we are glad to be able to write that there is a better reason for these trips. The true missionary zeal has been so intense in 1903 that not once was the missionary obliged to suggest these Gospel trips, but the men of their own accord asked for permission, and the missionary gladly helped them in arranging details.

Up to date of this writing, the colporters have been out upon four different tours. They have traveled hundreds of miles,

visiting towns upon the sea-coast north and south from here, and getting inland over the mountains and into places where never before anyone has been with God's Book. They have sold Scriptures in some sixty-five different towns, besides witnessing for Christ in other places where their books were not welcomed. One hundred and ten days and one hundred and eight nights were spent in strange homes and out under the open sky.

They have suffered hardships and imprisonment, and braved dangers many for the cause of Christ. In two different places the Sheikhs forbade them to sell any books, and special heralds proclaimed the command in the bazaars. At another place no one was willing to give them a shelter for the night, and they were compelled to sleep outside the town and in a pouring rain. In the mountains one of the Sheikhs supplied them with lodging, but placed a guard at the door, and they were not allowed to leave the house. Nor were they permitted to proceed upon their journey or to return homeward unless they paid the present which his highness demanded. When this man learned that they really had nothing to give him, the order was given to release them; but at the doors such an army of slaves and servants met them, demanding "backhisheesh," that they were again compelled to retreat, for to give that crowd money meant that there would be nothing left to get home with.

At another time they were surrounded in the way by a party of robbers, and it was "none other than God" who delivered them out of the hands of these wicked men. Soon after leaving Muscat upon their last trip, they barely missed being massacred by a band of fanatics. Tidings reached them that this band had preceded them and was waiting to fall upon them in the way. For several days they feared they might encounter it and be murdered. It was upon their return here that they learned the truth of this report. A band of men had actually gone out with the intention of murdering the party, but they missed each other in traveling different roads. The murderers, upon learning their mistake, had gone on and spent their wrath upon a small settlement, killing two of the inhabitants. Surely God has wonderfully spared our men this year.

And He has blessed their labors abundantly. Although they cannot point to any one who accepted Christ, yet they relate many instances where the seed seems to have fallen in good ground and may yet bear fruit. At one time they entered a town and had met with nothing but discouragement until they happened upon a Persian, who proved a friend in time of need. This man had read the Scripture, and then and there testified before the people to the truth of the Book and their obligation to receive it. The conversation with this Persian turned upon a sermon which he had heard some years ago, upon the text, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up;" and then the colporters embraced the opportunity to tell him more about the Son of man.

At another time it was the Wali, or governor of the town, who first bought Scriptures, and thereafter many of the people came to the men to buy books. Upon a later trip one of the colporters arrived at a town which he found invested by a party of fighting Arabs, purposing to attack a larger and walled town, from which the colporter had just come. But he was graciously received and given permission to sell wherever he liked; and when leaving the place was given an escort of soldiers to take him in safety beyond the camp.

In order that our readers may the better be acquainted with these men who work for you in bringing the Bible unto this people, I append a paragraph taken from their report, which clearly sets forth the spirit in which they go about their work—not in their own strength but in God's strength as He directs. I translate freely:

"And it happened unto us as it did unto Peter and John in Acts 4: 17, 18, and we remembered the 29th verse where they prayed, 'And now, Lord, look upon their threatenings and grant unto thy servants to speak Thy word with all boldness.' And we request that all friends who may come to know about our experiences will join us in prayer, so that we may all be of one heart, and with one voice cry out unto God that He will hear us even as He heard and answered in the days of Peter and John in Acts 4: 31."