

Lebanon station -  
1903 - 1904.

by

G.C. Doolittle.

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## LEBANON STATION, 1903-1904.

PROGRESS IN ZAHLEH.—During the past summer an aged man returned after many years in Egypt to Zahleh, his native town. Feeble in health and oppressed in mind, he made special request that Mr. Jessup come and pray with him, and recounted to him the events of his early days; how he had thrown the first stone at Rev. and Mrs. Benton, pioneer missionaries to Zahleh. Men, women and children had united in forcibly ridding themselves of these heretics. Forty-five years have elapsed, and wonderful have been the changes in Zahleh and vicinity. To-day there are six foreign workers, welcomed in every home. There are over thirty Protestant families; the church is situated in the center of the town; twelve meetings for worship or work are held each week. The schools on both sides of the valley enroll 125 boys and 250 girls. In the early days Zahleh was on the edge of missionary operations. Now it is the geographical center of the Lebanon Station.

EXTENT OF WORK.—In 47 towns and villages evangelistic work is carried on, with day schools in nearly every one. These places are grouped into the seven districts of Zahleh, Baalbek, Meshghureh, Deir-el-Komar, Abeih, Suk el Gharb and Shweir. In 39 places communion services are held. To meet four such appointments in each place, fully 150 communions must be held annually. There are 47 schools with 2,400 children, to examine whom requires 35 days of solid work. Three missionaries are now charged with what was formerly done by five. There should be more ordained Syrians to share the responsibility. This is a paramount necessity for permanence and progress in the native evangelistic agency.

PERSONAL MENTION.—On New Year's Eve, Professor Patch gave an illustrated lecture at the Zahleh school on "Carbon." The occasion was the dedication of the school building, purchased in 1902, and recently repaired and improved. Invitations were responded to by 115 people. The lecture was very interesting, and was enjoyed by all.

The announced resignation of Mrs. Gerald F. Dale from the Syria Mission, to accept a position in the Woman's Hospital, of the College, will cause a vacancy in the ranks of the Lebanon Station exceedingly difficult to fill. Her unusual fitness for life and work in Syrian villages has rendered her services invaluable. We rejoice that Syria is still to have the rich benefit of her Christian efforts.

Many thanks are due the Bible Societies for rendering possible the wide distribution of God's Word. Their liberality seems unbounded. Yet we have endeavored never to part with a book for less than the highest price obtainable in each case.

For nine months of the year Miss Emily Bird was detained in the Prussian Hospital, where she was generously cared for by surgeons and nurses. Upon her return to Abeih, May 16th, over 100 school children visited the house with songs of welcome and the oriental salutation, "Thank God for your return in peace." And, although the silk-worm industry was at its height, claiming closest attention from the people, the missionary home was crowded with callers—300 in a month's time, beside the children, from Abeih and surrounding villages. Miss Bird is making slow, but gratifying progress. During her long absence her mother, alone in the home, continued the work.

The loss to the station of Mr. Bird's genial presence and mature counsels is not dimmed by time. "He being dead, yet speaketh." During the summer the plan of his devoted helper, Amin Fahd, for a memorial porch was realized. Every piaster of its cost was subscribed by Syrians. It is built of Lebanon stone, and enhances the appearance of Abeih church. Two tablets in memory of Rev. Simeon Calhoun and Rev. William Bird are placed on either side of the arch at the entrance, and the inscriptions are in Arabic and English. It is a fitting tribute to the labors of these devoted servants of God.

Another monument is building at the entrance to the beautiful Mission grounds at Shweir. It is a tomb, erected by the warm friends of Dr. William Carslaw out of every religious sect in Shweir, to receive the body of his son, James, who died early in September, 1903. This spontaneous memorial from Syrian friends

reveals the heartfelt appreciation of the more than quarter century of loving, patient service rendered to Syria by Dr. Carslaw, both as physician, preacher, pastor and educator. Though the Lord has called Home an only child, Dr. and Mrs. Carslaw may find comfort in the thought that their memory will remain in Lebanon long beyond the years allotted to sons and to sons' sons. Another testimony of sympathy came from an old pupil, an advocate in Egypt—a scholarship of ten pounds a year for three years, for the education of poor boys in the Shweir Boarding School.

NECROLOGY.—The necrology of the Lebanon field contains the names of twelve communicants, some of them “charter members” of Protestantism in their towns. Miss Bird writes, “In January the oldest of our church members was called to his Heavenly Home. For years, on pleasant Sabbaths, his seat at morning service had rarely been vacant, and his bent figure, with staff in hand, had been an object-lesson in regular church attendance. In March the wife of one of our elders, after a long and wearisome illness, ‘entered into rest.’ The poise and calmness with which these two met their summons was precious testimony to the reality of their faith in Christ.”

In villages near Zahleh death removed two staunch Christians. Each had passed the allotted “three score and ten.” They were the leading Protostants in their respective communities, and by their upright, consistent Christian lives, had won the confidence and esteem of all who knew them.

A sad death occurred in Deir el Komar,—sad, because of its loneliness. A preacher from the Suk el Gharb district, a young man eminently spiritual, returned to his Catholic home, dying of quick consumption. Our pastor visited him, and left instructions to be called, should the end draw near. Suddenly one night death came, and ere our pastor heard of it, arrangements had been made for a *Catholic* funeral and interment.

The banner school of the Station, at Qobb Elias, has met severe loss in the death of the faithful assistant teacher. Early in August he fell from a ladder and fractured his leg and arm. After many weeks of intense suffering and almost daily surgical attention, recovery seemed assured. Slight fever set in, and ere we

knew it he was gone. At his funeral the concourse was so large, that the service was held out of doors. The school boys whom he had trained well in singing, paid him their last tribute of honor by singing most appropriately from the school to the grave. No teacher in our employ was more conscientious than he.

**WEDDINGS.**—Wedding bells have rung frequently during the year. Once, when Mr. Jessup was in Ain Zehalteh, they rang after eleven o'clock at night. He was roused from sleep to marry a couple, whose united age was somewhere near 135 years. In the same village occurred the wedding of another pair, who together could hardly reach 35 years.

On the day after Christmas two members of the Greek Orthodox Church in Zahleh were united in marriage by the missionaries (because they were own cousins). The bride had been educated in Protestant schools. As both parties were from influential families, the ceremony attracted many people, who paid earnest attention to the gospel advice given to the happy couple. The next Sunday bride and groom attended the Protestant church service, and continued to do so, until in July they united with the church.

On the 5th of October, 1903, two earnest, practical, Christian young people were married in Zahleh. The groom was educated in Sidon Academy. While there he reclaimed his backsliding father. He went to Canada, but kept before him the purpose to return, study theology, and preach to his fellow-Syrians. His first act upon arrival was to teach a month without salary as a thank-offering for his safety. His wife is indeed one whose "price is far above rubies." She was educated in the training school of the British Syrian Mission. This young couple are a joy to those who have labored to see just such Christian hearts and homes.

**LEGAL BUSINESS.**—The legal business has included permits for new church roofs in Muallekeh and Aitenith; purchase of road privileges in Zahleh; abatement of a long-standing insult and injury to the Zahleh church property; defense of various innocent Protestants; help in settling property questions; transfer of names to the Protestant tax list; and many other minor problems.

The town of Sughbin furnished a law suit that lasted for

nearly a year. The energy of our Biblical preacher so infuriated the drunken, autocratic priest of the town that he twice entered our church during service, beat the school boys, struck the preacher, and broke up the meeting. A third time he sent an accomplice into the church for a similar disturbance. Mr. Jessup entered complaint against them both. Judgment was rendered against them,—thanks to the unremitting efforts of the American Consul in Beirut and the Consular Agent in Damascus.

CHANGES AMONG EMPLOYEES.—Five of our teachers left this year for America and Egypt. The great weight of this loss fell upon the Zahleh day school. Yusef Haddad, in Mission employ for more than fifteen years, with unusual gifts as an instructor, was obliged to resign because of throat trouble. With deep mutual regret he sailed for New York in June, with his wife and children. An elder in the church here, he has not forgotten his Christianity there. As he was selling silk goods in a hotel, he was asked to tell the fortunes of some women in the parlor. He demanded a good cash payment in advance. Then he recalled some of the gestures and mutterings of the Oriental gypsies, and quite satisfied his American dupes. Assured of this, he turned upon them with "What do you think I am? You know and I know that God alone knows the future. I am a Christian and fear God. There is your money!"

Another valuable teacher left the Zahleh school at the close of the year for Egypt. A young man of magnificent physique and excellent preparation, he built up the school in numbers and prestige.

The hardest vacancy to fill came after the resignation in September, 1903, of Rev. Murad Haddad, who for two years had supplied the Zahleh pulpit. The missionaries took his place for two months, greatly perplexed as to his successor. Then providentially came Mufid Yusef, the choicest graduate of the last theological class. He has proved his entire fitness for this important post. At Christmas time he married a Sidon Seminary graduate, who is a worthy help-meet. This summer he was offered a very lucrative position as agent in Beirut for certain British

firms. He declined, saying that he had consecrated his life to the preaching of the gospel.

Lebanon Station prefers to pay well for the best men available, rather than to increase the number of points for work. With a force of nearly 90 Syrian employées, many changes occur annually. This year there are thirteen places to supply with new employées, beside as many more necessary changes and removals. The transfers made on paper in the kalaidoscopic plans of the summer would mount up into the hundreds!

EDUCATION.—Primary education in the village schools has kept pace with the increasing desire for knowledge. Keen opposition has been felt in some places. Our schools are the envy and despair of other sects.

The Greek Bishop was asked by some of the people of Ain Sindianeh to open a Russian school. Now it happens that our Protestant school there is one of the best and is crowded with children. The Bishop knew this, and replied to his petitioners, "What do you want of a Russian school, when there is a good Protestant school here?"

In Zahleh Mrs. Jessup and Mrs. Doolittle have conducted a Tuesday afternoon class to teach any women to read who care to learn. A Catholic woman became so interested in the Bible, that she read many hours a day. She has finished the New Testament and is well on in the Old. A similar class has been taught by a female teacher near Suk el Gharb.

Emigration has multiplied languages in some of the schools. In the examination at Muallakeh six different languages might have been used, to suit the knowledge of the various pupils,—French, Italian, Greek, Turkish, Arabic and English. Two of the boys were born in Wisconsin, and understood English better than Arabic. Another was brought up in Tennessee, and had an unmistakable southern accent. A third boy came from Australia, with the peculiar, soft inflection of that country.

These Syrian day schools are little light-houses scattered throughout the land, requiring careful supervision. They are thoroughly Biblical, and their value is far out of proportion to their cost. New York State last year expended for public educa-

tion \$43,195,914. Lebanon Station had \$5,000 for its 47 village schools. Yet from these have arisen the men and women in whom rest the hopes of Syria.

The epitome of Dr. Carslaw's report of the Shweir Boys' Boarding School is as follows: "Eighty-one boys were enrolled, 32 of them full boarders and 18 lodgers; 6 were Protestants, 56 Greek Orthodox, 17 Catholics and 2 Maronites. The health of the boys was good. The head teacher, Murad Saleeby, B.A., is highly to be commended. He has introduced athletics, and has won the boys' attachment. The present excellent condition of the school is largely due to him. There is a quiet, earnest attention given to the Bible lessons never seen before. The school this year very nearly paid all expenses, teachers' salaries included. If station scholarships for poor-paying pupils had been credited to the school account, at the rate paid to the other boarding schools, there would have been a clear balance over all expenses of 1,700 piasters (\$60)." (Note)—This excellent financial showing is due to the thorough business management of both Dr. and Mrs. Carslaw. The latter, although she is never free from pain, cares for every detail of daily expense.

The following is the synopsis of Mr. Hardin's report of the Suk el Gharb Boys' Boarding School: "In the fall of 1903 boys came in such numbers that we found difficulty at first in providing for them all; but they were finally accommodated in rather better fashion than in former years. Of the 167 pupils, 135 were boarders and lodgers, and 32 day pupils. Judging from the experience of recent years, it would not be difficult to beat the record, year by year, had we the facilities for taking care of larger numbers. But we ought to cut down the numbers; 125 boarders would be the comfortable limit. It was a record year in at least one respect,—we never had to expel so many boys for bad conduct and general worthlessness as during the past year. General society, both religious and political, is built upon cliques. Boys bring this feeling with them to school, and it requires much alertness to get the better of it. Financially the year was a good one. Income from pupils rose above the hundred thousand piaster limit for the first time in the history of the school. If assisted pupils

were eliminated, and paying pupils taken in their place, the problem of self-support would be speedily solved. Our Protestant brethren are the worst sinners in this respect. They stoutly claim, in addition to spiritual benefits, a first seat at the temporal table of loaves and fishes, and they generally get it. Work in study showed good results at the examinations. Of the first class, 5 entered the Freshman Class, and 5 are teaching in day schools. Last year Freshman and Senior Classes were led by our boys. On Sundays we studied the Book of Acts throughout the year. The Sunday-school paid for a young man's education in Bardezagh High School, in Armenia. Religious instruction was given daily in all the classes, but we have seen little evidence of personal results in decided Christian character. Many of the older boys gave evidence of conscientious thoughtfulness, but it did not ripen into confession of faith in their Saviour. This is the crucial problem, and we feel the insufficiency of man and his methods, and must look to God for His sovereign grace and blessing."

In the Syrian Protestant College there were 88 pupils from the Lebanon field. In all the higher institutions larger fees are now paid and with less bargaining than before. The entire amount for higher education expended by 324 pupils from Lebanon field during the year was \$9,487.65.

EVANGELISTIC.—Church statistics this year are highly encouraging. Forty-seven new members were added in Lebanon,—an increase over last year of nearly fifty per cent. Twenty-nine children were baptized. The total membership in the seven organized churches is 695.

At Deir el Komar, the stronghold of the Maronite Christian sect, a spiritual blessing descended at the close of a spontaneous "Decision Day." Several people, nominally Maronites, practically Protestants, were urged by the visiting missionary openly to profess their evangelical faith. Finally the two most prominent ones, both heads of families, passed an evening in earnest discussion, and at its close stood and joined hands, and solemnly declared their purpose to unite with the church at the next communion. After years of seemingly fruitless labor, then and there began a revival. The Protestant sect was aroused by the earnest

endeavors of these new members. Additions were made at each successive communion season. A small organ was purchased for the chapel. Several possible applicants for church fellowship are found. The pastor is filled with hope.

At Sughbin, despite the opposition of the Catholic priest, the truth has advanced. The day school is larger *by far* than ever before. The church members, few in numbers, are fervent in spirit. Two earnest young men have recently joined the church, in whom there is great promise of continued usefulness. One of the school-boys has prepared an excellent book of Bible proof-texts for Protestant doctrines, culled from his daily readings and arranged by topics. The idea was entirely his own. For years Sughbin was accounted barren soil. Now there are signs of harvest.

The Syrian pastor at Shweir writes: "Most of our meetings during the week of prayer were very successful. We felt the presence of the Spirit of God in our midst. With great joy I inform you that on Sunday three confessed their faith before all the congregation and joined the church."

Mrs. Dale writes from her summer home in Rishmeyeh: "It has been a most delightful time,—the people were never more cordial, while each of the many visits to their homes is like a religious meeting, as all are most willing to listen and ask questions. The Abbot of the Monastery of Elijah has been deposed." He was the chief cause of reducing our once flourishing school to a mere handful. Two staunch members have been added to the struggling, persecuted church. One of them is such an excellent carpenter that the priests cannot prevent the people from employing him.

In Abeih the year's work has suffered, owing partly to Miss Bird's absence, and also to severe epidemics of typhoid fever and small-pox. For the first time in its history the Abeih Women's Sewing Society gave up its winter's work, most of the members being kept busy at their homes in caring for the sick. During the summer the church and Sunday-School services were very well attended.

At Baalbek the coming of several Protestant families from Mardin, people of sterling qualities, has put new life into the small

evangelical community. Much talk was aroused by the unexpected departure of a Papal nun from the Jesuit convent. She had by some means become enlightened, and, having finished her vow, determined to become a Protestant. Our Baalbek preacher and his wife were the entirely innocent abettors of her plans. She came with the wife to the manse at Zahleh, thence went alone to Egypt, where she is now, so far as is known, teaching in a Protestant school.

The pupils at Haush Barada, a small hamlet near Baalbek, collected a Turkish dollar during the year and sent it to the Lebanon treasurer, with the request that it be used in evangelistic work.

In Zahleh new members have been received at every communion. At the Easter service six new members were received, and six children baptized.

Over 200 children have attended the Sunday-School, despite the introduction of weekly offerings. 265 piasters (\$9.50) were collected. 32 books were given as prizes for regular attendance.

The Zahleh Women's Sewing Society, of 59 members, met 19 times in 14 homes, with an average attendance of 28; 83 garments were made and given away, some with a Bible passage read by the giver. The receipts amounted to 781 piasters (\$28), and 698 piasters (\$25) were expended.

The Women's Christian Endeavor Society has 20 active members. Seven of them joined the church during the year; 476 piasters (\$17) were collected, and 448 piasters (\$16) were paid for a scholarship in the Prussian Deaconess' School.

After the arrival of the new pastor in November the place of holding the men's meetings was changed to a more central position, and renewed interest was shown in the Sunday evening meetings.

On New Year's morning a very helpful, spiritual "sunrise meeting" was held by the united Societies.

They also joined in an annual celebration on the evening of July 18th. One of the addresses was made by a Syrian-American, visiting his home and church. His words had all the freshness of American Christian Endeavor.

Early in April twenty-three delegates from the Lebanon field attended the Conference of Syrian workers held at the College.

LEBANON PRESBYTERY.—On September 6-9 Lebanon Presbytery met in Zahleh. Twenty-five members were present, beside two delegates from Sidon and Tripoli Presbyteries. Many topics of vital importance were thoroughly discussed. The Complete Form of Government, arranged by a committee representing the three Presbyteries and the Mission, was accepted and adopted. An important financial step was considered which will throw upon the Presbytery a large part of the responsibility that is now carried by the missionaries alone. The consummation of this plan will make more permanent and prominent the part played by the Syrians in the evangelization of their own land. They were made to realize, as never before, that we are depending upon *them* and upon their *children* to bear the brunt of the battle in the holy war.

CHARACTER SKETCHES.—Individual lives show the power of Christianity. In Ras Baalbek is a man who recently returned after an absence of many years. He went away an ignorant Catholic. He came back an intelligent Protestant. During his stay in Hums he had been taught to read by the preacher, and now knows the Bible thoroughly. "A good man, indeed," is the testimony of the Ras people. He spends many hours of Sunday by himself in the mountains, praying for the people of his town.

At Jeditheh our teacher, after winning over his father and brothers, has turned his attention to the station-master, and induced him to attend church as regularly as railroad duties will allow.

The preacher-teacher at Aleih has been in Mission employ for well-nigh three-score years; 45 of them in his present place. His home is in Suk el Gharb, two miles and a half from his school. Almost every day for these 45 years, in winter's rain and mud and summer's heat and dust, he has walked to and fro—five miles a day. Had he set out to encircle the earth, he would now have accomplished nearly a half of the third revolution.

Simaan Sejaan, of Metulleh, is a one-time teacher of limited mental ability, rich in faith, poor in worldly goods. He has been the sole means of keeping alive the gospel flame in his region.

Years ago he was dropped from the roll of teachers, but has never desisted from preaching the gospel in his simple way. Early in the year the people of his hamlet joined with those of another in asking him to teach their children, offering a small compensation. He immediately sent word to *another* ex-teacher, poorer, if possible, than he, and offered the work to him, because he was more needy! Such as he will stand near to the King of Love during His glorious reign.

At Zahleh is an interesting character,—a weaver of native cloaks, whom to meet brings a blessing. He is a short, thick-set, powerful man, with a grip like a vise and an ever-present smile. He cannot read a single word; but by means of his daughter he has learned the Scriptures by heart, and always has a verse to say at the Christian Endeavor meeting. While on a trip to sell his cloaks, our weaver spent some time at a village where we have a school, and (like Paul of old) mingled religion with business, bringing in many references to Scripture. His exposition of Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones evoked some question as to whether it is found in the Bible. Thereupon this unlearned artisan directed them to the exact chapter, and his doubting auditors found it just as he had said.

Another pen-picture—a middle-aged stone cutter from Hums, now residing in Zahleh. A few years ago he was the boon companion of the roughest element among the Greek sect of Hums. His time was wasted in coffee houses. He could not read and cared nothing for religion. He was aroused by hearing his nephew studying his Bible lesson for school in the evenings at home. Then a Christian relative persuaded him to go to the Protestant service. From that point onward his progress was rapid, and to-day he is the most sensible, earnest, active member in the church and Christian Endeavor Society. A severe trial of faith came recently in the death of his only child, a promising boy—a loss doubly great to an Oriental. His Christian fortitude shone brightly out of the clouds of bereavement, and his faith never faltered. In the evening after the funeral he said to his wife, "Let us read and sing, for we should praise God at all times."

Such are some of the results of mission work in Syria. Every child educated in our village schools, every young man or woman who has passed through our higher institutions of learning, every page printed in our Press, every patient treated in our hospitals, every person who attends our church services, or hears or reads the gospel message, *may be* in God's providence a factor in the grand onward movement of His Kingdom in the Orient. In August, after the inspiring Brummana Conference, a few days were passed at Aleih, whence was witnessed the wonderful display in Beirut harbor, in commemoration of King Edward's coronation day. Twenty British battle-ships had so arranged myriads of incandescent electric lights, that as the darkness fell upon harbor and city and plain, the forms of these twenty iron-clads stood out from the darkness like a fleet of fairy ships, at times lost to view as the mists crept up the mountain-side, and again appearing in all their exquisite beauty. And this transcendent display was caused by *single lamps*, grouped and arranged by a master hand.

Let us, then, keep brightly burning the many lamps of truth and purity that have been lighted in Syria, assured that God, the loving, all-wise Creator is preparing them to beautify the Heavenly City.

GEORGE C. DOOLITTLE.







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