



Historical Sketch of Busrah Station

Our missionary enterprise may be said to have had its inception in a conversation between two men on an ocean steamer in the early eighties. One was W. A. Buchanan, Esq., of London, now a trustee of the Arabian Mission, then a young man in business at Busrah. The other was Dr. Lansing, of Cairo, a pioneer of the American Egyptian Mission, and the father of the founder of our own organization. To this latter was given such a vivid representation of the need and promise in Eastern Arabia that it was repeated to his son, and became one of the factors influencing our choice of this field.

Another used in God's providence to draw us to this place was Marcus Eustace, M. D., for years a missionary of the C. M. S. at



FIRST HOUSE IN BUSRAH OCCUPIED BY THE MISSION

Ispahan, Persia, and Quetta, Baluchistan, but at this time physician to the English community at Busrah. The first two missionaries had reported at Aden early in 1891 in their further quest for a location, Zwemer to go northward into Yemen, and Cantine to visit the Persian Gulf. And when the latter's exploration seemed likely to terminate at Bushire, where two hot summer months were trying hard to exhaust purse, strength and hope, a very cordial letter from this Dr. Eustace bade the total stranger come on to Busrah, and on no account to leave the Gulf until the opportunity in this great Moslem centre has been seen and weighed. The Eustace's home was the headquarters of our mission as long as they remained in Busrah. At one time it was hoped that they would permanently join us, but eventually they went back to their own society.

The nearest missionaries there of the C. M. S., at Baghdad, 500 miles up the Tigris, were found quite ready to welcome us as neighbors. The British and Foreign Bible Society, in whose field we were, promised us their co-operation. Mr. Buchanan was pleased to see us, and the other English residents seemed kindly disposed. Busrah itself was so large and its population so mixed that we judged the local Turkish Government would not greatly exercise itself over the presence of a couple more strangers. These and other arguments brought Zwemer on for a consultation, which resulted in Busrah being formally adopted as the first home of the Arabian Mission. This was in the autumn of 1891.

Our first missionary efforts foreshadowed future developments. A little shop in the native bazaar was hired, in which the missionary himself daily sought to explain the Christian doctrine and sell the scriptures. A couple of Moslem youths were found who wanted to learn English. Exploring trips were taken in all directions, especially along the Tigris, Euphrates and Karun rivers.

As soon as our location had been decided upon, an appeal for a medical missionary was at once sent home, and Dr. C. E. Riggs arrived in the spring of 1892. It was soon found, to our intense disappointment, that Dr. Riggs, though having many lovable qualities and great enthusiasm, was not in harmony with either our faith or our practice. The matter was, in mutual good will, presented to our trustees, and Dr. Riggs was recalled. About this time the Mission also suffered a great loss in the death of Kamil Abdel Messiah, a Syrian convert, who had labored with us in Aden and who had begun a work in Busrah of great promise. Another convert from Baghdad was exiled and never allowed to return. It seemed as if the Turkish Government, awakening to the fact that we were driving in our stakes, made a determined attempt to uproot them. In this they were abetted to some extent by the native Christian communities, who feared that we would proselytize from among their folds. We were driven from one house to another until we were able to have one built for us on long lease. Most mendacious reports concerning our revolutionary teaching were sent to Constantinople, and in general our activities were interfered with in every possible way. There was not much for us to do but to wait and pray, making friends with individuals if we could not with the local Government. Our representatives at Constantinople would not consent to our forcible deportation, and gradually our patience and persistence wearied our adversaries and we were left alone.

During this period Cantine and Zwemer were both resident at Busrah, though the latter was generally away on tour or at Bahrein, which soon was considered our second station. Our third ordained missionary, Peter J. Zwemer, arrived in Busrah late in 1892. He spent here, however, but a year in language study and then made his home in Muscat, our next point of occupation in Eastern Arabia. Our medical work, which ceased with the departure of Dr. Riggs, was resumed in March, 1894, by Dr. J. T. Wyckoff, whose Turkish diploma gave him a legal standing in Busrah, and whose cheery smile brightened the outlook for many, both inside and outside the dispensary. His stay

was all too short, sickness compelling his return to America before the year was over. The third medical missionary to be sent by the Board to Busrah was Dr. H. R. L. Worrall, who has been blessed by many years of fruitful service. Most of our missionaries have spent a longer or shorter period at Busrah, either in study or active work, and it would serve no useful purpose here to give the details.

The history of Busrah Station as regards its superficial development has been one of diminution, not of increase. This is as it should be. Amara, on the Tigris, made an out-station in 1895, and Nasaria on the Euphrates, also made an out-station in 1897, were united into a station in 1910. At the same time Kuwait, at the South, was given an independent organization. Muhammera, on the Persian side, has also



PRESENT BUSRAH RESIDENCES

passed into other hands. This natural growth has enabled us at Busrah to concentrate our efforts on a much smaller area. The result of this concentration is seen in the foothold we have already gained at Zobeir, on the border of the Arabian desert, in our two bible shops in Busrah and our three schools, and in general in our largely increased force of workers, both men and women.

In material evidences of prosperity, such as ground and buildings, this station has lagged behind the others, perhaps because their need was greater, in that we would generally rent some sort of building while they often could not. In 1908, however, ground was bought and in 1911 a hospital and house were completed.

The development of our station has naturally been qualified by that of the country in which we are located. We reached Busrah about