



should have plenty of time to prepare for his part in the discussion for the evening.

The majority of those present thought that they would much rather have religious subjects for discussion. So it was decided to have only an occasional subject which was purely educational, although all of these topics, even those which the program committee suggested, were not without a religious side. Usually they preferred to have debates on the subjects suggested, and so it happened that, out of twelve meetings, ten were devoted to formal debates and only two in which papers were read on some given topic of interest and profit. After the debate by the parties appointed for this task, the debate was thrown open to the meeting for all to participate who cared to ask questions or had some new thought on the subject; and in this way a larger number received personal benefit and practice in these things.



A THING OF WONDER TO THE ARABS—THE BUSRAH DRAWBRIDGE.

After the time for this exercise had expired the chairman took his turn to decide, first, on the merits of the debaters participating and, then, on the merits of the question for the evening, always making careful explanation of the reasons for his decisions. And this was his opportunity, also, for throwing out hints and larger instructions in the matter of the conduct of debates and debaters and in pointing out their weak points and mistakes of the evening. In order that

our readers may have a more intelligent idea of the program of these meetings, I mention two subjects only, which were used at two different meetings, viz.: for debate they used the subject, "Resolved, that in preaching the Gospel the parables of Christ are more useful as subject matter than the miracles of Christ," and as a subject for a paper the committee assigned, "A short review of the teaching and practice of the four religions of the people round about us." To acquaint you with the interest which was maintained in these meetings, I need only give you a few figures taken from the report of the secretary. For fourteen meetings there was an average attendance of twenty out of a possible thirty-seven, which last figure includes visitors. Every one of the brethren who joined the society has taken his turn in contributing to the program.

The object which the missionaries had in mind in organizing this society was three-fold: (1) to bring the men of the station together where they would rub up against each other, so that they could not help getting acquainted in more than one sense of that word. The inquirers and young converts needed this very badly, also the helpers. in order that they might learn to know each other's weak points and to help each other in different ways possible to overcome mistakes and learn how to conduct themselves toward their neighbors; (2) to train the men in thinking and in more concerted methods of talking and preaching to their fellows; (3) to gain the confidence of strangers and outside friends and all who might visit these meetings, and to influence these and indirectly give them the Gospel or perhaps a desire to hear more about these things. And we think that the results already apparent are a promise of better things if this society can be continued. The missionaries have had a better opportunity to study their men and to learn their needs and have had new opportunities to influence and instruct them; we believe that the men have learned to know more about their own shortcomings and need of more sympathy and help from their fellow Christians and thus have also learned to be more willing to help others. And we know of a few strangers who have been touched for good.

One man, the son of Syrian Christian parents, had run away from his home influences and had since lived a careless and untruthful life, even going so far as to make his comrades think he was a Moslem, although at heart he was not sincere. One night he visited our meeting, and after that called upon our men and associated with them during his stay in the town, and the final result was that he decided to forsake his evil ways and return to his parents where he might again be under Christian instruction and influence. On another occasion soldiers who were passing through the town attended one of our meetings. One of

these afterwards came back to town for Christian instruction, and, although we have been disappointed in the ultimate outcome, we still cherish the hope that this man will some time come out right. His friends who were present with him at this one meeting have not shown any further interest, but the knowledge which they obtained concerning Christians has resulted in giving us their friendship in a manner which we had not before that time. We also feel very much encouraged because the helpers and others of our community have gained a larger interest in this method of touching the men round about them and have found new opportunities for influencing others.

