

THE
CATHOLIC PRESBYTERIAN.

No. XL.—APRIL, 1882.

TWENTY-SIX YEARS' WORK IN SYRIA.

ON the seventh February, 1882, I am writing this paper. On the seventh February, twenty-six years ago, it was first my privilege to set foot on Syrian soil. A small company of missionaries,—including Dr. Bliss, President of the Syrian Protestant College, Dr. Trowbridge, of the Central College, and others,—we had set sail from Boston, 12th December, 1855, on a little sailing-clipper barque, the *Sultana*, and, after a tempestuous and perilous voyage, reached Smyrna, where our party divided, some going to the north, while Dr. Bliss, his wife, and myself took steamer for Syria. We were just out of the theological seminary, full of the ardour of youth, and determined to give our lives to the spiritual welfare of the Syrian people. We landed on a bright, clear morning, the sun rising in glory over the snowy summits of Lebanon, and were welcomed by the missionaries with true cordiality. Our paths soon separated. At the annual meeting of the mission, Dr. Bliss was stationed in Mount Lebanon, and my lot was cast in Tripoli, where I spent several years.

For twenty-two years Beirut has been my home, and this anniversary of our arrival, which finds Dr. Bliss and myself both labouring in this city, seems a not unfitting time for a general review of the missionary work as it is to-day in this ancient and interesting land.

I take it for granted that the readers of this journal are more or less familiar with the past history of the American Mission in Syria, founded about 1824. Its first twenty years were largely years of exploration, experiment, and struggle. Wars within and without, plague, and persecution, kept the little mission force in constant agitation; for a season it migrated between Malta and Syria, and tried the experiment of labour in Jerusalem, Cyprus, and Mount Lebanon, until finally Beirut was fixed upon as the best strategic point for all evangelistic, educational, and literary labours in Syria. Jerusalem was abandoned to the brethren of the Church of England, and the little Greek Mission in Cyprus was withdrawn.

Finding the population without books or schools, and without a

proper version of the sacred Scriptures, we deemed it a necessary and fundamental step to enter upon the retranslation of the whole Bible into the Arabic language. It became also necessary to construct a new fount of Arabic type, from the most perfect specimens of Arabic caligraphy, which was done by Mr. Homan Hallock and Dr. Eli Smith. This fount of Arabic type, which is now the standard type in use in all the leading presses of Syria, is that in which the Arabic Bible was finally electrotyped and printed.

The work of translating the Bible was carried on by Dr. Eli Smith for some ten years, and after his death, in 1857, taken up virtually *de novo* by Dr. Van Dyck, who completed the New Testament in 1860, and the Old Testament in 1865. These eighteen years of labour produced a version of the Scriptures, which, owing to the eminent scholarship and conscientious fidelity of the translators, and the co-operation of learned Arabic scholars throughout the East and in Europe, no less than to the striking similarity between the Semitic Arabic and the Semitic Hebrew, has perhaps never been surpassed. When Dr. Eli Smith died, in January, 1857, he expressed to his missionary brethren his unwillingness to be responsible for any portion of the translation, as he had not yet carried it to its final revision. But the work of preparation he had performed, and the critical apparatus collected by him was of inestimable value to his learned successor, Dr. Van Dyck, whose name, with that of Dr. Smith, will be remembered as long as the Arabic Bible is read.

I remember hearing Dr. W. M. Thomson, author of "The Land and the Book," state that when he reached Syria in 1832, the first work assigned to him was a tour of the principal cities and seaports of Syria, to gather up the vast numbers of Arabic Bibles of the old version (made in Rome by the Propaganda, and printed by the British and Foreign Bible Society), and ship them back to the depôt in Malta.

They had been deposited in quantities in the houses of the British consular agents, and others, and dealt out to the people gratuitously; but, owing to the illiteracy of the people, and the fanatical ignorance of the priests, these sacred volumes were being rapidly destroyed. Bishops and priests gathered them from the people, and made bonfires of them in the paved courts of their churches. Shoemakers used the leather covers for the soles of shoes, and shopkeepers used the leaves for wrapping their wares. Such wholesale "casting of pearls before swine" could not be tolerated, and the books still in depôt were shipped back to Malta. The time had not come for Bible distribution. There were no readers, excepting among the Moslems, and possibly two or three per cent. of the male Christian population. The pall of mediæval darkness rested on the land of the prophets and apostles.

It was seen that books without readers would be of little use. The existing Government was an incubus instead of being an inspiration to the people. The ecclesiastical rulers found it for their interest to keep

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the people in darkness. They barred and bolted the doors, and threatened any who should approach with the "open sesame" of light and knowledge. There seemed not a ray of light from within the country itself. To translate the Bible and prepare and publish religious books for a nation unable to read, and not caring to learn, seemed a premature undertaking. But for a half-dozen foreigners, just beginning to master the vernacular language, to propose to teach two and one-half millions of people to read, and provide them with books, seemed simply an impossibility.

Yet the missionaries had come to Syria to *stay*; and although not literally burning their ships behind them, they had resolved that, with Divine help, the Gospel should be given to the Arab race in their own tongue, and that they should be taught to read it.

The work was begun, simply and feebly at first, with a few elementary books printed at the Mission Press in Malta, and with teachers so ignorant and rude that the very children of to-day could instruct them; but once begun, it was never abandoned. A normal training and high school was soon established, and conducted successively by Messrs. Thomson, Hebard, Van Dyck, and Calhoun, and carried on with varying fortune for some thirty-five years, until it was merged in the noble college in Beirut, to which we shall have occasion soon to allude. This normal school prepared teachers, who went out through the land, either opening Bible schools, or forcing the native clergy to open schools in self-defence, until Lebanon and the adjacent regions began to be dotted with these centres of light and Gospel knowledge.

The missionaries also early had the audacity to open schools for teaching Syrian girls to read. It was a forlorn hope at first, and brought down ridicule and contempt upon their heads. But Anglo-Saxon Christians, sons and daughters of enlightened Christian mothers, were not to be deterred by opposition from opening the treasures of Divine knowledge and consolation to the benighted daughters of Arabistan. Boarding-schools and day-schools were established, and girls were invited and induced to enter them; and in 1860, when the storm of massacre and conflagration swept over the land, and broke up the very strata of society, hurling not less than 22,000 refugees from all parts of the land into Beirut to be fed and clothed by the charity of Protestant England, America, and Germany, there were found ready to hand a noble corps of educated Syrian young women, prepared to teach and instruct the poor widows and orphans thus torn from home and left desolate in the world. The girls' schools already existing were enlarged and new ones opened. The lamented Mrs. Bowen Thompson and the admirable Sisterhood of the Kaiserswerth Deaconesses came also to the aid of their Syrian sisters, and for twenty-two years have laboured side by side and in cordial co-operation with the American missionaries, while other societies have entered the field here and there, thus giving the poor women and girls of Syria an opportunity to rise and

show that they need only light and a fair chance to prove themselves worthy of a place among their sisters of the more favoured nations.

Thus *two* of the great problems of Syrian evangelisation were grappled with—viz., Bible translation and education.

The *third* was that of founding a pure Christian Church amid the chaos of oriental sects. A Church which should protest against idolatry, mariolatry, saint worship, and superstition, and show to the Moham-medans that one can be Christian without being pagan, and a follower of Christ without bowing abjectly to the work of men's hands, and that one may exhibit a morality superior to any then known in the East,—this was a problem towards which the other two steps were but preparatory, and which was worth all the zeal and energy, the faith and patience, which could be brought to its proper solution.

These were the great questions agitated at every mission conference and annual meeting twenty-six years ago, and the two latter are the "burning" questions of to-day, though far nearer to a solution and far better understood both by the foreign labourers and the people for whom they labour, than they could have been a quarter of a century ago.

In another paper we propose to give a statistical table showing the present condition of the American mission work in Syria, together with a numerical outline of the other missionary, educational, and medical operations carried on in Syria and Palestine. As these statistics are official, they can be relied upon as correct. It will probably occasion some surprise to see so many small societies engaged in missionary work in a territory so limited, but it must be remembered that the most of these minor missionary operations are to a great extent *special* in their character, and confined to labour in spheres comparatively limited. It should also be borne in mind that the growing accessibility of the Holy Land is drawing into Palestine an increasing number of agents and agencies, which can hardly be said as yet to have any definite or broad view of what constitutes true missionary policy in foreign lands. And this multiplication of the sects of Protestantism in the East is becoming a source of confusion to the people, and should be avoided as far as possible.

As stated above, the questions connected with the founding of a native evangelical Church, and the general subject of education, are now among the most important agitated in the missions in Syria and Palestine. The former is the most prominent, as lying at the foundation of future success in the Gospel work in the East. The great object of the foreign missionary ever should be, to found native churches, place native pastors over them, and hand over the work of general *home evangelisation* in their own lands, as soon as practicable, to the native Christians themselves. Whatever delays this result should be regarded as an injury to the cause; and whatever promotes and fosters it should be encouraged. This is, we believe, the great aim and object of

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all the missionaries of the A.B.C.F.M. in Turkey and Asia Minor, of the Presbyterian missionaries in Syria, and of our brethren of the Church Missionary Society in Palestine.

Such a broad and far-reaching policy, and one so apostolic and Scriptural, cannot be looked for among that class of missionaries who regard our Saviour's last command as simply implying the obligation to walk through a country "bearing testimony" to the people,—this may be done in intelligible language, or it may be done, as in some notorious cases in this land in years past, by merely repeating in barbarously mispronounced and utterly unintelligible Arabic, a few Gospel verses, in order to "hurry up" the time when the Gospel shall have been preached "as a testimony" to all nations, and thus bring about the final consummation. Such was not the policy or the practice of the Apostle Paul in Ephesus, when "for the space of three years he ceased not to warn every man day and night with tears."

The results in the matter of founding a native Church in the Turkish Empire are now known to the world. The greatest success has been given to those labouring among the Armenians; and the progress is less satisfactory as you look southward through Syria and Palestine. It may be said that the difficulties increase as you approach Jerusalem, and for this reason; the Church of Rome has been for ages engaged in the great scheme of absorbing all the Oriental Churches—Greek, Armenian, Nestorian, Coptic, Maronite, and Jacobite into one Latin Church. This scheme has called for the expenditure of fabulous sums of money in the way of bribes and subsidies to the sects converted from the Oriental Churches; and the natural result has appeared in the demoralisation and pauperisation of the oriental nominal Christian conscience. Consequently, when Protestant missionaries first appeared on these shores, the inward thought of the people was, that here they had a new bid for the oriental constituency, and a new opportunity to be supported by foreign gold.

That this is not an imaginary evil will appear from the fact that this very year the *French Government* sends, through the French Consul in Beirut, the sum of *three hundred thousand francs*, as a subsidy to the *Maronite clergy* of Mount Lebanon! The same Government also sends *forty thousand five hundred francs*, as bursaries, to the Jesuit, Maronite, and Greek Catholic colleges in Syria. Forty-six of these bursaries have been founded since the year 1879. I have these figures from official sources. The bursaries are given as follows:—

10 to the Maronite College of Bishop Dibbs, in Beirut,	400 f. each.
10 to the Greek Catholic Patriarchal College, do.,	400 f. do.
10 to Maronite College of Mar Maroun, in Lebanon,	400 f. do.
10 do. do. Aramôn, do.,	400 f. do.
25 to Lazarist College at Aintura, Lebanon,	500 f. do.
20 to Jesuit College in Beirut,	600 f. do.
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85 bursaries, at 40,500 francs in all.	

If you add to this the enormous sums expended by the Jesuits, Lazarists, Capuchins, Sisters of Charity, the Papal Nuncio, and other Catholic almoners of European Catholic bounty or bribery to the oriental sects, together with the sums sent from Russia to the Greeks, and from all Europe and America to the Jews, and bear in mind that the total population of Syria and Palestine is two and a-half millions, you can understand how demoralised the public conscience is becoming, or has already become. We should also remember that the population of Palestine has been for ages hardened and perverted by the unceasing stream of pilgrims from all lands, which pours through their towns and villages, paying exorbitant prices for articles of food and sacred relics, until every foreigner and stranger is looked upon as a legitimate subject for avaricious imposition.

To found a self-supporting, native evangelical Church in such a land is a work which can only be accomplished by the quickening and sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit working on the hearts and consciences of the people. And the missionaries must plan from the outset to instruct their people, and educate them up to the point of self-dependence and self-support, training a native ministry for the churches they have founded.

There are now in connection with the American Presbyterian Mission in Syria 3 native evangelical churches, with 1008 members. There are 3 ordained native pastors, and 27 licensed native preachers. These native pastors are each partially supported by their people.

Seven years ago, the entire sum contributed by the native Churches for all objects was \$610. The last year it had risen to \$1653. Two years ago the Beirut Church, of which the writer is the acting pastor, voted unanimously to call a native pastor, and pay him the sum of \$700 as annual salary, but to their great disappointment and our own, he felt constrained to decline the call, and the labour still devolves upon the foreign missionary.

The impulse given to the matter of self-support in this part of Syria will also appear from the altered policy of our chief educational institutions. The Syrian Protestant College in Beirut has now 152 students, of whom the great majority pay for their education. Our Female Seminary, which was founded on a purely charity basis many years ago, received last year from the pupils about \$1500, a fact which appears almost incredible in view of the so recent indifference and opposition to female education in Syria.

In the sale of books a similar change has been effected. Twenty years ago parents expected to be hired to send their children to missionary schools, and have books, mats, and rent furnished gratis. Now, in most instances in this part of Syria, they furnish the room, supply the mats and books, and often pay something for each pupil. Twenty years ago it was hardly thought possible to induce a Syrian to *buy* a Bible or Testament.

During the year 1881, there were issued from the American press in Beirut 15,715 copies of the Scriptures, every one of which was *sold*. Twenty-three thousand other books and tracts were also sold during the year. The number of pages printed was 18,041,600, and the whole number of pages printed from the beginning at the Beirut press is 224,754,417. There were also printed and distributed during the year 154,000 copies of periodicals, religious and scientific. The number of persons received into the churches during 1881 was 131, a larger number than ever before in one year. The congregations show an increase of 900 during the year, and the enrolled Protestants an increase of nearly 800. The Sabbath-school scholars increased more than 900, and the number of Sabbath schools rose from 70 to 84. The number of common schools under the care of the mission increased from 91 to 113, and the pupils from 3770 to 4987, showing a total in all the mission fields of 128 schools, with 5544 pupils. The college has shared in the onward movement, increasing its pupils from 120 to 152. During the past seven years the foreign missionary force has been increased by four (all female missionaries), while the native force of pastors, licensed preachers, and teachers, has risen from 107 to 191. A theological class is under instruction in Beirut, and a suitable building for its purposes is about to be erected near the college, at Ras Beirut.

The limits of this paper will not admit of our introducing the general statistical table of mission work in Syria and Palestine which has just been completed, and it must be reserved for the next paper, which will contain a view of other missionary operations in Syria and Palestine, and some observations on the present political and religious outlook in the East, and other kindred topics.

HENRY H. JESSUP.

SCOTTISH PRESBYTERY MEETINGS IN DAYS OF OLD.

FIRST PAPER.

WE are so much accustomed to the name of "the Presbytery" in these days, that it is ready to be forgotten that another name is sanctioned by the standards of our Church. In the "Form of Presbyterial Church Government, agreed upon by the Assembly of Divines at Westminster," the leading names given to the various courts of the Church are: the "Congregational Assembly," which we now call the Kirk-session; the "Classical Assembly," which we call the Presbytery; the "Synodical Assembly," which we call the Provincial Synod, or simply, the Synod; and the "National Assembly," which we call the