

Turkish Empire.

Ed. D. Little.



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SYRIAN FACTS
for
SCIENTIFIC
MINDS



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Syrian Facts for Scientific Minds

The present age is a missionary age. The truth of Christ's great teaching,—the brotherhood of man,—is gripping men's hearts as never before;—not a small, select, local brotherhood, but one that includes the ends of the earth.

This is also a scientific age. The scientific spirit has transformed many branches of learning, as psychology and physics. *Facts* are considered, not theories. In business efficiency and economy are linked up with results.

The Syria Mission hails with delight this scientific, investigative spirit. Out of an experience covering ninety years they have facts to offer that prove that "the Word of God is quick and powerful," and is transforming life and character in that interesting Bible land.

Many tourists traverse the five thousand miles between New York and the eastern end of the Mediterranean sea, that they may get hurried glimpses of the Holy Land and follow in the footsteps of the Son of Man, who made sacred by his divine presence and work those cities and lakes and mountains. They visit Jerusalem and Bethlehem, Jericho and the Jordan, and the surpassingly beautiful Sea of Galilee. These travellers, however, take little time to see what God hath wrought in the transformation of character through the agency of church and school, press and hospital. The Syria Mission has established a *character-plant* in that sacred land, and those who are hunting for *facts*,—not theories,—regarding mission work and results will find them in that *character* establishment from the ground floor upward.

Mission work in Syria has to deal with a conglomerate mass of people,—Mohammedans comprising the great majority of the population, believers in the *one God* and despisers of idolatry in any form; Druzes having a secret religion that teaches them to embrace outwardly the religion of the dominant sect, Mohammedans; Jews in small numbers, *not* the imported variety; and nominal Christians that may be divided into those that *do* or *do not* give allegiance to the Pope at Rome. Since all the sects in Syria are also political parties, it is not surprising that the so-called Christians are largely such only in name. A Christian in the Levant may be a good man, or he may be a scoundrel,—he is not a Moslem or a Jew. The village clergy are often very ignorant, hardly able to stumble through the printed form of service; many of them are grossly immoral; hence the mass of the laity have little conception of what the Christian religion is. By actual contact with individual cases the missionaries have discovered that they know not why Christ came to earth; when he came; what he did; nor his divine relationship! The crass Mariolatry and image- and picture-worship of the oriental churches have stood as a barrier to the progress of evangelical work among the Mohammedans. The early missionaries went to Syria with the avowed purpose of converting the Moslems. But they were rebuffed with the scathing taunt, “You are idol-worshippers; *we* believe in *one God* and will have none of your religion.” Consequently they were obliged to build up out of the oriental Christians a body of true men and women who would exemplify in doctrine and daily life the true religion of Jesus Christ. The problem of womankind in Syria is acute and vital, affected through all grades of society by the Moslem conception of woman’s position and prerogatives.

These poor Moslem women lead an existence not to be coveted. If they leave the house, they must cover themselves from head to foot in flowing robes, generally of black,

and conceal their faces behind a thick veil. In their houses, behind closed door and latticed windows bevy of these women gather and gossip by the hour in a babel of shrill voices, and before their children, on topics of domestic menage and neighborhood scandal, on sex physiology and conjugal infelicities. In all probability none of them can read or write. The husband is away from the house during the day at business and in the evening with male friends or at the coffee house, and has married his wife simply to cook for him, bear him children, and be the plaything of his passions.

The women of the Christian sects fare much better than their Moslem sisters, though there is much to be desired. A girl is an unwelcome addition to the family. She often receives such names as "Enough," "More than enough," "The last," "Exact" (the count of girls),—as if the parents would thus gently remind the Creator of the state of the case. Per contra, if a *boy* dies, the next one will be named "Wolf" or "Lion" or "Tiger," to frighten away the angel of death.

In business and morals and politics eastern standards have prevailed. Nothing has a fixed price. The buyer offers far less than he expects to pay, and the seller demands far more than he hopes to receive. An oriental bargain consumes time and patience. Western ideals of veracity and uprightness are lacking. It is a bad thing to lie—if discovered in it. Once a pupil came to the President of the College with a complaint against a fellow-student. "He called me a liar." "Oh, never mind; you often say that; it doesn't amount to anything." "But he called me a liar *in English!*" That pupil had grasped the ethical difference. In politics, Syria (a part of the Turkish Empire) leads the world in graft. The poor, simple farmer and artisan are the ultimate object of this systematized robbery. Without "pull" they can hope for little justice.

Into this condition of affairs the American Presbyterian Mission has thrust itself with all

the power at its command, combatting ignorance with education, bigotry with religious freedom, laxity in morals with a solid front of pure Christianity manifested in everyday life. Religion has been shown to be not a mere gate-pass into heaven, but a vital part of man's existence, affecting business and morals and education. The four general methods



Two Church Elders from 'Alma

of work—evangelistic, educational, publication and medical—are not independent of one another, but overlap and intertwine at many points. The preachers have all been teachers in their day, and continue to be educators in this land of restricted intellectual opportunities. Most of the teachers hold Sunday services. Bible and arithmetic go hand in hand through all the school course. The Press with its 700 different publications is the *sine*

qua non of all endeavor. The medical work is an acknowledged means of opening otherwise closed doors. There are 115 regular preaching places in Syria, including the 36 organized churches. The 125 schools are so many lighthouses for disseminating the pure, free truth that is founded upon God's *open* Word. And the tens of millions of pages of Scripture and tracts and illustrated stories,—over a billion pages since the Press was founded,—are like the grains of wheat that fall into all kinds of soil. The *indirect* results of Mission work in Syria have been tremendous. Statistical blanks can never tell the whole story. The column for church members may seem to be meager, but that does not represent one-tenth part of the evangelical influence in education, in the professions, in business, in the home. In morals and religion it has been like leaven that leaveneth the whole lump. The *positive* character of Protestantism in Syria, in doctrine and daily life, is recognized and *expected* by all classes. Some Maronites of questionable reputation once explained why they had not become Protestants:—"Because then we could not lie or swear!" A Protestant teacher who had unintentionally witnessed a street fracas, was called for by the judge in preference to Maronites and Catholics, "Because *he* will tell the truth!" The changed attitude of the oriental clergy toward the Protestant movement is eloquent evidence of its power and growth. A half century ago a Catholic or Maronite who displayed any interest in Evangelical teaching was set upon by the clergy and regularly persecuted and finally ejected from his church. One was even walled up in a Maronite monastery and starved to death. To-day the clergy are obliged to say, "Believe as you please, attend their services if you will, educate your children in their schools, but do not sever your nominal connection with your old church!"

Who can estimate the spiritual value of the results obtained in the Sanatorium for tubercular patients conducted by Dr. Mary P.

Eddy! There these poor sufferers may at least *die* in friendly, sympathetic company in a land where consumption is feared as much as smallpox in America, and the unfortunates of whatever social or financial rank are ostracised and cast off as if they were moral outlaws. The pathetic stories told by them would wring tears from flint! And there is no column in the statistical tables for *facts* like these!

In the large city of Hama, the Hamath of Joshua's time, the leading Protestant is a physician, graduate of the Syrian Protestant College. He served his term as Protestant member of the Council along with Moslems and numbers of other Christian sects. By the rule of rotation in office amongst the sects he was not eligible for a second consecutive term. But his ability, integrity and fairness were so marked, that the *Catholics* chose him as *their* member!

From Hama, too, a Protestant stone-cutter went to Zahleh to live. He was a capable workman. This man had been a wild and dissolute young fellow, an Orthodox by sect, was led to Christ in the Protestant church, *learned to read*, and became an active Christian Endeavorer. His quiet, serene bearing, and that of his young wife, when their only son died, was a lesson to all in that land of frenzied grief and paid mourners.

The multiplicity of schools throughout Syria is a tribute to Evangelical influence there. Throughout the whole land, from the beginning, our schools have been the pioneers in education. Orthodox, Maronite, Catholic, Druze, and even Moslem schools for *girls* have been opened in *self-defense*, not willingly. They would have kept the masses in ignorance, could they have done so. American Protestant leadership in education is openly acknowledged on all sides. The story is frequently told,—has taken its place in the folklore of Syria,—how Dr. Van Dyck was once asked by a chance road-companion, "Where are you going?" "I am going to —— to open

two schools." "But why are you going to open *two* schools in that small place?" "Oh, I shall open one, and the Jesuits will soon open the other!" This result of our educational policy does not appear in the statistics!

The crowning feature of the educational work is the boarding schools for boys and girls. Here are gathered hundreds of Syria's



Graduating Class of Sidon Girls' Seminary

choicest young people,—the hope of the nation,—drawn from a wide area. The Mission boarding schools present the most effective means for the production of Christian character. Day after day, for a period of from one to seven years, these young lives come into constant, personal touch with the Superintendent and teachers in class room, on the athletic field, at the table, giving results in intellectual growth and character-building

of inestimable value,—the best and most enduring. From these come the teachers for the schools and eventually the preachers for the churches. The three-fold development is aimed at,—body, mind and heart. Physical exercise forms a regular part of student life. Football and basket-ball teams do excellent work. When the U. S. Cruiser “Montana” paid a visit to Sidon early in 1913 the basket-ball team of Gerard Institute sent a challenge to the cruiser’s team. They landed in their basket-ball togs, expecting to pocket an easy victory. Result, 31 to 19 in favor of Gerard Institute! Visitors are always pleased at the order in these schools. One old man from the country arrived just at recess time, when the boys were “raising Cain.” He didn’t think much of that school. Then a bell rang somewhere, and like the melting of the dew those boys vanished, and soon the surprised old man was visiting orderly recitations and a quiet study room.

Excellent results are obtained in education in Syria, despite the utterly inadequate housing and equipment available. Consider, oh ye pedagogues, the prospect of teaching seventy-five children in some Syrian village in a room with but one door and two small windows! The room is dark, poorly ventilated, and barely the size of an American recitation room.

What would happen to some of those Syrian pupils, if they could have the advantages of some of the buildings and equipments in this favored land? America is enormously wealthy and can afford the best possible equipment—*at home*.

When the missionaries on the other side of the ocean hear that the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions has promised over a million dollars to the work in foreign lands for the new year, and think of all that it means in education and character-building, in church life and social improvement, in relief of suffering and care of orphans, they rejoice at the magnificent generosity of the American

people,—until they happen to notice that more than one hundred times that amount is spent for confectionery; that the “movies” take in one hundred times as much as the Board; that the public school system costs America nearly four hundred and fifty million dollars; that life insurance premiums amount to \$800,000,000 annually. Then they realize what the churches



A large school for a small building with but one door and two windows

and societies *might* do for their less fortunate fellow men, were there a juster and more unselfish apportionment of the *personal* finances.

The missionaries are very careful in expenditure of funds. Church and school buildings are not ornate; they are often pitifully inadequate. Often the preacher must be content with a house of two rooms, and a small kitchen. All honor to those noble Syrian men and women who are serving their coun-

try at a very small wage when their fellow-countrymen are emigrating to America and amassing considerable wealth! Those small Protestant churches have accomplished results out of all proportion to their size or numbers. From one of these village churches went forth a remarkable family of eight brothers and sisters, children of a converted



Khyam Church from which went forth the family of mission workers

Maronite woman, who resolved to dedicate to the Lord's service every child that He should give her. She was very poor and worked hard to educate them. She lived to see her eldest daughter the wife of Syria's ablest preacher of a generation ago; four of her sons preachers of the Word; another a worker in a missionary hospital at Nazareth; still another the preacher-teacher in the celebrated German Industrial Orphanage at Jeru-

saalem; and a daughter now the mother of a student in the present theological class! Has such a record often been surpassed?

The Protestant church of Syria is the outward, tangible symbol of the Mission's great, underlying motive,—its very reason for existence,—to bring to all classes in this Arabic-speaking country,—Moslems, Druzes, Jews and Christians,—the opportunity for a saving knowledge of the pure, untrammelled Gospel of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. With this supreme motive three generations of men and women have lived and worked, have hoped and prayed. The quiet Mission cemetery, just below the great, throbbing Press, is a silent witness to the truth of Paul's words, "For the love of Christ constraineth us," and his fervid exclamation, "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" The graves of Pliny Fisk, first Protestant missionary to the Levant, Dr. Eli Smith, Dr. Van Dyck, Dr. Eddy, Rev. William Bird, Drs. Henry and Samuel Jessup, and many other noble men and women, challenge America's best young manhood and womanhood to enter into the heritage of good deeds, noble lives and consecrated service which they have left behind them in that Bible land.

GEO. C. DOOLITTLE.

The Presbyterian Church has also work in the Islamic World in Persia. A most suggestive leaflet is issued with this entitled "The Open Door in Persia."

