

# **DARE AND PERSEVERE**

*The story of one hundred years of  
evangelism in Syria and Lebanon,  
from 1860 to 1960*

by  
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*Field Secretary*

Foreword by  
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**LEBANON EVANGELICAL MISSION  
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## The Author.



**Miss F.E. Scott, B.A.**

Miss Frances Elizabeth Scott, B.A., who joined the Mission in 1926, has been its Field Secretary since 1952. She was sometime Principal of the British-Lebanese Training College in Beirut (upon relinquishment of which appointment she received the Lebanese Government's Gold Medal for distinguished services to the country), and subsequently took charge of the work at Damascus. She is thus well qualified to write a history of the Mission to mark its Centenary Year.

Miss Scott has reviewed the work in terms of the main phases of development, treating its principal aspects in each succeeding phase, rather than in one continuous narrative. This method has the merit of high-lighting the outstanding pattern of each generation and focusing on the more important features of each sphere of the work. The book is packed with anecdote and verbatim commentary by the persons concerned, which makes for most interesting reading. Above all, the dominant purpose of the Mission, namely to glorify God and to win the people of these lands to a living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is maintained in perspective throughout; and the title theme, combining bold adventure for Christ with a patient perseverance in His service, is skillfully pursued. Miss Scott concludes with a forward look on the need for training youth in Christian leadership and for more dedicated messengers of the Gospel, and with an upward look to the One who satisfies the deepest needs of all mankind.

**Note** – Miss Scott was awarded the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in 1966. She retired at the end of 1965 and went to live in New Zealand; she stayed with Mollie Harries, also a former member of the mission, in the Lady Allum Rest home on the North Shore. When they were there they organised a special prayer meeting for the mission and certainly spoke about the work to the people there. She past away on the 30<sup>th</sup> November 1991 aged 91 years old.

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## FOREWORD

THIS account of the work of a Mission which for the past hundred years has effectively witnessed to the truth in Christ Jesus will not only be welcomed by supporters but will be of great interest to all who study the history of missions in the Middle East. Miss Scott gives a vivid picture of the struggles and the ideals of the early missionaries. There is no doubt of their courage and singleness of purpose and it is not surprising in the circumstances to find a certain lack of understanding of the Ancient Churches of the East. It was inevitable in their day and generation. The book has the courage to face the difficult problems which are always posed by interdenominational societies. The difficulties are made more acute by the very success of the evangelistic work of these devoted servants of Jesus Christ. The great dangers we are in by our unhappy divisions stand out all too clearly and the increasing number of sects has complicated what was a comparatively simple problem in the early days of the Mission. It is a great challenge to prayer and deep thought.

There is one serious omission in the story which has been given to us. It is typical of the author that she has left out any reference to herself. A highly qualified and gifted teacher, she has played an important role in the educational work of the Mission, not least as head of the Training College which she describes. She has also more recently assumed the tremendous responsibilities of the Field Secretary of the Mission. She has a happy gift of establishing easy personal relationships with people of all types and not only finds time for her many mission duties, but has for many years played a leading part in inter-mission and inter-church councils.

I do warmly commend this book, which both tells an interesting story, and gives all who read it cause for deep thankfulness to God for a century of evangelistic effort which has been greatly blessed.

CAMPBELL.  
Archbishop in Jerusalem.



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# Part I

## Beginnings, 1869-1869

### Chapter I

#### The Need

FEW Missions can have had an origin as strange as that of the British Syrian Mission. The lady whose birthday we celebrate on Founder's Day did not go out to found a mission, but to do, for six months, what would now be called relief work among refugees. She went to Syria in response to her Lord's call to care for widows and orphans: and He led her on to the opening of schools and the laying of foundations of a work which in His hand has prospered these hundred years.

The lands we now call Syria and Lebanon were at that time part of the great Ottoman Empire, which embraced practically all the Moslem world. It was an empire in which often great power was wielded by local governors. Members of Christian sects, mostly of the ancient Eastern Churches, enjoyed a certain amount of religious freedom, but lived in a state of constant fear of the cruelty and ruthlessness of their rulers. As had so often happened down the centuries, the country was the battleground over which contending parties fought, and almost nothing was done to develop its resources. Roads were few and poor, and apart from the small coastal towns and Damascus, the population lived in scattered villages. In this part of the book we shall use the name "Syria" to include all the area from the Mediterranean Sea to the Euphrates, and from Turkey south to Palestine.

Beirut in the summer of 1860 was a sad place, crowded with refugees who had fled from mountain villages - women and children who had seen their husbands and fathers killed before their eyes. In the castles of Hasbeiya and Beit-ed-din, in Damascus and other places, men and boys had been betrayed by those who had promised them protection, and cruelly slaughtered. For long there had been bitter enmity between the Christian population on the one hand, and their Druze neighbours on the other, and there were frequent clashes and family feuds. Hatred and bitterness came to a head, and the Maronites and Greek Orthodox Christians fled for refuge to their Moslem rulers, the Turks, but they were betrayed, and the men delivered up to the swords of their enemies. Although there were individual cases, especially in Damascus, where Moslems protected their Christian neighbours, in general the Christians were completely at the mercy of those they feared.

Even now, after a hundred years, the terror and bitterness of those days are not forgotten. I remember an old gentleman, father of one of our teachers, sitting in our drawing-room and talking of the old days. Suddenly he took off his tarboosh and showed us a deep dent in the crown of his head. As a little boy he had gone with his father to the castle of Hasbeiya and suffered with the rest. His body had been left for dead, under his father's; in some remarkable way his life had been spared, but the memory could not be effaced. Can we be surprised that the Christians fear the Moslems and Druzes and are unwilling to trust them? They have suffered too much. The Turkish authorities did nothing to protect them from the barbarity of their neighbours. It is little wonder that the Christians of Lebanon are afraid of being again under Moslem rule.

Only the grace and love of God can overcome the hatred, bitterness and fear which such events entail, and it is to proclaim the Gospel of that love and grace that the Mission continues in the land, God's

instrument of reconciliation among communities where there is still division and strife. So we do not dwell on the details of the massacres, or seek to apportion blame to one party or another. Suffice it to say that as a result of what are now euphemistically called "the troubles" of 1860, Beirut and the coastal places were swarming with terrified, homeless, destitute women and children, with scarred memories of tragic bereavement. In some places the attack had come suddenly, and families were separated: not until weeks later was it known who had been spared. "The orders in Hasbeiya" (to quote from a letter written at the time), "were that every male from seven to seventy should be slain. Thus thousands upon thousands were butchered. Those who escaped to Damascus were, in a few weeks, also cut down. .. their houses were rifled and burnt, and their widows and orphans abandoned to all the horrors of flight ... most to the seaport towns of Tyre, Sidon and Beirut." Whole districts, with their towns and villages, were laid waste with fire and sword. "Women of the highest rank were now with their children sunk into abject misery almost appalling." Such was the condition of Syria in the summer of 1860 - "thousands of women and children plunged in helpless despair".

## Chapter 2

### The Supply

GOD does not leave His children, nor are His ears deaf to the cry of the widow and fatherless. As the news of these terrible happenings spread to England, many hearts were stirred to sympathy. There was one woman, herself a widow, whose heart was quickened as she read, for she had spent a few years in Syria and knew something of the conditions there. Mrs. Bowen Thompson had lived in Antioch with her doctor husband, until he died of fever in Scutari, where the couple had gone to help the wounded soldiers from the Crimea. In Antioch she had begun classes for women, knowing their ignorance and need of the Word of God; so now when their desperate cry came to her ears, she knew that she must go back to Syria, not only to relieve physical distress and suffering, but most of all to bring the "balm of Gilead" to heal the broken hearts and save sin-sick souls. To quote her own words: "As a widow, I felt specially called to try and alleviate their distress, and make known to them the only balm for a broken heart - the love of Jesus." The motto of her family was "DARE AND PERSEVERE", and never was it more strikingly exemplified than in Elizabeth Bowen Thompson, as she sailed for Beirut, landing on October 27th, 1860. Within a few days she was laid low with fever and was advised to return home at once. "You can do nothing here!" Nothing? How little the world sees! Thanks to her daring to obey the heavenly vision and the heavenly voice, and to her perseverance in, faith in the path where her Lord led, a work was begun which by His providence has gone on for a hundred years.

What did she do? She began in the hotel where she stayed, speaking to those about her of her Lord, and teaching them His Word. She rented a house where she gathered widows and set them to work making clothes with material sent from England. More than seventy widows filled the two rooms prepared, and the doors had to be closed to keep out those for whom there was no room. The day began with Bible reading, singing and prayer, and two hours were given up to learning to read. Some of these poor women were so deeply touched that very soon difficulties were overcome, and the love and peace of the Saviour entered their hearts. Some of them became Biblewomen, and in their turn set out to carry to others the Gospel which had been the means of showing them the Saviour of their souls.

There arose the question of what to do with the children. Often there was no "home" in which to leave them, so they had to come with their mothers. What a noise they made! Mrs. Thompson, ever resourceful, found a teacher for them: tents served as classrooms. Soon over three hundred children gathered and a second teacher was supplied. Mothers and children alike were learning of the loving Heavenly Father, and singing the Arabic version of "My faith looks up to Thee, Thou Lamb of Calvary".

This was not all: other women who could not come to school were given needlework to do at home, for which they were paid. For many years the sale of beautiful needlework and gold embroidery enabled poor women to earn a livelihood under the care of the Mission.

Money came from personal friends, and her own private fortune was dedicated to the work. The story is told of how Mrs. Thompson established a laundry for ships of the British Fleet which were in port, and so obtained work for her widows for seven months. A contemporary writer gives us the picture: "The widows now had an additional means of livelihood, but Mrs. Thompson had additional toil. There were no carriages: she had to walk or ride a donkey to and fro, and to instruct in mending and ironing by her own example. 'Here comes the laundress!' people used to say, as she passed along; but she

would only remark, 'Such contempt is nothing compared with what the Lord endured for us.' "

The daily needs of the large family called forth daily prayer, and many remarkable answers to prayer were received. The needs were told only to God and He sent the supply - sometimes a gift from the Pasha, sometimes a friend's cheque through the post, sometimes from some unknown source, but always at the right time, and the amount more than sufficient for the current need. Here is one story in Mrs. Thompson's own words. "I had no money in hand for my poor widows. They were without food; I could not touch my own dinner. I went up into my own room and besought the Lord to give me the means of helping them. While yet in prayer, the excellent Prussian Consul called to tell me he had opened a soup-kitchen, and would give a meal a day to fifty of my poor women. Jehovah Jireh!" Is it any wonder that Mrs. Thompson took for the motto of the work those very words: "Jehovah Jireh"? Those words stand over the doorway of many a house still, a reminder to her successors to carry on in the same spirit of faith and prayer to their all-sufficient God.

It was soon evident that a work had been begun which could not lightly be dropped. It grew rapidly: demands for other schools came in, and her motherly affection for her pupils so deepened that she realised the Lord had a continuing service for her to do for Him in Syria. A sister in England, Mrs. Henry Smith, acted as Honorary Secretary to a Committee to help forward regular contributions to the work.

A fortnight after she landed, Mrs. Thompson was introduced to a young man who had miraculously escaped from the massacres in Damascus, and was recommended to her as interpreter and assistant. Selim Kessab remained for forty-six years the devoted and untiring servant of God in the Mission. Without his support and knowledge, much less must have been accomplished. We shall see how he helped to build up the work and especially to set the high standard of education and character for which the schools became famous. In his book, *Our Inspector's Story*, he tells of those early days, and of all the calls that came to Mrs. Thompson. Here is a quotation that will illustrate how manifold was the task she undertook:

"It was not enough ... for Mrs. Thompson to give employment within and without, to organise the schools, and to manage the household; she must needs inaugurate visitation in slums, cottages and crowded inns, herself carrying food, clothing and medicine, together with the tidings of the Kingdom. Many and many a dark night have I attended her on her way through mulberry trees and prickly pears and muddy places, laden with relief, and I have seen her kneel down close to the sick, to plead with them, and to pray, and to read the Word of God. I well remember how on these occasions tears of repentance and faith used to flow, and how many 'fell asleep' in radiant expectation.

"This indefatigable lady would rise at 5 a.m., conduct family prayer later on, arrange for the day's sewing, give necessary orders, teach certain classes, and attend to outside cases. After dinner she would write and visit till dark, and then she would attend to accounts, plan for the morrow, see visitors, hold Bible chats, or go forth to the haunts of sin. I had often to sit up till one or two in the morning, and once at last, being deadly tired, I remonstrated, and said, 'Such an excess of labour will exhaust even a strong constitution like mine: I can hardly bear it any longer.' But how ashamed I felt when she replied so sweetly, 'How can we enjoy ease while so many are suffering in soul and body!' I was greatly troubled in conscience, and said to myself, 'If a lady, who is a volunteer and a foreigner, does so much and cares so much for my nation, how much more ought I to spend and be spent in a cause so holy.' "

Though the Women's School was discontinued after a few years, as most of the widows were forced to return to their villages, the following story, as told by Mrs. Thompson herself, shows something of its influence on these poor women for whom so little had ever been done before:

"Old Scheneh, our first and oldest pupil (being above sixty years of age), is now lying on her death bed. She has had to go through deep waters, and as yet cannot grasp the out-stretched hand of Jesus to keep her from sinking. Her husband and two married sons were the first who were slain on her knees in the castle of Hasbeiya, and she and her three widowed daughters have been in our schools ever since they were opened, also several of her grandchildren. Truly we have been permitted to minister comfort to many.... When we called to see her yesterday, she exclaimed, 'Dear lady, I bless God for that school. I can't sleep at night but those words I was so long in getting by heart (I think she was three months learning them correctly) are always sounding in my ears, "Come unto Me all ye that are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." 'She said she was a great sinner. I asked her did she not know the hymn, 'Just as I am'? Her countenance brightened and then she joined her daughter and me in singing it. 'But there is one I love better, which we used to sing at school', and then she began singing, 'My faith looks up to Thee, Thou Lamb of Calvary'."

The adult school, the infant school, and a separate school for little boys, were quickly followed by a girls' school for the upper classes, and there was also a Sunday evening class when some of the parents and brothers, as well as workers and friends, came to hear the Word of God. "The few who can read sit round the tables and read verses in turn, after which Selim (Kessab) reads a Chapter and explains it. Many questions are asked, and then we close in prayer."

In May 1862, H.R.H. The Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII), while on a visit to Beirut, visited the schools, listened to reading and recitation, and inspected work. This visit gave immense pleasure at the time, and had a most important consequence five years later, as we shall see.

The year 1862 was also memorable for the arrival of Mr. Mentor Mott with his wife and Miss Lloyd, two sisters of Mrs. Bowen Thompson. They saw at once the magnitude and importance of the work and readily threw themselves into it. Their home in England having been destroyed, they decided to remain in Syria. Mr. Mott, being a wealthy man, bought land near the "Institution", as the compound which Mrs. Thompson had rented was called, and built a large house there. In subsequent letters and reports we read much of the hospitality and Christian gatherings for which the house became renowned. Now, alas! the beautiful and valuable property belongs to a French lycee, whose garden adjoins the present Blind School and Headquarters of the Mission.

It was in 1862 also that a start was made with a Teacher Training Department, a feature of the educational programme for which the Mission has ever since been almost unique. The need for women teachers was very evident on all sides. Hardly any of the so-called Christian women could read, much less the Moslems and Druzes. How could they grow in knowledge of the Saviour of whom she told them, or be comforted in their distress, without the Word of God in their hearts and heads? So plans were made to educate some of the more promising pupils as teachers. The following year the Institution was purchased, together with a garden, and the building was enlarged to provide accommodation for boarders. This department started with five, who were taken free and provided with everything. Even so there were difficulties. Mr. Kessab tells of one experience: "One day I met several widows leading their children away from our gate, and weeping. I insisted on knowing why, and they said, after much hesitation, 'Mrs. Bowen Thompson is going to send them to England with the Fleet!' I had to run in instantly to tell Mrs. Thompson, who soon allayed their fears." Nowadays parents are willing to pay high fees and expenses, and come months in advance to secure a place in the school for their daughters!

Mrs. Thompson gave much personal attention to these first trainees, instructing them in Scripture, English and other subjects, and praying with them and for them. No doubt it was the personal care

lavished upon them that resulted in the great blessing of many who went out with the Gospel in their hearts and on their lips, to pass on to others the knowledge of the Way of Salvation which they had found themselves in school.

## Chapter 3

### Developing Opportunities

It is not very easy to make out from the records the order in which various branch schools were opened in Beirut, or even where they were located; the city has changed so much. We find early mention of a Boys' School, when the number of children attending the "Institution" became unmanageable. A further division was made by the formation of an Infant School, which soon had 200 on the roll. There still stands by the gate of the British Lebanese Training College (the present name of the former Institution), a ruined building which bears an inscription "English School ... Foundation Stone laid in 1866". We have an account of Christmas examinations in 1863, lasting two days, when 339 pupils from seven schools in Beirut were examined, and a note adds that more names were on the books. As examinations were oral and public, held in the presence of outside guests, no doubt some scholars found it convenient to stay away! One note from the examination of the Upper Girls' School helps us to realise how far we have come since those days. "Next came their examination in grammar by their Arabic Master, who is considered a first-rate teacher.... Arabic grammar has not hitherto been taught to Syrian females, and when Mrs. Thompson engaged this master, he was at first indignant that he was to teach girls grammar; but he soon learnt to take the greatest interest in his pupils, whom he teaches for an hour daily, and is now quite proud of them." We find pupils singing carols and hymns in Arabic and English, reading Old and New Testament fluently in Arabic, and in English, and able to answer questions on what they read. "Their Scripture knowledge was good, and they repeated several Chapter s by heart."

By 1863, orders had come to the poor widows of Hasbeiya from the Greek and Maronite Bishops that, unless they returned "home", they would forfeit the ordinances of the Church and some Government indemnity to rebuild their houses. Some returned to gather in the olives and grapes and see what could be done, but they had no one to help or advise them. Many of the women urged Mrs. Bowen Thompson to transfer the Women's School to Hasbeiya and open a girl's school, so that they might continue work and learning. This decided Mrs. Thompson to visit the Hasbeiya district and see for herself what could be done and whether some guarantee from those in power could be given that the schools would be protected in the event of any future outbreak of trouble. Such a trip was quite an undertaking in those days, involving as it did horses, mules, tents and servants. Several women from the schools in Beirut were there to welcome the travellers. "But oh! what pen can describe the utter desolation, ruin and misery of Hasbeiya, once the largest, most prosperous and beautiful village of the Lebanon." Accompanied by some of the women, they went over the ruins to identify their former homes. "All were in ruins ... walls burnt or cracked ... heaps of stones and rubbish, and here and there a skull or human bones.... Here, too, our hearts were refreshed by a little girl who laid her hand on my arm and said, 'I have been in your school!' "Losing no time, Mrs. Thompson visited the Moslem princes in the Castle and secured their goodwill, as well as that of the Druze authorities, even the notorious Sitt Naifeh. A room was engaged and prepared and one of the trained girls put in charge. Before sunset the names of fifty girls had been enrolled. A former Beirut Biblewoman, then living in Hasbeiya with her husband, was appointed to act as Biblewoman there. Some of the women who had learned to sew and knit were encouraged to prepare articles for sale at the local monthly fair in the neighbourhood.

This is the story of the first of the branch schools to be established outside Beirut. The school is now conducted by the Synod of the National Evangelical Church, in our premises; our workers are in close collaboration with the Church, and Hasbeiya remains an important centre for the Mission's evangelistic work among women and girls. It is not without significance that when the time came to buy land and



build our own Mission house, property was acquired quite close to the Protestant Church, which had been established many years earlier.

A school in Choueir was opened in a different way. One of the girls trained in Beirut was married to a young mason in that large mountain village, where there had never been a school for girls. She asked her husband's permission to open one, and he gladly consented, saying, "How can I refuse my wife to open a school and teach others what she has been taught herself? I know well the advantages of an educated wife." So the school was opened in November 1865 and shortly increased from twenty-five to eighty pupils.

In the same year, in response to the earnest entreaties of the inhabitants, a school was begun in Mokhtara, in the palace of the Druze leader, Jumblatt Beg.

Zahleh, at that time having a population of about 3,000 nominal Christians, Catholic and Orthodox, was the next place to petition for a school. There were difficulties and serious opposition, and it was not until 1868 that the school was opened. "A Gospel door had been opened through the young people who had learned with us in Beirut and who knew the power and comfort of God's Word. These formed a nucleus, and before very long our English lady in charge reported 126 pupils and the absolute necessity of opening a separate school for boys." More opposition was aroused, but in the end the school moved to a much better site and more suitable premises, and received much financial help from a national source. Soon a second school was opened "since the Word of God could not be bound".

The year 1867 saw the opening of a school in Ainzahalta, where again the Lord wonderfully answered prayer in a striking way. In response to a request from several of her former pupils, Mrs. Thompson had sent a teacher to Deir-el-Kamr, a large mountain village in the south, but the local Pasha, a Catholic, closed the school and imprisoned the teacher. Mrs. Thompson appealed to the Ambassador in Constantinople and wrote to the Committee in England. At that time the Sultan was visiting London and the Prime Minister, Lord Beaconsfield, took the opportunity at a Guildhall banquet to mention this outrage in the dominions of one who proclaimed that he was giving "full liberty to European agents and missionaries in the Turkish dominions". The matter was investigated, and the result was that the offending Pasha personally conducted Mrs. Thompson to the neighbouring village of Ainzahalta and enabled her to open a school there. The graphic story is told in detail in Mr. Kessab's book.

That visit of the Sultan to England had an even more far-reaching result. The Prince of Wales himself, who had seen the Beirut schools in 1862, personally commended our schools to the Sultan, and the result was an Imperial Writ or Firman, which was received in the summer of 1868, permitting Mrs. Thompson to open schools in different parts of Syria, and calling on the authorities not only to protect her from molestation, but also to help her in her undertakings. Even in our own day, this Firman has been accepted by the Government as proof of our right to maintain schools in these lands.

In 1867 came the call to open work in Damascus. Mr. Kessab, grieved that nothing was being done for girls in this ancient city, laid the matter before the Lord, and the very next day several leading Greek Orthodox gentlemen visited him to beg his mediation with Mrs. Bowen Thompson for a girls' school. In response to their petition, in which some Moslems and Jews also joined, Mrs. Thompson arrived and preparations were made. These wealthy gentlemen wished for a high class school in which their daughters might receive a thorough education. In conference with them, Mrs. Thompson agreed on a plan by which she was able to help the poor too. She writes in her journal: "It has been agreed that as the rich were contending the poor ought not to pay, that they should do so for them, and I proposed

that for every pound, they should have the privilege of sending four children for one year free to our Arabic school, and this, I am glad to say, meets their objections. In this way several Jewish children have been already adopted - four little ones for one pound. May a rich blessing attend this plan?" The school was opened in the Christian quarter in 1868. Later on, a school was provided in the Meedan quarter for Druze boys and girls, and finally a third school especially for Moslem girls.

For the opening of two schools Mr. Mentor Mott was specially responsible. Many are the stories told of this pious though somewhat eccentric gentleman, but there is no doubt about his zeal for the Lord and his fearlessness in seeking to win souls, even in the teeth of opposition. He was greatly interested in young men, and in those who were handicapped, and it was not long before his compassion for the blind expressed itself in action. He hired a cottage near his house and engaged someone who could instruct the blind in handicraft, and in the Moon system of reading. The work grew and later became part of the Mission. Many teachers and Scripture readers, trained in this school, were able to carry the good news of the Gospel to others. People used to say: "They put us to shame: they know their Bibles better than we do!" At a later date, schools for the blind were carried on in Tyre and Damascus. At one time a class for cripples was organised.

In the spring of 1869, Mr. Mott went on a missionary tour down the coast. Finding the Americans at work in Sidon, he went on to Tyre which he found "absolutely devoid of either a school or of Gospel testimony". Having sent to Beirut for alphabets, primers and a blackboard, he collected a few children and began to teach them himself. He gathered poor folk, mostly fishermen, and spoke to them of the atoning work of Jesus. In spite of opposition, the work was established. He made himself responsible for the cost of the teacher, and soon one was sent who had relations in Tyre with whom she could live. Opposition was not over, but the work went on, and later a boys' school was opened at the request of several parents, with a pupil-teacher in charge, who had lately married a young Protestant. Mrs. Thompson writes: "Perhaps none of our Branch Schools have suffered so much persecution as this nursling. Before we commenced there was no instruction of any kind given to the daughters of Tyre.... But no sooner was the Gospel standard raised, no sooner was the Word of God read and taught in that ancient city, than the enemy came in like a flood."

## Chapter 4

### Bible Mission

WE can perhaps trace the origin of this part of the work in these words from a letter written by Mrs. Bowen Thompson soon after her arrival in Beirut. "Ignorance of the truth, and deeply cherished revenge characterised the greater number of the women. Even the families of priests would say, 'We are like the cows: we know nothing.' When, however, their Christian teachers unfolded to them the Bible, they would sit at their feet in rapt attention, exclaiming, 'We never heard such words.' 'Does it mean for us women?'; while some few blessed God for the privilege of learning to read His Word."

From among these widows one and another were chosen for special instruction, and these went among the homes teaching those who could not come to school. By 1864, we find a report of three Biblewomen, whose support came from the "Bible and Domestic Mission" in England. One visited the khans (inns) and among Moslem families, and had begun visiting some Druze families in another quarter. Another was a young married woman without family, who had started a Bible reading in her own home. A third, who had been working in Beirut, had married and gone to Hasbeiya, whither some of the refugees had returned: "Nakhleh is now at Hasbeiya, and is full of comfort in her work. She says the people are so changed. Those who had persecuted the Protestants are now all anxious to hear the Gospel."

From the Report for 1865 we take one story to show with what a Biblewomen might have to contend. "I went to see the mothers of some girls in school and read to them. . . . Two priests entered: they said, 'What is this?' The woman of the house answered, 'She is reading to us from the Testament.'

One of them said laughing, 'In old times the Testament was for the priest alone, and peace was found then, but now, when everybody has a Testament, wickedness is entered.' I said to him, 'Not at all ... but through the wickedness of our hearts, and the Testament makes this appear. . . .' Then the priest said, 'We want to write the names of those who are *dead*, make prayers and masses for them.' This they did and took money. I said, 'It is strange you write the names of the dead, and you don't write the names of the living, to pray for them, and we know that God says in His Book, He is the God of the living and not of the dead.' The priest said, 'This does not concern you. You are an ignorant woman. You have learnt a few words and lo! you want to preach to the people, to make them irreligious.' The woman of the house said, 'No, father, all that she reads and tells us is from the Book of God: and I must tell you I never heard such words from your reverend fathers!'"

From Hasbeiya, speaking of the temporary appointment of a Biblewoman: "Before the month was over, she resolved, God helping her, not to leave Hasbeiya, but to devote herself entirely to the religious instruction of the women. Four days in the week she visits different localities, where she has Mothers' Meetings for prayer and reading the Scriptures.... The people are very thankful and gladly go to hear her."

That the Biblewoman was a welcome visitor at some of the Moslem *hareems* is evident from the following story told by Mrs. Bowen Thompson. "A few days ago a tall and handsome woman called on me at the *Madresse* (school) early in the morning, and attended our prayers in the great hall. She then presented a letter of introduction from our Biblewoman (in Deir-el-Kamr).... She told me she was a Moslem, but that her two daughters, who attend the school regularly, were making great progress both in Arabic and English. She spoke so highly of Sophia (the Biblewoman), of her love and devotion

to the children, and her regular visits to the Castle, which she never left without reading to the ladies."

The following year the number of Biblewoman was increased to six, two being appointed to Damascus. Of one working in Beirut we read: "Her straightforward exhibition of the truth has silenced many gainsayers and led not a few to read the Word of God." An interesting sidelight on method comes from Damascus, where the two women visited together, it being not advisable to go alone. "They visit several families and collect some neighbours, and while one reads a Chapter, the other asks questions. 'This is the only way in which we can have any profitable conversation on the Bible. The women are so excessively ignorant that they know not how to ask or to answer a question, and in this way they get interested and join in the conversation.' "Speaking of Moslem women: "Others begged that I would allow our Biblewoman to come to the hareem to teach them to read. Surely this call is from God. Can we doubt that coming, as these Biblewomen do, in the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel of Peace, their visits will prove as life from the dead?"

The Report for the following year (1867) shows how much progress had been made in Damascus. Mrs. Bowen Thompson writes of a Sunday when the two Biblewomen brought their thirty adult pupils to her. "There were several visited by the Biblewomen an hour a day three times a week. Most of them commenced with the Arabic alphabet, and some are now able to read the Psalms, and others the New Testament." They fully understood the questions asked. "In speaking of prayer I asked had any of them felt that they had really had an answer to prayer? Several of them said they had, and one young woman exclaimed, 'Oh yes! Now I ask God for everything and I can feel He hears and answers me.' "

In the last Report she wrote, Mrs. Bowen Thompson says: "Our Biblewomen, by their simple straightforward conversation and their knowledge of the habits and prejudices of the people, gain an increasing access, some even into houses and hareems of the wealthy. They are living epistles known and read of all, and prove great helpers in our Mission work. It is really surprising with how much discretion and readiness they are able to meet the objections of the gainsayers. Oft-times have they confronted the priests, as well as answered the doubts and difficulties of Jews and Moslems." We can see how Mrs. Bowen Thompson had faithfully imparted to those who gathered about her not only her own sure faith in God, and her knowledge of His Word, but also her whole-hearted devotion to those in need, whether physical or spiritual. When a fever epidemic carried off many children in a mountain village, Biblewoman and teachers were indefatigable in visiting the sick. One was asked whether people sent for her on their beds of sickness, or in case of death. "Oh, I do not wait till they send for me," she said, "I go as soon as I hear of any case."

Thus was the foundation laid for what has come to be known familiarly as "the evangelistic side" of the Mission. The term "Biblewoman" has given place to "woman evangelist" or, as it is in Arabic, "*mubashiri*", with the same meaning, "one who brings the Gospel".

## Chapter 5

### Home Organisation

NOT long after Mrs. Bowen Thompson went to Syria, the group of ladies with whom she had been associated for the purposes of sending relief to Syria, seeing that a work of more lasting significance was in progress, formed themselves into a society called "The Ladies' Association for the Moral and Religious Improvement of Syrian Females". The Victorians went in for long titles! Apart from the Honorary Treasurer, all the Officers and Members of the Committee were ladies, many of them titled. The Honorary Secretary was Mrs. Henry Smith, a sister of the Foundress. Funds and property were vested in three or more Trustees, with a local Board in Beirut, consisting of some prominent British or European residents. It was the response of faith to the daring and perseverance of one intrepid widow.

The Report for 1863 begins: "Since the issue of their last Report, the Lord has so graciously owned and blessed their work, that your Committee feel they have no alternative but to go forward." They issued appeals for funds, not only for the maintenance of the work but also for the purchase of land and the erection of buildings in Beirut and Hasbeiya. As far as we can tell, each school began in a rented building. Although prices and the value of money were very different in those days, and it is not always possible to know what kind of pounds, sterling or Turkish, is meant, it is evident that a vast number of people were being supported on what seems a small sum. There is an interesting note in 1865. "I wish we had a helping fund towards the education of those children whose parents can pay something. We must remember how novel is the education of the Oriental female, and how essentially important it is that we should aid not merely the totally destitute, but the daughters of the respectable though not opulent classes; always, however, bearing in mind our fundamental principle of trying to make our *schools self-supporting*."

It is on the title-page of the Sixth Annual Report, that for 1866, that we find the term "British Syrian Schools" first used, above the full title of the Association as given in an earlier paragraph; and this was maintained for many years, though sometimes "Social" was inserted instead of "Moral".

The Report for 1868 mentions the addition of a Finance Committee of "several gentlemen of influence in the City of London" who offered "their services in superintending the financial management of the Association and assisting to increase its funds".

In the late summer of 1869, Mrs. Bowen Thompson, whose health had never been strong, and who had never fully recovered from the effects of a severe cold the previous Christmas, caught while riding through the night from Zahleh to Damascus, was persuaded to return to England for a thorough rest. She rallied somewhat, but an internal malady gained ground, and "at midnight on Sunday, Nov. 14th Elizabeth Maria Thompson entered her heavenly rest".\*

\*She was buried in the college cemetery of Morden College, Blackheath, London, where her brother-in-law, Mr. Henry W. Smith, was Treasurer for 53 years.

While feeling their irreparable loss the Committee realised that the work was not hers but her Lord's; "her sisters too who had been long associated with her, and to whom she had committed the care of the Mission, readily responded to the request of the Committee to undertake its direction. Moreover, a promising band of more than twenty native pupils, trained under her personal superintendence, were now taking their place as teachers in schools of her own planting. Many of these youthful teachers are

able from their own experience to explain the grand Scripture doctrines of salvation." In the "List of Teachers in British Syrian Schools", we find twenty-three schools with a total of 1,590 scholars; names of thirty-eight national teachers are given, apart from English teachers, and seven Bible-women. Mr. Kessab was Superintendent of all the schools and Mr. Theophilus Waldemeier, a Swiss missionary, was acting as Inspector of Branch Schools. In several of the Beirut schools Sunday services were conducted by friends of the American Mission, or national teachers, and there were large Sunday Schools. In particular, the Mission owed much to the wise counsel and pastoral care of the Rev. Henry Jessup, one of the grand veterans of the American Presbyterian Mission. Among other services, he conducted a weekly Bible Class in the Institution for the older girls.

The direction of the work in Syria was in the hands of Mrs. Mentor Mott, sister of the Foundress, ably assisted by her husband, though we do not find her name appearing among the list of "Officers" till 1871.

We cannot close this first part of our story better than in the words of the 1870 Report of the work in Syria. "It opened amid scenes of anarchy and bloodshed, every man's hand lifted against his brother; woman, degraded, despised, ignorant, fleeing before the assassin, frantic with rage and terror, with no hope or refuge, for time or eternity.... We now behold these same women brought under the power of the Gospel; some having received the true baptism of the Spirit, taking their position as the honoured help-meet for man; many training their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; while others, having a good report among the people, are filling the office of Biblewomen, or going from house to house to read and explain the Word of God more perfectly, able to confute the gainsayer, as well as to bind up the brokenhearted by the comfort wherewith they themselves have been comforted of God.

"The Lord has been very gracious, and has supplied all our needs. At times, indeed, our funds were so low that our hearts would have failed us, had not our faith been sustained by Him whom we have by long experience learned to know as JEHOVAH JIREH."

## Part II

# Expansion and Consolidation, 1869-1914

## Chapter I

### Expansion

THE work of expansion which had already begun during Mrs. Bowen Thompson's lifetime was continued after her death. The Institution remained the centre of the work: to it came girls from outlying villages, as well as from the city; and from it went forth year by year a small band of trusted, trained young women to develop village schools on the same sure foundation - the Word of God.

Shortly after Mrs. Bowen Thompson's death, when the Elementary and Infant Schools were transferred to other quarters, more space was available in the Institution to develop a more systematised education, leading up to Teacher Training, while the Branch Schools (as they were called) were reorganised with a unified system of classification. We find the introduction of "articled" pupils, who were under contract to teach on the completion of their education. It was not until Miss Caroline Thompson became Principal in 1882 that the "First Class" for regular teacher training was organised, probably furnishing a more comprehensive course than had been given before. In fact, the general plan for the trainees laid down then is on much the same lines as are followed today - the theoretical side, the building up of knowledge and how to impart it, and the practical side, observation, criticism lessons, and practical experience of teaching under supervision in the Elementary and Infants' Schools. as pupil-teachers, very much under the supervision of the Sitt (lady) in charge of the station. It is in these years (1875) that we find the idea being put forward of having a "lady superintendent" (foreign) residing at a centre around which were village schools staffed by nationals. This was the pattern that developed during this period. The importance of training for these ladies is emphasised in the Preface to the 1875 Report: "Past experience has shown the great importance of having as superintendents ladies who have been specially trained for the work; the Committee have therefore determined that in future no ladies will be engaged who have not gone through a course of training."

In 1874 a new centre was opened at Baalbek in the central plain, where there was already a school for boys under the auspices of the American Mission. When their teacher married one of Mrs. Bowen Thompson's protégées, the way opened for the establishment of a school for girls also. It began with forty pupils, mostly Moslems. But the school at Baalbek seems to have been doomed to lead an intermittent existence: in 1876, owing to some riots or disturbances (it is not clear from the record what these were), the teacher and her husband and child fled for refuge to Zahleh. (A similar withdrawal took place for a similar reason in 1958!) The school was reopened the following year: a lady superintendent was appointed, together with a national teacher from Tyre who had just returned from a course of training at the Home and Colonial Training College in England.

In 1877 a school was opened in Bekfaya, a stronghold of Catholicism. "During the summer, Mr. Mott pitched his tent in this romantic district. He had some difficulty in hiring a small house, as the Jesuits threatened to burn down any dwelling that might be let to him. He soon ascertained that there was no Protestant girl's school in that bigoted spot, and finding there one of our married pupils, he lost no time in gathering a little flock of children round her." There was immediate opposition, which caused the intervention of the Governor-General of Lebanon, Rustum Pasha, and the school continued with about forty pupils. Later records show that the place became the usual summer resort of the

missionaries, and Mr. Mott retained a great love for this village, often retiring there.

Through the help of the American Mission, a second school was opened in Zahleh, called the Shaftesbury School, situated on the south hill. At first, it was supported by private means, but a year later taken on to the Mission budget.

That same year a second school was opened in Damascus, especially for Moslem girls. This was a challenge, and it is not surprising to find that the next year the school had to be moved to another house on the edge of the Christian quarter, because we were driven out of the first one. Yet it is clear that these Mission schools were doing a work the importance of which even Moslem officials were bound to recognise. The Mufti of Beirut is reported to have said: "With these schools has begun the regeneration of Syria." Two years later we find it called the Central School, the name by which it was known till it was closed in 1945.

It was about this time that meetings for women and girls were being organised, and a Young Women's Christian Association formed, which in 1880 was affiliated with the Association in London. This Association continued to exist as a separate Organisation for many years after a national Y.W.C.A., sponsored from America, grew up in Lebanon. Ours was finally merged in the Lebanese Association in 1951.

It would seem as though the rate of expansion on the Field was too rapid for the organisation at home to keep pace with it. In 1884, we begin to hear of threatened closure of village schools at Mokhtara, because of lack of funds. Response to an appeal made it possible to reopen the schools early in the following year, but the threat was still there. In April 1886, we read of a special gift of £170 to keep the Boys' School in Beirut open - this apparently being sufficient! In July 1892, three schools (two of them in Beirut) were closed for financial reasons.

Somewhere about the same time, the school in Baalbek must have been closed again; but in 1896, it was reopened as a boarding school. By this time, the finances must have been on a firmer basis, because in 1897, we read of a Jubilee Forward Movement for which, £300 was subscribed, and our Mission assumed responsibility for some twenty new schools. Some of these were taken over from the American Mission, which was going through a period of retrenchment, but some were in new village centres. That brought the total number of schools up to fifty-two, with 3,789 pupils, 105 national teachers, twenty-four Biblewomen, and sixteen European workers.

The following year the Mission was offered the school and property at Shemlan. This girls' boarding school had been begun by another of those intrepid little Victorian ladies whose names are still cherished in this land - Mrs. Elizabeth Watson. She established the school in 1858, built its premises, and also a Protestant church, in a fanatically Maronite village on the foothills of Lebanon about eighteen miles from Beirut. Then she handed it over to the Female Education Society. When that Society came to an end, our Mission was asked to take over the work in Shemlan, which we did, together with the two ladies then in charge, Miss Adie and Miss Farrell.

At the beginning of the new century, there seems to have been another period of financial difficulty, as we find mention of closing the Boys' School in Beirut, as well as some of the mountain schools, and Baalbek. Some of the schools which had been taken over from the American Mission were returned to them. These incidents show how close was the comity and co-operation in which the two Missions were working, each supplementing the other.



But what of the work that was going on in the lives of these thousands of boys and girls in our schools, Christians from Catholic and Orthodox as well as Protestant homes, Jews, Moslems and Druzes? The Word of God was the centre of the teaching in all the schools and each day was begun with School Prayers. Memorisation of Bible verses had been a part of the curriculum from early days and in 1881 the systematic learning of the "100 Texts" arranged by the Irish Church Missions was begun, and these are still an important feature of our Scripture syllabus.

The following year saw the beginning of the Lighthouse Society. Miss Thompson writes: "The children's noonday prayer meeting continues to be well attended. They have formed themselves into a society - 'The Lighthouse'. Their names have been written neatly on a card with the text, 'Let your light shine'. This hangs in the classroom and each member takes daily turn to pray. These children have great belief in the power of prayer."

We read too that "English and national workers meet daily for reading and prayer at 6-30 p.m., when we remember the various classes and schools in turn. This forms a strong bond of union."

From the *Quarterly Paper* for October 1885, we give the following account of the origin of one of the most important days in our school calendar, Founder's Day, one of the means that God has used year after year to bring new life to young and old:

"Last summer when the workers from the different stations were spending the holidays together in Aleih, daily prayer was offered for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and it was proposed to set apart one day in the coming year as a 'Mission' day for special prayer and earnest evangelistic effort. And now, the Lord having specially said to us, by the removal of our two loved friends [Mrs. Henry Smith and Mrs. Johnston, a member of the Committee], 'Seek ye My face', our hearts replied, 'Thy face, Lord, will we seek', and dear Mrs. Mott fixed on March 24th as the day on which all secular employments should be set aside in every station of the Mission, and the time given to calling upon God.

"The hearts of the children in the Institution were like ground being prepared for the sowing. Eternity had been brought twice very near them, and of their own accord the greater number had been meeting every evening for prayer, in little groups, in the playground, at the time we met for ours.... The week preceding the 24th was one of preparation by special prayer for a blessing in our meetings, and by bringing before our children the responsibility of such a 'day'. I shall not soon forget the attention of the children at the Lighthouse Meeting, when reminded that never before had they been called to lay aside their lesson books and give the whole day to thought for their souls....

"The next morning at eight, we assembled to seek a blessing. For our encouragement, we took the promise, 'Prove Me now herewith, saith the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it'; and how near the Lord came to us in that little meeting! ... We all went into prayers expecting. After the hymn, 'Come, ye sinners poor and wretched', the reading of Philippians 3, and prayer from Muallim Selim, we went to the classrooms for the Bible lessons. These were: 'The Young Ruler coming to Christ', in the upper, 'The Spiritual Lessons of the Healing of Naaman', in the middle, and the 'Call of Samuel', in the lowest classes. All these had been carefully prepared and prayed over.

"At 10.30, Dr. Jessup (American Mission), a great favourite with the children, came and gave a very hearty evangelistic service, the subject being, 'Mighty to save'. One of the girls has since told me she became convinced of sin by that address.

"At noon we heard from one and another worker of the results of the morning, of the deep attention and pleasure of the children.... For the morning lessons, each teacher had taken another class; in the afternoon for an hour they took their own and tried to water the seed. The bigger girls were allowed the use of the dormitories for private prayer, and were spoken to by their teacher, one after the other, to try to get at the state of mind of each. At 4 p.m. there was a gathering of all the Beirut teachers and Biblewomen at Mrs. Mott's house.

"In the Institution in the evening, we had a meeting to try to find out what were the results of the efforts of the day, and so great was the seriousness, and so many professed to be anxious to come out on the Lord's side, that we promised them a second the next night. And we had such a good time! One after the other rose to confess her desire to find Christ, and came forward to be prayed for. We divided them into little groups for enquiry and prayer.... Every evening that week we gave up to religious exercises, varied in form, but tending to the same end, and the children always speak of it as 'the happy week'. About forty came to have their names put down as anxious to have spiritual help; some assured us that they had found Christ, others that they earnestly desired to do so. One day four little ones sat in my room, and the teacher asked if they knew what was meant when we spoke of sin as a burden? 'Oh yes, my teacher,' instantly replied one of the smallest, 'my sins were heavy on my heart, but the night we came to pray, I asked Jesus to take them away, and they are all gone now!' Another dear child, her face radiant with joy, said she had given her heart to Christ. 'I thought you had long ago,' I said. 'Yes, I did give part: but now I have given all.' Several applied for church membership.... It was a happy Sunday when, on May 17th, six pupils and one young teacher from the Institution, and four young teachers from the out-schools publicly confessed their personal faith in Christ.... The whole Institution is now divided into little bands for enquiry and prayer once a week, and nearly every teacher prays with one of the children in her dormitory daily. From these efforts, may we not expect much blessing in the future?"

We get a glimpse of how this work was carried on from the words of a newcomer: "Miss Thompson has such a beautiful way with the children, she never loses sight of the missionary aim in her work, and in every little detail of daily life soul-winning comes in. The Bible Readings and Prayer Meetings of the children are so simple and child-like, one has no difficulty in speaking of these things. On their first arrival, they are often very stolid, having been cautioned at home. But every girl who enters the school must take Bible lessons and learn texts, and the children are so anxious to tell new ones of Jesus, that the wall soon begins to crumble. Much prayer is offered (the Institution has been called the Home of Prayer), many gracious answers are vouchsafed. Who can tell how many? God only knows how the Spirit works."

That the interest and spiritual life of the pupils were not only personal, but reached out beyond the confines of their own land is evident from the fact that the girls at the Institution began to support a little Chinese girl in Hong Kong. In the Report for 1893 we read: "Our children partly support a little Chinese girl, Yat Sen, at the German Foundling Hospital at Hong Kong. On the Queen's Birthday picnic, they give as much to her as they allow themselves for sweets, and on wet Sundays when we cannot go to church, we have service here, and the smallest children are allowed, to their great delight, to make the collection, while Yat Sen seems to smile down upon them from her photograph which is fastened to the wall, so that they have her always with them. When the hall is decorated on the Queen's Birthday, Yat Sen gets a flower too, and every Sunday morning she is specially prayed for at the children's meeting."

Evidently some supporters of the Mission at home were not aware of the importance of the missionary work being done at the Institution. In 1905 we find an article by Miss Thompson headed, "Is School

Work Mission Work?" The following extract might have been written in 1958: "My own conviction is that there is no more definite mission work that a woman can do than to influence young hearts day by day for Christ. ... No line of mission work . . . calls for higher, deeper living than a Training School for teachers.... Patient plod, bright encouragement, never-failing sympathy, an ever giving of one's self, all these are needed, and always needed, from every loving debtor to Christ who goes forth to help in rearing a spiritual temple of living stones in Syria as elsewhere.

And what a variety of material the Training Institution offers! Children of all grades of society, of all grades of thought . . . of all ages.... As we look around at prayers, when all are assembled, we know that not Syria only, but the whole world will lie before them. Many will make their home in Syria, yet the constant stream of emigration will bear some to the United States, more to Mexico and South America: a few will find their way to the East and to the West Indies; New Zealand, Australia and the Cape will claim a share; Egypt and the Sudan will be glad at the coming of many who will teach Copt and Moslem in the newly-formed schools, where, as here, Arabic is the vernacular. Where shall we find a place of larger influence? Rays of light focusing now in the Training Institution shall brighten many a dark place of the earth in days to come."

Here is a glimpse of what was being done in the school at Baalbek: "Our first class children have come all the year, and have made astonishing progress. The other class contained an assortment of girls from four years old to eighteen. Many are distressingly poor, and so dirty. Some of the bigger girls cannot learn much.... When one of these first came to us, she was very rough and ignorant, and on one occasion she was angry and kept the children from coming to the school. What a difference there is in her since that time! Her face beams when she is able to answer a question in the Scripture class, and her sewing has greatly improved. Instead of preventing the children coming, she goes round and brings them." This school had just been reopened after a period of closure for lack of funds.

The year 1906 was one of light and shade. "Our hearts were gladdened by tidings of a wave of blessing throughout the Training Institution and Day Schools in Beirut. Mr. Fransen, a Swedish evangelist, was the instrument used of God for the reaping of much fruit. The seed sown amid labour and tears, and watched and tended with unceasing care, was ready for the reaper. On the other hand, the adversary of souls has been busy. Our brave little Moslem School in Beirut has been subjected to a fiery ordeal of persecution. A judge in the Court of Equity has published a brochure inveighing against the custom of many of his co-religionists in sending their children to Christian schools. He declares that he has 'never yet known a girl come out uncontaminated; and though, thanks to the bonds with which they are bound, they are unable to declare themselves Christians openly, they pass on the contagion by teaching their children'. The streets are being clean swept of children. Moslem schools are being opened in all directions. Christ will conquer in the end, but we need your prayers for the present." In those early years of the century, political movements were going on within the Turkish Empire which had repercussions on the schools in Syria. The New Constitution of 1908 gave promise of liberty for religious sects, but was soon to be followed by a counter-revolution and the massacres of Armenians.

These years saw the Training Institution become the Training College, and a reorganisation of the Training Classes to work for regular Diplomas and Certificates - Higher Diploma, Lower Diploma and Elementary Certificate. The examination papers were set in England and practical examinations were conducted with an examiner from a sister-Mission. On Tuesday, July 6th, 1909, the first Diploma Day was held in the "new hall of the Dorothea Beale Wing", when diplomas and certificates were presented to eleven students by H.M. Consul-General in Syria.

In 1910 the first Teachers' Conference was held in Beirut, and found to be a rich experience for all who came. The desire for education throughout the Empire was increasing, but the clouds of war were looming in the distance. We were obliged two years later for financial reasons to withdraw from our schools in Zahleh, but the American Mission kept them open. It is obvious from the records that the numbers in our schools were decreasing. One reason was the commotion and fear of bombardment which caused thousands of people to flee from the city. Another reason was the "improvement in the teaching of the national schools for Moslems, by the employment of Christian teachers, some of them trained in Mission Schools, and the pressure brought to bear upon the parents by the Sheikhs to send their children to these schools, where of course the Koran is taught".

Then the clouds came closer and our Mission Field as part of the Turkish Empire was swept into the World War of 1914-18, the results of which changed the whole life of the Near East in far-reaching ways.

The Report for the school year ending June 1914 gives a list of thirty-four schools, with 3,108 pupils, seventy-eight national teachers, twelve Biblewomen and Scripture Readers, and twenty European workers.

## Chapter 2

### Consolidation

THE period with which we are dealing was the one during which the Mission acquired most of its property and erected its buildings, and this in spite of the repeated experience of financial difficulties. It is again a story of daring and perseverance.

In 1870 the building of the school house at Hasbeiya was completed and named the Ellesmere School, in memory of Lady Ellesmere whose bequest had made it possible. An Arabic Bible and a gold sovereign were put in each corner of the foundations. At the same time, a handsome arcade was built on the west side of the Institution in Beirut, as a memorial to Mrs. Bowen Thompson. The tablet recording this is one of the few which survived the wilful destruction of the Institution tablets by the Turks in the 194-18 war.

The same year a good-sized property at the bottom of the Motts' garden was purchased for the Mission, and a building erected to house the small school for blind girls, and the Elementary and Infant Schools which had outgrown the space available in the Institution. This site became known as "Engannon", and is now the Mission Headquarters and Blind School. It became a great centre for women's meetings, in which Mrs. Henry Smith took a special interest, and after her death, it was suggested to endow it as a memorial to her. "Engannon is the place where the women's meetings are held, to whom Mrs. Smith spoke so lovingly every Sunday words of pardon and peace, conveying in simple language the blessed Gospel of Jesus Christ, and hearing so often the reply - 'Is this good news for us? for us women?' "

The next step was the purchase of a house in Damascus in 1872, evidently through a special gift of £2,400, which covered the cost of the land. This was in the Christian quarter and became known as "St. Paul's School".

A very valuable addition was made to the building at the Institution in the erection of a new kitchen and washroom, the expense being borne by two members of the Society of Friends who had visited Syria and become interested in our school, Eli and Sybil Jones. Their names are commemorated on a marble plaque to be seen on the wall of the washroom today. At this time the whole of the house roof was tiled. In 1881 ground was bought on the east side of the Institution and the house standing on it became the School for Blind Men. Another important addition was the purchase of an adjoining piece of land for a laundry, evidently considerably easing the domestic situation. These various pieces of land were not joined together on one title-deed until 1955.

In October of 1883 a piece of land was purchased on the seashore in Tyre for £442. In consequence of a recent order from Constantinople in regard to the erection of new mission buildings, a petition was sent there, together with the original Firman obtained from the Sultan, and a plan for "twenty chambers contained in two stories". Since "no local inconvenience" was caused by the said plan, the order was given on August 7th, 1883. Work was commenced right away and the building for the Boys' School and Church was opened in 1884; the main building was begun but stopped for lack of funds. These were forthcoming and the buildings completed in 1885 and named the Victoria Augusta School, in commemoration of Mrs. Mentor Mott, whose husband had been its first promoter.

The next purchase of land was in Baalbek in 1885, but the only building for the next two years was a

wall enclosing the property. Later it was proposed that the Memorial Fund (i.e. for Mrs. Smith) should be transferred to the building of the school in Baalbek, "because Mrs. Smith opened the school in Baalbek in 1874 that the children might be taught to know the true and living God, where the ruined temples of Baal and of the Sun still stand as a witness of the darkness and gross ignorance of the impure worship of former ages. It was her burning desire that the children should turn to God from idols, to serve the living and true God". Two years later the foundation stone was laid and the building completed in the summer of 1889. We are told that it had the first tiled roof in Baalbek, and it evidently created quite a sensation that such a large, two-story building should be finished all in one year!

In July 1892 all Mission property was fully registered in the Land Office. Since all official correspondence had to be conducted through Constantinople, it is not surprising that business took a long time to complete. Difficulties over taxes in Damascus necessitated our agent staying some months in the capital in order to see the matter through in person.

A new school house was built in Zahleh in 1895. The corner stone was laid on May 11th. While the building was in progress the workmen were summoned every morning at five o'clock for prayer. The whole building "was formally dedicated to the work of the British Syrian Mission and the glory of God" on May 14th, 1896. The same year saw the opening of a boarding school at Baalbek, "in the teeth of much opposition from Romanists and Maronites". This came from the priests and nuns and not from the people. "The children simply love to come to school; the mothers tell us with tears in their eyes that they wish to send them, and to come themselves to our Women's Class on Sunday afternoons; but the nuns have opened a meeting at exactly the same time . . . and any absentee is immediately rounded up . . . if she has entered the House of Devils, i.e. the Mission School, woe betide her!"

The story is told of one who, in the early days of Mission work in this country, was accosted on a journey with the usual question, "Where are you going?" "To - " was the reply, naming the destination. "What for?" "To open two schools!" "Two schools? I should have thought it was hard work to start one!" "That may be," replied the missionary, "but I open one, and the Jesuits immediately open another, so the result is two schools." By this reckoning we were responsible for four schools in Baalbek!

In 1900 school property to the value of £150 was purchased in Mokhtara, "which presented such exceptional advantages for the Mission that the Committee felt impelled to incur the extra outlay". We had had schools for boys and girls in this mountain village since 1866. It was and is the centre of the Jumblatt Druzes, and at this time the first pupil in the school was Sitt Nazeera, granddaughter of the principal Lady Head of the Druzes. "This village is almost the only place in the Mission where we are not molested with opposition schools." There was a Biblewoman (wife of our teacher), and Sunday School and Sunday services were conducted regularly.

About this time the present Mission house in Ainzahalta was built, "most of it literally hewn out of the rocks". What a blessing this house has been down the years, especially of late years in summer for tired workers to rest in its fresh air and peaceful surroundings. A few years later a second story was added through private gifts.

During the year 1909, plans were begun for the celebration of the Mission Jubilee, and £5,000 was set as a target for the Jubilee Fund. Offerings came in from far and near. Some of the most precious were from those who had known the very early days, pupils and teachers, who recalled Mrs. Bowen Thompson with thanksgiving.

"A recent visitor, for many years a worker in our Mission, stood meditatively looking at the pebbled mosaic at the entrance to the Training College. 'I helped to lay these stones,' she said. 'It was in the early days after the massacre. We girls came with our mothers, and Mrs. Bowen Thompson set us to work to make this pavement. How I remember the women weeping and wailing, and how she would walk up and down, soothing and encouraging them. Surely her memory is blessed!' "

One of the most tangible reminders of the Jubilee is the beautiful colonnaded building across the garden of the College in Beirut, which was begun in 1910 as a Jubilee gift, in order to provide more accommodation, prayer hall, classrooms and dormitories, for the growing needs of the work. On May 2nd, 1911, the building was dedicated, and since the commemoration tablet completely disappeared during the First World War, it will be in place to recall it here:

*"Jehovah Jireh"  
In Commemoration of the Jubilee  
of the  
British Syrian Mission  
this building was founded in 1910  
"Hitherto hath the Lord helped us"*

In the following year, the beautiful stained-glass window, a further gift to the College, was dedicated by the Bishop of London. Its two panels, one portraying Deborah encouraging Barak, and the other Hannah presenting Samuel to Eli, remind us of the influence of women in both public and private life. There is a vivid account of the journey of the window from England, its chequered career through the customs at Beirut, and its fixing into place, a matter of months, and accomplished only after many setbacks and much toil and patience.

In 1911, the property at Mukhtara was sold and the money used to secure land for the building of our own school in the Pine Forest, near Beirut. The numbers there had increased so much and the school had been so flourishing that when the Mukhtara money was available, the opportunity was seized "to secure suitable accommodation and freedom from the tyranny of unreasonable landlords". A simple, two-roomed building was put up. The work was hard: the teacher, Muallimeh Rogina, writes: "At first when I went to visit, the people used to look so dull, and never asked me to sit down; I would look about to find something to sit on, a stone, or a piece of wood, and with much trouble, I would begin to read to them without giving them warning. Thank God, this year, when a visit is postponed, they begin to ask about me, and enquire what the reason is I have not come, and as soon as I sit down some of them ask me to open 'the Book' and read."

When the war broke out and the missionaries had to leave, living conditions became very difficult, and normal life seems to have disintegrated. For some time, it was possible to send money for our Biblewomen, but most of the schools were closed. The whole country was oppressed by the Government. "Against the sturdy, forceful people of the Lebanon, especially, the fiat went forth that they were to be exterminated, their sympathies being known to be with the Entente. A cordon was drawn round the 'goodly mountain', and the inhabitants were slowly being starved to death." Famine soon spread throughout the whole area and within a few months 80,000 died of starvation, and many thousands from typhus. Mission houses and schools were seized and used for barracks and other purposes while furniture and all private belongings were looted from them.

But through the war years, plans were being made for the future, for the words of the Apostle Paul were still true:

"Troubled on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed." (II Cor. iv. 8-10.)



## Chapter 3

### Blind and Medical Work

THE schools for the blind already established in Beirut and Damascus continued to be a means of blessing to many. A beginning had been made also in Beirut with a Cripples' School. Later it was opened in the evenings and "much frequented by all denominations, who attend regularly to learn to read and write Arabic. Some of the pupils are much interested in reading the Scriptures." There is a lovely story of how one poor, legless Nubian so bore insult and injury that a week later the offender (a Moslem) came back to ask forgiveness. "It was your forbearance, the kind, quiet way in which you bore my insults and my injury, which has melted my heart. . . . I want to learn to read that Book which has taught you to return good for evil."

One of the most enlightened of the blind men pupils, Ghandour Zeitoun, a Druze, having already embraced Christianity with great joy, was baptised and became a pupil-teacher in the school, and later a Scripture Reader.

The School for Blind Girls, established in 1868, benefited much when moved to the Engannon premises. Some of the girls, adopted by friends in England, were boarded, and all were given a mid-day meal. There was a constant struggle to keep them from the nuns who sought to "entice them away with the promise of better food and clothing, backed by the terrors of the awful future which awaits all who read the Book of the Protestants". The work evidently went slowly, needing much patience on the part of teacher and pupil, but when once the raised alphabet was mastered, progress was more rapid. It is told of one Moslem girl "that she told the Bible stories to her mother and sister at home, and at their request ('Bring the books and read and then we will believe you') has taken her Gospel home with her."

We read of the witness of a blind Moslem lad, who had been in the school. After he left, apparently untouched, the Holy Spirit wrought a work of grace in his heart, and he began to go to church and speak of what he knew. He persevered in spite of beating from his relatives. Later he returned to Beirut, and with portions of the Scriptures went from house to house to read to the inmates, and, what was most unusual among the Moslems, he knelt down and prayed with them in the name of Jesus.

In 1872 a school for the blind was begun in Tyre. We quote from a letter dated January 18th: "We had the first class for the blind on Sunday afternoon and eight came. This day I wrote names that bring our scholars up to fifty. The blind are very grateful. I send you the sketch of an old blind and lame woman, who fairly began to dance and leap for joy on hearing that blind people could learn to read." The Moon system was used, and Mr. Moon himself sent a gift of paper for embossing the Arabic and English vocabulary.

The story of Abu Ferrah, the blind Scripture Reader, is a testimony to the wonder-working power of God. As a young man, from being a persecutor of the Protestants, he became soundly converted and endured severe persecution himself, as his little shop, his livelihood, was repeatedly destroyed and he forced to flee. Then finally he became blind. He said, "In the midst of all the trouble and persecution, I used to feel a verse of David's very specially precious and full of comfort. It is: 'I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinketh upon me. Thou art my Helper and Deliverer.' When I became blind, I felt that this was still true, that He would still care for me. He did so by opening the way for me to enter the School for the Blind under the B.S.M." It is said of him that from January to November 1890, he paid 109 visits

to hospitals, visited 263 shops, and the total number of those of all sects of Christians, as well as Moslems, Druzes and Jews, who heard the Word of God through him was 2,730.

The story of Nakhleh belongs to 1907. "The teacher of the school summed up the change that has been wrought in him during these two years in the following words: 'When he came to us he was a little wolf: now he is a lamb.' At home, out of school hours, he was a constant source of trouble, ill-treating his little brother and disobeying his parents. Surely the Holy Spirit is at work in his heart and is influencing the home from which he comes."

The Jubilee year saw the appointment of M. Khalil Yazagie as master of the School for Blind Men. He remained in this Post till July 1934, when he was eighty years of age, and had been the means of winning many of the blind to Christ. Soon after his coming to the school, the Braille system of reading and writing was introduced into both girls' and boys' schools. Miss Thompson herself began the instruction and tells us what a joyful experience it was. "I shall never forget one day when I had been persuading one of our men to try writing a few words, and then showed him how to turn the paper and read what he had written. For a moment there was silence, as his fingers travelled over the lines, and then such a radiant joy broke over his face, a joy like an entrance into a new world, and such it was to him. No longer he dwelt in a narrow circle, to be reached only by speech: now he could communicate with those far away. 'Oh, ya Sitt!' he said, 'oh! how can I ever thank you! Oh, you have brought a new light into my life; it is a new world for me.' It brought a new joy into my own."

## **Medical Work**

The first mention in the records of medical work in connection with our Mission is in 1885, when we read of a "thoroughly educated female doctor" resident in Damascus, a former pupil of ours who had migrated with her family to Philadelphia, where she had completed medical and surgical studies and obtained a diploma. She returned to reside in Damascus in our Moslem School with our Biblewoman, who had a ministry among the patients in the waiting-room. We do not know how long this continued.

In 1888 medical work was begun in Beirut in a quiet way, one of the ladies, Miss Butlin, going from house to house with the Biblewoman. Her accounts of the difficulties encountered strike a note familiar to us even today - the room full of chattering visitors, friends going from doctor to doctor if immediate progress is not made by the patient, as well as utter inability to keep to the diet the doctor orders!

The following year Miss Butlin commenced medical work in Baalbeck, and when the new school buildings were completed there, three rooms in the garden were set aside for waiting-room, consulting room for private cases, and dispensary. Within the first eight months the number of patients totalled 1,016. Outlying villages were also visited, both Moslem and Christian, and the welcome was overwhelming. The report concludes: "That the Lord may heal the souls of these poor people as well as their bodies is our earnest prayer."

A similar work was going on in 1892 in Damascus, where Miss Atthill had a small dispensary, and also visited in the homes, going with each of the Biblewoman in turn. After reading the Bible with talk and prayer, two or three patients would be treated in each home. One remarkable case was a woman who had had an inch of darning needle in her foot for twenty years. It took two days of treatment to get it out!

Similar work was begun in Tyre and was a valuable means of contact with the villages around. In 1897, the workers appealed for more help for the necessary medicines: "Often we should be so glad to be able to help them get better food; in many cases this is more needed than medicine." In those days poverty and ignorance were prevalent, and it is clear that the Mission compounds with their offer of friendship and practical help for mind, body and estate, as well as their message of love in the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, were indeed shining lights in the surrounding darkness.

## Chapter 4

### Bible Work among Men and Women

THE ministry of Biblewomen increased: at one time there were as many as twenty-nine Biblewomen and Scripture Readers, though by the time the war supervened this number had been already reduced to about half. The response they received was varied. In 1870 one of them writes: "I am happy to say that ... in nearly every place I go, they receive the Word with gladness. . . . Concerning my work among the Moslems, they used to be very bigoted ... but they seem to be improved." Sometimes in a village, such as Aramoun, the teacher's husband acted as Scripture Reader among the men. An unexpected visit from a missionary found twenty-five girls in school, mostly Druzes. A meeting was held in the evening when over eighty people listened to a sermon on John ix. The Bible Reader felt it would be good to take part (in 1874) in the Week of Prayer kept in different parts of the world. He says: "We had meetings for prayer every night. The people that came together were about thirty, and they listened as one man. One night I spoke to them about the Vine (John xv), about the engrafting of the wild branch on the Vine, just as we see done often in our vineyards, and about the fruitless branches like those we root out and use as wood for burning. And I exhorted them all to examine themselves as to the past year, and to pray God that we might all be fruitful branches in the future. Then we joined in prayer and sang a hymn together."

Some of the Biblewomen were able to visit even in the hareems of the wealthy Moslem effendis, and speak to the women about Jesus Christ, and in some cases to teach them to read, using the Gospels and Psalms as textbooks. One Moslem lady of high family frequently called her servants also to hear the reading. It was almost impossible for them to confess openly their desire to become Christians, but it is clear that there were secret believers.

In some of the larger places, women's classes were held regularly, usually in connection with the school. The women were often taught different kinds of needlework "just to keep them steady, quiet and attentive to the Bible Reading." These classes were attended by both Moslems and Christians. There were Sunday classes also for women, the one held in Engannon being particularly well attended.

A unique branch of this Bible work was carried on for several years by M. Ibrahim Nassif Atiyeh, namely, the distribution of Scriptures among the soldiers. It was actually begun by Miss Lloyd and then became the special care of Mrs. Smith. Guard-houses were regularly visited and names taken of those who wished for a Bible, which was brought to them the following week. "These Bibles have gone far and wide, because the soldiers are constantly going from place to place, and many by this means have found the Saviour.... It was her (Mrs. Smith's) earnest prayer and desire that every soldier under the Lebanon Government should possess a Bible." The wife of a Maronite soldier sent M. Ibrahim Atiyeh this message: "Thank you for the precious Book you gave my husband. My husband was very cruel to me, used to beat me, and tell me bad words, but now after reading the Bible he is quite changed, and said to me, 'Wife, God has told us in His Book to be kind to our wives and treat them kindly.' "On another occasion, two Druze men came to M. Ibrahim's house and begged for Bibles. They said, "We heard our friends reading, it is so nice and useful, so we came on purpose to ask you to give to us." They paid part of the price and were very glad to have them. There are deeply interesting accounts of this work, giving details of conversations with men of different religions, and of visits to various barracks by special permission, where M. Ibrahim was greeted by many already contacted.

Some of the Biblewomen were supported by the British and Foreign Bible Society, and others by a

society for Bible work with a magazine called The Missing Link, others by private donors.

At one time a notable work among the Bedouin was done by Gideon Aoud, one of themselves. He, a shepherd lad, had found his way to the night school in Beirut and later spent five years in the Boys' School. Under the instruction of M. Selim Kessab and M. Ibrahim Atiyeh, he was converted and gave his life to witnessing among the Bedouin tribes. He was supported by the Edinburgh Association. He was fearless and frank, and had a wonderful ministry, reading the Gospel, teaching the children to read, and witnessing to the Lord Jesus Christ. Here is an extract from one of his reports:

"I was reading one day at a house to a lot of Bedouins, in different places in the Bible. One of them wept and said, 'This Book awakes the sleepy and turns man from his bad ways.' I have now to write a joyful little story. A Bedouin boy about ten years old came to me from a distance of three hours' journey. He begged me to go and see his mother and read to her out of my Book. 'She is ill,' he said. I went to her and pointed her to Jesus, telling her that He is the way to God. I read to her about Peter's mother-in-law. I prayed for her. She was very glad. When she got better, she said, 'The Book of Jesus healed me!'"

For almost a quarter of a century he travelled to and fro among the tribes. He was last seen in 1913, and it may be that he was one of those thousands who perished in the bitter famine and strife of the war days. The Lord whom he served so faithfully alone knows when and how the end came.

The following simple story, as told by one of the missionaries in Beirut, illustrates the childlike faith of the ignorant women to whom the Gospel was being taught by God's servants :

"One hot summer evening we saw two women on the doorstep. Both looked tired and ill, and one was evidently half-blind. We wondered where they had come from and what they wanted at that late hour.... After the usual salutations the elder woman began to unfold their story:

"'Lady, she is ill: I am ill,' she said in Arabic, pointing to her companion. 'We are Protestants. Christ said, 'Do not be afraid', so we are not afraid, and she and I have come from Damascus to see the doctor for lie is clever with eyes.'

"Then followed further explanations, showing that their present need was for accommodation for the night. 'Have you money? Are you hungry?' we asked, for Damascus is a day's journey from Beirut.

"'No money, lady - what do we want with money? We have bread and cucumber, and water in this pot, and Jesus said, 'Do not be afraid', and so we have come.'

"We found them a lodging near by, and together they went off down the path ... murmuring thanks. What simple faith and trust!"

I would like to close this Chapter with a brief extract from the story of one of the oldest of the Biblewomen, Nijmy Ateek. She was born in Hasbeiya and married very young; her husband was killed by bandits and she herself with her boys was in the Castle during the terrible massacre of 1860. She lost ten relations there, including her three brothers. Then she went to Beirut and studied with Mrs. Thompson's widows. Later she was converted through reading the story of the Canaanite woman in Matthew xv. She became a teacher, first in Mukhtara, and then in Ainzahalta. Finally she was sent to help in Hasbeiya, and found that Basma, the servant in the school, was the daughter of the man who had killed her brothers. "I was able to show her kindness, and she is still my friend. Nearly all the girls

in the school were the daughters of murderers and I was glad to be able to teach and help them." Later, when she became somewhat paralysed in her old age, though still able to visit a little, she used to hold up her trembling hand and say, "Do you know what I call this? I call it a blessing. I tell the neighbours that it is a message from the King of Kings telling me to get ready, for He is going to send for me soon"; and her face lighted up with joy, as if she were nearing that Presence.

## Chapter 5

### Personnel and Organisation

*"There were giants in those days"*

THOSE of us who have been called to serve the Lord in this Mission in these days cannot but stand in awe as we read the stories of those who laboured here before us. Truly they were "giants" and we but as grasshoppers! Their stories have been handed down and their names live on in the memory and imagination and shame us and inspire us to dare more for our glorious Master and to persevere more gladly in His service.

What names are these?

First of all, dominating the first half of this period were Mr. and Mrs. Mentor Mott. It is quite clear that it was Mrs. Mott who was Directress of the Mission, although her husband was active in all good works, and particularly in work among the blind: yet it is significant that after her death in August 1891, there was no thought of transferring the direction to her husband. He lived on till 1901. He was one of the Trustees of the Mission and even until recent times some old people referred to the Training College as "*Madrasat Mr. Mott*" (i.e. The School of Mr. Mott). Their beautiful house and garden were ever at the disposal of visitors, and for several years annual rallies of all our Beirut schools were held there, with over 1,000 pupils, each school grouped around its own banner. One account runs in true Victorian style: "Here we see Old England's flag unfurled in token that beneath her ample folds she shields and protects the daughters of Syria."

In 1875, Mrs. Henry Smith, another sister of the Foundress, who had been organising the home end of the work, settled in Beirut and interested herself specially in the work among women. Two years later, we find a long statement from her explaining the circumstances which "led to the recent transfer of the management and responsibility of the Mission into the hands of myself and Mrs. Mott". As the work developed, the Committee at home wished to assume "paramount authority in the management of the schools". This the two sisters felt to be impracticable and tendered their resignations. Finally they agreed to accept the responsibility of the Mission, including all liabilities, the property still, as before, vested in Trustees, and provision made "for the continuance of the Mission under every contingency". At the same time, they felt deeply "that one great desideratum of the British Syrian Schools Society at the present time is a Clerical Superintendent who should be resident at Beirut, taking under his special charge the religious training in our Institution, but part of whose duties could be to visit our various schools periodically, examine the children, and report to the Home Committee. Such an appointment would ... give stability to our Mission." It was never made. A Consultative Council was formed, in addition to the Committee already existing, the Council being composed of gentlemen, the Committee of ladies! The Council was to be consulted about any fresh outlay and the opening of new schools. One of their first acts was to issue an appeal for £800 to buy land adjacent to the Institution for laundry and garden and boundary walls.

Mrs. Smith died in January 1885, and within a few days the Mission lost another devoted helper, Mrs. Johnston. She had been for years a zealous supporter of the Mission and member of Committee, and had gone to Syria with her daughter "to become thoroughly acquainted with the work and to see, since retrenchment was spoken of, whether this would be possible without damage to the Mission". Her finding was: "Not one School must be relinquished."

A fourth sister, Miss Lloyd, came to the Field with Mr. and Mrs. Mott, and shared fully in the work, as much as her strength allowed. Her special charge was the business of dealing with the cases of gifts which were sent twice a year from England. In the absence of Mrs. Mott in England, Miss Lloyd acted as temporary Directress with much ability and wisdom. She suffered ill-health for years, and was released from pain and weakness in August 1895.

The Trust Deed of the Mission had arranged for the election of a Committee to take over the management after the death of the sisters, Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Mott, and accordingly on October 28th, 1891, a General Meeting assembled in London and a new Committee was elected to take the place of the former Council and Committee, and "to make such rules and regulations as it should deem advisable for the efficient carrying on of the British Syrian Mission". With some minor alterations, this has been the pattern of the home organisation ever since then.

For a few years the work on the Field was under the direction of Miss James, who had visited the Field with her friend, Mrs. Hornby, both being members of the London Committee. They lived together in a large house down the hill from the Training College. Miss James' health was never very strong and after little more than two years, she became seriously ill and was compelled to resign the post which she had "filled so admirably, so wisely, and lovingly during her short tenure of office". She was able to continue work on the Committee in England, but went to be with the Lord in June 1897. She had brought to the work a wide experience and a mind endowed with more than ordinary gifts, and "offered willingly" to the Lord's work, "the love of Christ constraining" her.

The direction of the Mission on the Field passed then to Miss Caroline Thompson, who had gone to Syria in 1881 and who had been Principal of the Institution since 1882. From the beginning her work was particularly in the training of the older girls in the theory and practice of teaching, and to them she devoted her life. In 1900, we find her carrying on as Principal of the Institution and also as "General Superintendent" of the Mission on the Field. For a fuller appreciation of this great leader, we refer our readers to the booklet entitled, *Caroline Thompson*, written by Miss Talbot, her lifelong friend. We begin to understand the secret of her achievements: "her single-heartedness was the keynote of her life: her genius for loving and expressing her love was the secret of her success." One of her letters reveals the source of her peace. After describing the rush of work, the great heat, and a sirocco, she adds: "The Lord helps me wonderfully: it is such a sweet experience to be carried along as if in Everlasting Arms. This morning I waked early and had a lovely quite time before anyone was up. It was not 5 a.m.; a cool breeze was blowing, and there were no mosquitoes. The fragrances of the morning hour goes along all the day."

"For twelve years she carried-the double burden of Principal of the Training Institution and Directress of the Mission. To save expense, the labours of Accountant and Treasurer were voluntarily added, and though the Committee insisted upon a secretary, yet the pressure of work was enormous.... Those were years of special difficulty in the Mission, and there is no doubt that overwork and anxiety shortened Miss Thompson's service.... When those around her would have spared her, she could not spare herself; her mind was always busy planning how to help others." On March 1, 1906, she celebrated her Silver Jubilee, "the first to whom has been granted the honour of attaining to a quarter of a century spent in the Master's service in this Mission". Many gifts and tributes came from far and near. One telegram from a former teacher then working in Palestine wished twenty-five Bibles to be given away in her name. Friends from other Missions, former teachers and pupils gathered to express their praise and thanksgiving for such a life. In 1907, her health failed and she went on furlough. Two years later, she resigned from her posts but returned to Beirut to live among the people she loved. She gave much of



her time to the Schools for the Blind, and to strengthening links with old pupils, until the outbreak of war necessitated a return to England, where she died in 1922. The words on her memorial tablet in the Training College Prayer Hall were indeed true:

For forty years  
Loving Mother, Teacher and Friend  
to Her Syrian Daughters.  
Whose Faith Follow

for there are many today who gladly testify to the greatness of the debt they owe to her. "She being dead yet speaketh."

The name of Miss Gibbons is always linked with Hasbeiya. She went to take charge of the work there in 1867 or 1868, to the marked improvement of the school. Mrs. Mott writes a few years later: "I cannot speak too highly of the missionary spirit evinced by Miss Gibbons in her self-denying labour of love, energetic in action and untiring in zeal. Really this school is an oasis in the wilderness." She longed for another Englishwoman to share in her large work, not only in Hasbeiya itself, but in the villages round about. The district was the farthest from Headquarters and, owing to the special difficulties of the route, a three days' journey from Beirut; so the workers there felt very remote from their colleagues. In 1883, in returning to Hasbeiya after vacation, Miss Gibbons was thrown from her horse at Deir-el-Kamr and seriously injured, having to spend nearly four months in the Kaiserworth Hospital in Beirut. The following year she was joined by Miss Lord, who later became one of the stalwart warriors of Tyre. In 1886 Miss Gibbons was obliged to retire from the work, owing to increasing ill-health; she continued to live in Hasbeiya until her death in 1902, faithfully cared for by one of her former pupils. There are old ladies in Hasbeiya today who still remember her with loving gratitude.

For many years, even after she had retired as an invalid to Pau in the south of France, Damascus was bound up with the name of Miss Butchart. She arrived in November 1888 and until her retirement in 1903 was financially responsible for the expenses of the station: the house was largely furnished according to her taste. During the terrible outbreak of cholera which spread through the land, but was specially severe in Damascus, Miss Butchart remained at her post, keeping the schools going as well as possible. In an extract from a Turkish newspaper, we find these words (translated): "The English lady, Miss Butchart, the head of the English Schools of Damascus, is deeply engaged in works of mercy. She denied herself as a real female missionary and an honourable woman, and preferred to remain in town, though she is of affluent means and high parentage. . . . She is doing her utmost in helping the poor and needy of every sect with her money and advice. . . . She helps them with pecuniary aid, comforts them, and distributes flour to the indigent."

Another paper said: "Since this lady came to Damascus she ceased not of doing good.... Her great zeal and benevolent energy have specially been manifested in this cholera. . . . She answers the request of everyone who asks her help, of every sect and congregation, having charity and benevolence her great principle."

She herself says: "I told the servants I would oblige none to stay . . . but I would remain as long as the Lord kept me, I mean, unless carried off by cholera. At first I thought two would leave me, but the man, who looks after my horse and accompanies me when I go out, repented and came to say he would not leave me, and although he has been scared at times, he has never wavered in his allegiance and determination to remain at his post. The housemaid went, but she repented also, and after two and a half weeks returned.... It was hard work during those weeks, looking after the house, and the Medan

and St. Paul's Schools."

In 1895, Miss Butchart was joined by a young colleague to whom she became much attached, and to whom she communicated her love for Damascus, Miss Margaret Johnston, to whom it was granted to serve the Lord in Syria for thirty-eight years. On the resignation of Miss Thompson in 1909, Miss Johnston was appointed as her successor. She therefore came to reside in Beirut, but Damascus remained her first and deepest love. Miss Johnston was too democratic in outlook to be happy with the title of "Directress" or "Superintendent", and chose instead the term "Field Secretary". Most of her story belongs to the next period of our history, as it was her privilege to reconstruct the work of the Mission after the hiatus of the war years.

About this time, Miss Mabel Warburton went to join the staff of the Training College as Vice-Principal, having had a few years of missionary work in Egypt. Upon Miss Thompson's resignation in 1909, she became Principal and did much to encourage a high standard of intellectual achievement, as well as a deep spiritual experience. To her enterprise and perseverance, as well as to her gifts, the Mission owes the completion of the Jubilee Building to which we have already referred. She was particularly interested in the training of teachers, and organised the first Teacher's Conference in Beirut in 1910. After the war she returned with a relief party and then founded the school in Jerusalem afterwards called the Jerusalem Girls' College, though she has always kept a large place in her heart for the College in Beirut.

The list of "giants" is too long for us to find space to write about them all - Miss Pollard, Miss Walker, Miss Lord, Miss Fisher, Miss Stowell and many others. There is one, however, whose daring and perseverance throughout the war years must be commemorated. Miss Kendall was stationed in Ainzahalta, and had already endeared herself to the hearts of the people there. When war broke out, she had as companions two sisters, the Misses Oliver, both of them in poor health. One was too ill to travel, and so her sister and Miss Kendall knew that they must remain, when all the other missionaries were sent away. Supplies ran short, but Miss Kendall's ingenuity helped the people to make use of plants and berries that could serve as food or medicine. She had promised not to leave, when threats of massacre came, and so she stayed right through those terrible four years. She said: "Young thistles, etc., etc., formed the greater part of their - and our - food. We also made acorn bread - at first, laughed at by the people as 'pigs' food' - but soon how much prized! They really make quite a good substitute. They were eaten roasted, boiled and made into flour. None of us expected to live if the war went on another winter." Miss Elise Oliver died during that time, and was buried in Ainzahalta. Miss Christian Oliver lived long enough to know of the victory and of General Allenby's kindness in sending them relief, but the strain had been too great and she too died in Ainzahalta.

Miss Kendall went to England soon after the end of the war, but her health had been so undermined that she was unable to return to her beloved Ainzahalta. There are still very many of the older generation who remember that to her loving care and devotion and courage they owe their very lives.

## **Part III**

### **A New Beginning, 1914-1936**

#### **Chapter I**

##### **Picking up the Threads**

WHO picked them up? What was there to pick up? How did they do it? What made it possible? Let us answer the last question first! Through the years of the 1914-18 war, while schools were closed and national workers barely able to survive, while missionaries (almost all of them) were evacuated, the faithful band of home helpers found time, even amid strenuous "war work", to keep alive interest in Syria. This received fresh stimulus from the campaigns of General Allenby in Palestine; and the appeal to spread the Gospel in Bible Lands was backed up by men who had seen these lands and their people for themselves. The Committee at home realised that large sums would be needed for restoration of damaged property. Some of the missionaries spent long months in deputation work, buying up these opportunities. Others found a sphere of missionary service in Egypt, and renewed contacts with many former pupils who had gone to live there.

This meant that as soon as the advance of the Allied Forces opened up "Bible Lands", missionaries were on the spot to follow up with organised relief. The "Syria and Palestine Relief Fund" was started to include in a united effort all the British missionary societies working in these countries. Two of our missionaries, Miss Warburton and Miss Fisher, were the first British women allowed into Palestine, and they were soon at work - relieving the destitute, caring for orphaned children, and distributing food and clothing. There was so much to do there in Jerusalem, yet they could not help thinking of their old fellow workers further north, and praying that the advance of Allied troops would soon enable them to go up and see for themselves.

Before many months had passed, others were able to return as "relief" workers, and by December 1918, Miss Johnston and Miss Warburton were given permission to proceed to Beirut. What did they find? Here are Miss Johnston's own words, written a few days after landing in Beirut:

"Houses are closed everywhere, and the old town is a mass of gaping ruins.... People speak and look as though they had been through terrible things ... the people sold everything they possessed just to keep alive as long as they could - clothes, houses bit by bit, tiles, paving, windows, nails - and when all was gone, died of starvation. People could not sleep for the wailing and moaning of the starving people dying at their doors.... Dead donkeys were torn to pieces where they fell and eaten raw.... The destitute class has died out: the poorer middle class is destitute and in rags. The upper middle class were rapidly sinking, and they all say another winter would have seen them wiped out."

We have to remember that politically the old Ottoman Empire was no more. The dreaded "Turkish days" were over, but it was to be a long, uphill labour to bring order out of chaos and organise a stable government. By the system of Mandates set up by the League of Nations, various sections of the Ottoman Empire were given to the different Allied Powers to shepherd till such time as they could stand on their own feet as independent states. Thus the southern part of the eastern Mediterranean seaboard, known as Palestine, came into the care of the British, while the northern part, stretching across the desert to the Euphrates, became French Mandated Territory known as Syria.

This may be the best place to outline its subsequent political history. After various experiments, the territory was divided into five States - Etat de Syrie, Jebel Druze, Etat du Grand Liban, Etat des Alaouites, and the Sanjak of Alexandretta.

The States were governed by a French High Commissioner, and French became the official language, with Arabic second. Before long, the Sanjak of Alexandretta was ceded to Turkey. The next step was the amalgamation of the remaining states into two Republics - the Republic of Lebanon, which was the southern part and half the central plain, and the Republic of Syria, which included the Alaouites, Jebel-ed-Druze, and all the north and east regions. These republics were intended to be independent of France and of each other, but the treaties were never ratified, and then, before the expiry of the proposed term for negotiation, the Second World War had broken out, and all went into the melting pot again.

When our ladies returned to Beirut in 1918, they were able to take possession of our buildings there, though most were unusable, with roofs broken, and empty of furniture. The Training College had not been occupied by Turkish troops, but a Moslem School had been installed in it! The various commemorative tablets had been deliberately obliterated.

One of our former teachers, Miss Marie Kessab (daughter of our Inspector, Muallim Selim Kessab), had begun a small school in her own home, carrying it on with great courage and devotion. As soon as the Training College was restored to us, her school moved into part of these premises. There were 110 pupils, taught by some of our former students. Later on, Miss Kessab moved her school to another building, and it still flourishes there today under the name of the Ahlieh School, still under able national leadership.

This period gave rise to another school, though now alas! it no longer exists. Miss Warburton collected a small group of her former pupils and took them to Jerusalem to complete their training there, as it was not yet possible to re-open the Training College in Beirut. This was the beginning of the Jerusalem Girls' College, under Miss Warburton's leadership and invigorated by her vision and enthusiasm. It continued, as a united Mission effort, until the outbreak of the Arab-Israeli war, which finally left it, after the partition of Palestine, in the Israel section of Jerusalem.

Meanwhile, what about Syria? A few more of the missionaries returned and engaged in relief work in Beirut and Damascus, our premises being used as headquarters for the relief teams. In Beirut, Miss Lepper, who had joined the Mission just before the war, was in charge of sewing rooms, with the double object of making garments for the people who were in rags, and also of giving employment to needy women in the city. "Day after day they came ... widows with children, unmarried women or young girls with no one to look after them; women whose husbands were 'with the Turks', too often widows in fact, though no official information had come through to that effect. Some were ragged, pathetic figures ... others were tidy, and we should never have guessed, had not our Syrian helpers told us, that the old-fashioned dress, so carefully put on, was their only covering ... many who looked quite neat had no underclothing, or only rags."

This led to the establishment of an Industrial School under our auspices, a new type of mission work for us, an attempt to help the women to earn an honest livelihood, and be of permanent help to body and soul.

Writing in 1919, Miss Johnston speaks of the deeper needs of the people.

"We have been eagerly looking for signs of the moral effect on the country of this time of trouble. Has there been a quickening of spiritual life, or the reverse? ... On the whole, there has been no sign of spiritual revival. On the contrary the morals of the people have sunk very low and there is an atmosphere of spiritual death abroad. In the pressure of extreme want all else was forgotten.. . selfishness got the upper hand. Thieving was universal. . . . Girls sold their honour for a loaf of bread and their own mothers consented to it. . . . Those whose religion was superficial threw off all restraint, or grew callous or indifferent. . . . But wherever a living faith existed, it has stood the test and come out stronger. ... Many tell of the wonderful insight they have gained into the power of prayer. An empty cupboard and a hungry family drove many a father and mother to their knees.... Our girls have come out splendidly; again and again, it was the girls who saved the whole household. As teachers in government schools, they received the greater portion of their salaries in wheat, which was a priceless boon.

"The political situation is still unsettled. There is excitement and unrest everywhere. The cost of living has increased fourfold and is still rising."

Founder's Day was kept on March 25th, 1919. "A wonderful, beautiful anniversary ... so many old friends ... all older, worn, many very sad and thin, but all rejoicing in this happy occasion! It was indeed a Thanksgiving Service!"

On the eve of the Mission's Diamond Jubilee, "the Training College was reopened, 200 pupils being present at the dedication service in the beautiful Prayer Hall. One of the most notable features was the very large number of older Moslem girls, many of them over eighteen years of age."

The Scripture Union was re-started, as well as an "Old Girls" gathering: "how they have missed the old talks and Bible lessons and prayers." The Principal was Miss Dalton, and the Vice-Principal, Miss R. C. Fitzpatrick, who had joined the Mission in 1909.

At the same time the Pine Forest School, on the outskirts of Beirut, was reopened, and very soon it was crowded out!

In Damascus, as soon as the relief work came to an end, it was possible to reopen St. Paul's School, under the able care of Miss Bennison and a staff of earnest national teachers, with "a nice set of keen, interested girls". A house in the southern end of the city was secured after many difficulties, and the Meedan School reopened in "the very house we wanted, just in the right quarter, clean and suitable". Verily, God was guiding His children step by step. The Meedan was chiefly a Moslem and Druze quarter.

The editorial in the magazine for 1920 sums up the situation in stating the financial needs:

"In June 1914, faced with a very serious deficit, the Committee and friends of the B.S.M. gave themselves to special definite prayer.... God heard and answered. Once more the motto 'Jehovah Jireh' was justified and 'financial liberation' given. Six eventful years have passed - years of supreme crisis to the work of the Mission - its workers scattered, its buildings seized and their contents looted. Again we are faced with an outlook of extreme anxiety. Our missionaries are back at work, our buildings have been recovered from the hand of the Turk ... but the cost of the maintenance of the work has enormously increased; the value of all necessities of life has risen to such an extent as to make the income utterly inadequate.... In this day of opportunity, when the Moslems are allowing their girls in

greatly increased numbers to come to our schools, it would be deplorable if, for lack of funds, schools had to be closed." Wonderfully, God answered again.

Work in Ainzahalta was begun again in 1921. The Training Department of the College began again in the same year with fourteen girls in training: this meant that the Practising School was also restarted. After repeated appeals, Tyre was reopened in 1923 and Hasbeiya in 1924 (both evangelism and school), but Baalbek had to wait till 1928 (at first for evangelism, the school being reopened some years later). Schools for blind men and girls began again in 1922.

Once again the Mission was in full swing, but there were many changes. The influence of the mandatory power was seen not only in the language, but in fashions, in the opening up of new roads and consequent increase of motor traffic, as well as in the increase of schools, both private and belonging to the Government.

Although the Mission undertook some village schools, as around Ainzahalta, where supervision could be given from the central station, most of our former schools were never begun again. Whereas, at one time, in Beirut there were as many as ten outschools, after the war there were never more than two - the Practising School and the Pine Forest School.

The Government undertook the opening of schools in many villages, as well as in the towns, and a large number of private schools were opened, some foreign, some national. We rejoiced that we still had freedom to give the Word of God to children of every faith in our schools. School Prayers and the daily Bible Lesson gave us the continued opportunity of reaching hundreds of Syrian children with the Gospel message. Many became regular readers of the Bible, helped by the Scripture Union portions. We know that His Word was bearing fruit in many lives.

What of Shemlan? Very soon after the war was over it was lent to Miss Frearson, a British missionary who had come from Turkey with hundreds of Armenian orphans, fleeing from the scenes of terrible massacres. They occupied the premises for a few years till more extensive accommodation was found for them. After that, our house remained as a residence, especially for language students, who were thus able to profit from the skilful teaching and patient diligence of Miss Mariam Mishalany, daughter of our former Arabic master in Shemlan.

## Chapter 2

### Pattern of the Work: Schools

DURING this period, while in general the work followed its former pattern, it is clear that there was coming to be more organisation, and to some extent more separation into departments.

To the people of the country the outstanding feature of the mission work was its schools. "B.S.M." schools were well known, and continued to offer to the girls and small boys of Syria a sound, all-round education, based upon the Word of God, which was taught daily to children of all faiths. The Training College was again the centre of the work: to it came girls who had gone as far as they could in the mountain schools, to complete a few more years of secondary education and teacher training. From it went forth each year a small band of trained teachers to supply staff not only for our own schools, but for many others, both mission and private, even in other countries, such as Iraq, Palestine and Egypt.

Miss Fitzpatrick was its moving spirit. Owing to illness, both Miss Dalton, and her successor, Miss Waller, were unable to continue as Principal for very long, and so Miss Fitzpatrick shortly succeeded to that office, a position which she held until 1937. Her abounding energy and enthusiasm, and her genius for work, as well as her high standards, set an example to staff and girls, as she built up again the living structure of educated womanhood, ever uplifting Christ in the foremost place. The College classes were gradually reorganised, as years went on, until a complete ladder of education was again in being, from kindergarten, through Primary and Secondary classes to the Training College proper. With the opening of the American University to women, and the formation of a Junior College for Women by the American Mission, girls were offered opportunities of higher education which were undreamt of before the war. The staff of the College was drawn from tried and trusted former pupils, and reinforced by missionary teachers from England.

In 1923 the "B.L.T.C. Union" was formed, in an attempt to draw together the former students and give them encouragement and spiritual fellowship. Its chosen emblem - the olive - was to be a reminder of the call to fruitfulness and service.

The formation of the Training Department called for the re-establishment of an elementary school where the budding teachers might practise teaching and so the Practising School was begun in a small building in the College garden. It was in the care of Mrs. Nefigie Sahyoun for a number of years. To make room for it, the Blind School moved over to "Engannon".

The other elementary school which was reopened was the Pine Forest School. Here is an interesting picture showing its influence in 1921. It is taken from an article by Miss Johnston:

"The religious authorities in the little mosque near by were stirred up and insisting upon attendance at the school conducted there by the Sheikh." An official from the Education Department "called upon our teacher ... and was surprised to find anything so up-to-date in that neighbourhood. We do not consider our Pine Forest School particularly up-to-date, but it is a vast improvement upon the school of the Sheikh, as the people themselves have found out. The real reason for the objection from the religious authorities was the influence the school had last year upon the children attending it. The oldest class of boys and girls ... were deeply interested in the Scripture lessons, and the whole neighbourhood was talking about it. They said that if they left those children in that school they would all become Christians. They were learning infidelity. The boys themselves said, 'No, our teacher

teaches us only what is good: all her teaching is from the Word of God. . . .' Two families of the oldest scholars were taken away entirely on religious grounds, for the parents were greatly pleased by the progress they have made in their lessons."

Who can tell the extent of the work done in children's hearts? This comes from Damascus: "Some of the most regular attendants at our Bible classes are Moslem women once pupils in our schools. *Are they Moslems? or Christians from Moslem homes? Surely more of the latter ... vide the quick response given by one such when a Christian near her alluded to the mediation of the saints - 'But there is one God and one Mediator between God and men ... Jesus Christ'.*"

Incidentally, the young teachers in the Moslem municipal schools are almost invariably Christian girls from Mission Schools, untrained as a rule, but appreciated and doing good work. "How is it that your girls all love their teachers so much?" a Moslem superintendent asked me, "that is the secret we want to find out." It is the secret which Islam has to learn from the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours, and which we trust these young teachers may be found ready to pass on.

There were three schools run by our Mission in Damascus, St. Paul's in Bab Touma, the Central School on the edge of the Moslem quarter, and the Meedan School in the southern quarter of the city. Later a class for Haurani girls was started by Miss Harrison, who opened a small boarding department for them on very simple lines. They were taught Scripture and Arabic and embroidery, the idea being for them later to go back to their own villages to teach. This class was continued for several years.

During this period the mandatory power required that if a second language was taught in school, it must be French. Since parents sending their children to our schools wanted them to learn English, this meant that our pupils had to study three languages - Arabic, French and English - and classical Arabic is a language which needs real study, even for those who speak Arabic. So much time spent on languages meant an overloaded time-table.

Here is a little picture from Tyre school:

"A larger proportion of Moslems ... than last year ... most of the other scholars are Catholics.... The father of little Z. is a sorcerer and is very cruel to her and her mother. The child generally comes to Sunday School and the mother to women's meetings as often as she can.... She loves to hear the Gospel. . . . A Moslem boy, whose mother was in the school before the war, is one of the brightest in his class, and she is very pleased to hear again through him the Bible stories."

Baalbek School was re-opened in 1930, at first only a kindergarten. Though charging fees, it was very popular, and this aroused Catholic opposition, since they were offering low fees or none. However, the higher fees brought us into touch with the more prosperous families, Christian and Moslem, of a social class often hard to reach with the Gospel.

The second year priests and nuns visited parents of many of our scholars and laid before them the duty of removing their children from our influence, enforcing their remarks sometimes by promises of help and sometimes by threats! The son of a lawyer who was taken away "took the law into his own hands and came back to us, though we did not receive him until we had been assured of his father's consent. Twice the nuns got hold of him and he was absent for a few days, but twice he returned to us.

However, in the end the nuns were too strong for him and towards the end of the second term he was finally removed.



"Some of the older children, from nine to eleven years of age, have especially pleased us by the interest they have shown in the Scripture lessons.... Some of them show a very simple childlike faith in God and in prayer. A little girl fell off a roof and was badly hurt. When the doctor came, she was afraid. The teacher had gone to the house and was sitting beside her, so the child turned to her and said, 'You told us that God is always with us. God is with me now, isn't He? so I need not be afraid.' "

A quite new form of Mission work for us was the Weaving School: started as a form of relief work immediately on the close of the war, it was continued as a means of providing work for women and so reaching them with the Gospel. The women were taught carding, spinning, weaving, as well as some embroidery: they were mostly "the respectable poor who formerly belonged to the better classes", who could "not beg and jostle with the crowd. It started with fifty, but soon the number grew." In an account of the beginnings, Miss Lepper says: "One very important feature of the work must not be omitted: that is, the daily half-hour devoted to the Bible lesson. This is given by a very experienced Syrian teacher and is listened to with great attention, and, we believe, appreciation. As the women are ... from different sects and religions - Christians, Moslems, Druze - it was good to see all ready to accept this part of our programme without question. So far we have not heard of any unwillingness to attend."

Some lines from a report of a few years later show something of what this school meant: "If we had not employed the older women, probably they would have remained without any regular work and would have eked out some kind of miserable existence depending on the too infrequent gifts of their neighbours. They can never earn much, but with their wages they are able to buy food, and they have the feeling that there is someone who cares if they are ill or in special need. This is really what they appreciate most, and we believe that this helps to bring them nearer to the One who cares infinitely more than we do. It is good to see some of the old faces shining when we speak of Him at the Sunday Class. Their knowledge may be little, but it is *love* that counts in the Kingdom of God."

The school continued until 1930. By that time living conditions had considerably improved and women and girls could earn a living in many different ways. We thank God that during those years many were blessed. Writing in its final year the one in charge says: "The women are so fond of their school.... They have all learned to read and have had daily prayers and Bible teaching, and I feel sure that many lives have been influenced by the Word of God." Even to-day, we are in touch here and there with a few who were in the school as young women. They still ask after Miss Lepper. "So though our looms are silent, and the shuttles have ceased to fly, let us pray on in faith for those who have been in our Weaving School, and remember the promise - 'My Word shall not return to me void ... it shall prosper.' "

In 1922, it was found possible to re-open the *Schools for Blind*. The new Weaving School had been started in the former Blind School premises (in the College garden) but in 1922 it was moved to "Engannon" where there was more room for development. When this building was put into shape again, part of it could be set aside for the blind.

At first there were ten lads, in the care of Mualim Khalil Yazigi and his wife, and four girls with blind Saada as their teacher. How good it was once again to receive these handicapped ones and introduce them to the true Light! One cheering feature of this work was the practical help given by a group of Syrian ladies, who supported sometimes as many as ten pupils. "One after another have had their inward eyes opened to see Jesus as they had not known Him before, as their personal Saviour and loving Lord, and have given Him their allegiance. Even one poor lad whose intelligence is so slow that he seems at times almost lacking shows no signs of weakness when he joins in prayer."

There is the story of Nur. Her family belonged to the Hauran (ancient land of Bashan), but during the troubles of 1925-6 they fled to Damascus. Here they came in touch with Miss Harrison, and when she saw that their big daughter was blind, she thought at once of our Blind School. Nur was very ignorant, for there was no one in the Hauran to teach anything to a blind girl. How different she became in school! Always busy knitting and reading - and so happy. One Christmas she became ill and had to go to hospital. When her teacher visited her Nur said, "You have been planting the Seed in my heart, and God has made it grow. Now, because God has given me new life, I want to give my heart to Him." Sometime later, she read the parable of the man who hid his talent instead of trading with it and so increasing it. Nur thought about this and said, "The people in my country know nothing and have no one to teach them. I want to be like a missionary to them. I do not want to be like the man in the parable, who hid his talent in the earth." And so she went back, having learned some handwork by which to earn a scanty living, and with the Word of God in her heart, as well as in Braille, that she might indeed carry its message to her own people.

The story of the baptism of blind Ihsan belongs to a few years later. Here it is in Miss Johnston's words:

"I wish you could have been with us this afternoon. . . . The Prayer Hall decorated with freezias, violets and ageratum from the garden.... Little Ihsan, our blind boy, was to be baptised. He is not quite ten years old but a very fervent little disciple, and has been for a long time most anxious to follow his Lord's command and confess Him openly. The difficulty was a double one. His father, a member of the Greek Catholic Church, treated his request as a joke, and put him off with vague promises of taking him to be baptised in the Jordan one day. The second hindrance was the difficulty of neither of his parents being (Evangelical) Church members. His mother is a Metwali (Shiah Moslem). He could not be presented by them, and is not of age. However, the pastor was ready, with the consent of his Committee to baptise him privately in the school: so a formal visit was paid to his parents and the father's consent obtained, they were both present to-day with his two little sisters.

"Ihsan was a very happy little lad as he stood and responded to the questions put to him, and made the declaration of his faith and purpose. When we came out he was greeted by Ayoub, a Druze convert, also blind, and by Nur, a Moslem convert, both of whom have themselves been recently baptised."

In July 1934, our much-valued master, M. Khalil Yazigi, retired at over eighty years of age. Owing to lack of funds a new master was not appointed, and Miss Johnston took charge of the school with a Syrian matron. The number of pupils was reduced to seven men, and the girls' school was closed. Sitt Saada went to Tyre to do some evangelistic work in connection with the clinic. We were happy to know that ere long special funds were made available to take in more pupils and engage a new master. This was Mr. Salim Garboushian, who with his wife is still with us. They took the blind to their hearts and under their care the school was again built up and extended its influence to many boys and young men.

The shepherding of "old boys" has always been an important part of the work of the Blind School. It is hard for them to make a living, so we are glad for them to come back from time to time to buy cane (at a lower price than in town, because we get it free from customs duty), and to receive Christian fellowship and encouragement. The Master and his wife also visit former pupils.

Each Christmas a special party is held for old students, their wives and families, and a message from God's Word is given, after present pupils have recited and sung some carols and Christmas hymns.

Through the generosity of friends, we are able to give each one a small gift, in memory of God's great Gift to us all - the Lord Jesus Christ.

## Chapter 3

### Pattern of the Work: Medical and Evangelistic

MEDICAL work was begun first of all in Tyre, when that station was re-opened in 1923, with two Danish members of the Mission, Miss Paludan and Miss Olsen. The building which had been formerly the Boys' School was used as a dispensary, to which patients came three days a week at least, it was supposed to be open only three days a week but there were always special cases that needed daily treatment. The doors were closed at nine o'clock, and then a brief service was held, so that all could share in the spiritual food which they needed most of all. Afterwards, the evangelist Sitt Latifeh Abu Zeid, would talk to the waiting patients individually. There was much ignorance and superstition to combat. Miss Olsen writes:

"A girl who had been treated for a long time for trachoma was still not quite cured before I went away. I advised her to go to see a doctor during my absence, if her eyes should trouble her much. She answered, 'I will not.' 'Aren't you afraid of losing your sight?' I asked, to which she replied, 'I prefer being blind to being seen by a male doctor.' Often when I tell them to go and see a doctor they will reply: 'We know that *your God* blesses your hands, so we want to come to you for help.' "

It was obvious that this medical work offered valuable contacts. Some patients who needed daily treatments were given opportunities to hear the Gospel day after day. The Biblewoman taught the women and children in small group or individually. Some were visited in their homes and then again were open doors to speak of the One who died for our sins. Often it was apparent that some had come to the clinic from distant villages, and this gave our workers the chance to get an entrance into such places, following up the contacts made in the clinic.

Later on, when Miss Paludan was stationed in Ainzahalta, she also was able to do some medical work. There was no doctor then in the village, nor in the immediate neighbourhood, and so Miss Paludan was often called in cases of accident or sickness, and gave valuable help. This was continued for several years.

We had no medical work of our own in Damascus, but were closely associated with the Edinburgh Medical Mission Hospital on its evangelistic side. Our missionaries and Bible-women visited regularly in the wards, and also among the out patients. "We sit with them, talking about their homes, their families, their joys and their sorrows, and, where we have an opening, reading Bible stories and showing pictures to illustrate them. . . . The men often ask intelligent questions and their willingness to own to failure in the battle against temptation is very touching." Some of the patients came from surrounding villages, some from Bedouin tents, and our workers made every effort to follow them when they left the hospital.

Sometimes in Tyre it was necessary to have "in-patients". One was a poor woman from a distant village who came on a donkey, as she had a terribly infected foot. She stayed for ten days and was marvellously healed. Miss Olsen said: "She weeps with joy, again and again, and cannot thank the Lord enough for His goodness to her.... But the best ... is yet to be told. She is a very simple dear village woman, and had never heard anything about Christ before. She has opened her heart to all that she has been taught about Him here. She says that she believes in the Lord Jesus and that He has saved her and given her health back again: praise be to His Name! When the talk is given to the women, she says, 'Do listen to this ... this wonderful story about Jesus and His Love.' No doubt this simple woman

will go back to her village and be a light. She says she never wants to leave us, but I am sure that she will be glad to go home to her family."

Each Mission Station continued to be a centre for direct *evangelistic work*, carried on in various ways. A number of the former Biblewomen and Scripture Readers were no more, but some were still able to take up their work again after the war. The need of a Bible School to train new workers was strongly felt and in November 1922 the first steps were taken. It was decided to have it in Damascus, and Miss Johnston transferred her office there to inaugurate the new school. "It was such a new idea that it had to be expounded over and over again. One of those who gave it his heartiest approval was a venerable priest of the Greek Orthodox Church. He realised the importance of women's work for women and gave the school his fervent blessing."

The first month was a trial, with classes open to all comers. Many came, but they were unused to consecutive study, and too much hampered by the bondage of housekeeping and husbands! "The nucleus of the work and its chief source of interest lies in the little band of three regular students who are with us daily and enter with enthusiasm into every study. We feel that they are chosen of God for the work ... will set the standard high ... all are anxious to fit themselves to help their own people."

The teaching was given in Arabic by Miss Johnston and Miss Harrison, and the latter supervised the practical work, visiting, teaching adult pupils to read the Bible, hospital visits, Sunday School superintendence and teaching, cottage meetings or their equivalent. Lectures on Islam were given by Paster Nielsen of the Danish Mission, and on First Aid and Home Nursing by Miss Mann, of the Edinburgh Medical Mission Hospital in Damascus.

It is not surprising that Damascus became a strong centre of evangelism, both in the city, where in the 1930's we had a team of four national women evangelists as well as Miss Harrison and Miss Strong, and also in the districts around. Evangelistic trips were made as far south as Jebel-ed-Druze and Hauran, sometimes breaking new ground, at other times following up some contact made earlier in the city. Many were the opportunities to preach the Gospel.

Here is a story from one summer tour which led to a village in Jebel-ed-Druze.

"Stories would be told or verses read from the Gospel and explained in simple language. As I did this in one village, the chief man said, 'In this village we have a wise man who speaks as you do - let him be brought.' Anon, a venerable Druze Sheikh was led in: he proved to be blind. It seems that years ago some admiral had given him a Bible. Unable to read it, he got a boy to do so for him, and that so often that he practically knew the Gospel of St. John by heart.... This man is teaching them what he knows and really seems to believe, led by the Spirit. In a few cases we were able to sell Gospels. One of these was in a Moslem village, where we felt very strongly the presence of evil. Let us pray that this Gospel with the truth it contains may be the means of overcoming evil with good."

In Damascus too was begun a "Society of Guidance", whose members were pledged to help enquirers and welcome converts. This was a real encouragement, as up to this time national Christians had been slow to share with Moslem, Druze and Jew the good things of the Kingdom.

As the schools were reopened in Tyre and Ainzahalta and Hasbeiya, so in those places some direct evangelism was done by the missionaries with occasional help from voluntary national friends. Only in Tyre was there a regular Bible-woman. When Baalbek was reopened in 1928, it was decided to start with evangelistic work only and this was carried on for a few years, in the town and in the villages.

However, the demands of the people for a school were too insistent to be long refused, and a school was begun (kindergarten only at first) in 1930. Here is a snapshot of village visiting:

"How one longed that the People of the Plain should understand the blessed message. Understanding, alas! is very dim, and the power of thought pitifully weak . . . round Baalbek.

"'We don't know. Who shall make us know?' or 'Oh yes, there is a God: but see! He does not know us. We don't know Him and what can it matter? All of you who know Him are in one place in His thought as on this carpet' (pointing to a prayer rug), 'but we are outside the carpet. It doesn't matter.'"

For many years one faithful Biblewoman, Mrs. Jameelie Bejjani, devoted her life to work among the Jews in Beirut, and to many she was a tower of strength. They turned to her in every emergency, and ever she pointed them to the Word of God and brought to them His comfort.

This story of one of the Biblewomen comes from Beirut:

"One day as she left a house, she noticed several young men sitting drinking *arak* (native spirit). It was the middle of the day, and her soul was stirred within her. She stepped in and spoke a few earnest words to them and gave them some pamphlets on temperance. The young men read them, and some of them were so struck by what they read that they decided to give up intoxicants. Some of their friends joined them, and some twenty youths agreed to break away from this habit."

Mrs. Freijie, a valued colleague, went particularly among the Druze people whom she took to her heart and whom in turn they learnt to love. She was granted a long life of service in the Mission, first as teacher, then as Matron in the Blind School, and finally as Biblewoman.

In most stations women's meetings were held as before, where time was spent in memorising hymns and texts: "One has sometimes questioned the usefulness of this when one hears the parrot-like way in which they repeat the words. But when an old neighbour of ours was in her last illness, unable to leave her bed for months, lying there quite alone for hours, we found that one secret of her cheerful contentment was that she was constantly repeating to herself verses from the Bible which she had learnt at B.S.M. meetings.... One could see that it was the promises of God and the assurance of Christ's presence which brought her peace and comfort."

From the records of these years comes the story of the baptism of a blind man. He had had a wild youth, but was for some time in a Mission school in Egypt, though a Moslem. After a life of excesses and vicissitudes, he returned to his former blind companions, and one, a zealous evangelist, helped him. "Our faithful Blind School Master received him with the remark, 'If I did not believe that God is able from the stones to raise up believers, I would not have wanted to have anything to do with A - ! But A - was a vivid illustration of the 'new creation' which is possible to God alone. Finally, the Church session was fully convinced of the reality of his confession of faith, and on Christmas Day he was baptised, taking the name of Butros, the name of the blind evangelist who first instructed and welcomed him. Later he went to Egypt to find his family and pass on to his relatives the good news which had changed his life."

## Chapter 4

### Pattern of the Work: Administration and Finance

BUT what of the administrative side of the work? On the Field it was in the capable hands of Miss Margaret L. Johnston, who had taken up the reins of government in 1909 from Miss Caroline Thompson, and had the responsibility of building up the work again after the devastation of the war years. Her experienced and balanced judgment, together with her vision and statesmanship, were invaluable in this period. With the coming of more missionaries and the reorganisation of the work, she formed an Advisory Council, which later became the Executive Committee of the Field Council, composed of all the missionaries. Workers' Conferences were held from time to time when all national workers participated with the missionaries. Under Miss Johnston's leadership, a Constitution for the Field was drawn up to facilitate the conduct of the various branches of the work - a constitution which, in all essentials, has formed the basis for the present constitution. The supervision of the Blind School at that time was part of the work of the Field Secretary, as well as regular itineration of the stations. Miss Johnston was responsible for all the Mission accounts, and not until the last few years of her regime did she have any secretarial help, and then only part-time and amateur!

Miss Johnston reached retiring age (seventy in those days) in 1933, but after a brief holiday in England returned to the Field to give voluntary help, especially among the blind. Shortly before the outbreak of World War II, she returned to England, where she died in 1953. Her knowledge of languages, her wide vision and statesmanlike gifts were of immense value in the post-war period of reconstruction in a rapidly changing Field, for she had the gift to see the good in new ventures and adapt herself and the Mission in new circumstances. The vigour of her personality and her saintliness were a constant challenge to her fellow-workers, and the beauty of her life remains a fragrant memory with all who knew her.

Her place as Field Secretary, was taken by Miss R. I. Lepper, a missionary of wisdom and experience. It was during her tenure of office that, with the developing work and the dilapidation of the rooms in which the Field Secretary and her assistant worked, "Headquarters" became separate from the Training College, and finally, after some wanderings, found a home of its own in the transformed "Engannon" property near by. But that is a later story.

For a number of years, the Organising Secretary at home was Mr. Charles Walker, to whose devotion, soundness of judgment, prayerfulness and strong faith the Mission owed much, especially through the troubled years of the war and immediately after. He resigned in 1924 through ill health, and was succeeded as Organising and Deputation Secretary by Mr. J. D. Maitland-Kirwan. It was his privilege to bring into being the Overseas Branches of the Mission, by following up contacts made earlier by Miss Harrison in New Zealand and Australia. He visited those countries himself and encouraged the beginnings of Councils and Committees there. Similar contacts were made in South Africa. The first overseas missionary came from New Zealand in 1928, and from Tasmania in 1930.

In 1925, the General Secretary, Miss Hutcheon, felt compelled to resign, owing to a breakdown in health. For twenty-three years she had "been an inspiration to the Mission at home and to the workers in Syria. . . . Prayer and humble looking for God's guidance were the main spring of all she did and planned. Her enthusiasm inspired others."

Mr. Maitland-Kirwan was appointed General Secretary, with Miss Florence Bond as Assistant Secretary. Both were able to visit the Field and so become acquainted at first hand with all the workers and stations and see for themselves the needs and opportunities of this part of the Mission Field. Gradually much more extensive and intensive deputation work was done. The quarterly magazine was enlarged and improved, and a variety of methods employed to make the work more widely known. Towards the end of this period the name of the magazine was changed to *Under Syrian Skies*.

The post-war years brought many problems to those "holding the ropes" at home. The financial crisis and fall in the exchange rate of sterling in 1931 had grave repercussions for our Mission as elsewhere. The pound sterling counted for only two-thirds of its former value in Syrian currency. Miss Johnston writes: "How to make a constructive use of this crippling of our material resources rather than being overwhelmed by it has become our problem. We are seeking to realise that our spiritual resources are uncurtailed and unlimited, and only require faith and courage on our part to make them available." She continues:

"In spite of these difficulties we are able to report two fresh steps taken this autumn, the opening of a small school in a new district of Damascus, and of an additional village school in Lebanon." These were made possible by the sacrifice of a school in another part of Damascus, as well as personal sacrifices on the part of our workers. European workers' allowances (which were paid in sterling) decreased in value, but European and Syrian colleagues joined in the generosity of their giving. Attempts were made to reduce expenditure at Home and on the Field, to offset the reduction of income received at Home.

In the Annual Report for 1934 we have a picture of the social condition of the people to whom we were sent to minister:

"Poverty has increased and there is much unemployment. The fall in the dollar has accentuated the difficulties of many, for in past years much money came from North and South America to this country. Now many are unable to send remittances, and those which are sent are reduced by about one-third owing to the exchange. The greatly diminished rainfall of last winter brought about much hardship, for crops were greatly reduced and many villages had little or no water. In the Hauran, some of the villagers had to walk as much as eight hours to get water, wait their turn at the fountain, and walk eight hours back. The rains so far this winter give promise of a better harvest, but some of the very poor have no seed to sow. Many appeals for help reach us to which we can give only a negative reply."

Cases of gifts from Home at this time brought great joy. "These contained a splendid supply of clothing, especially for babies and very young children. . . . The clothing for grown ups and older children did not remain long on our shelves.... The woollen clothing is a real boon to the poor who cannot possibly buy wool for themselves."

In spite of all, the work went forward by God's grace. "Dare and Persevere" was still the ringing challenge handed down from our Foundress: her God was our God and we knew He would provide. Had we not - as she had - proved over and over again the fulfilment of His promise: "Jehovah Jireh"?



## Part IV New Developments, 1936-1959

### Chapter I

#### **Pioneering: A New Field – Alaouites**

The word "Alaouites" appears on our Mission map and in our Prayer Cycle because of the vision and enterprise and response to God's guidance of one elderly missionary. Miss Paludan joined our Mission from Denmark in 1921, and served as an evangelistic and medical missionary in Tyre, Ainzahalta and Baalbek. It was while she was stationed in the last-named centre that the call came to her to go out towards unoccupied fields. Here are her own words:

"When last winter (1935-6), I was thinking what bit of extra work I could do, and asked the Lord for guidance, my thoughts were drawn to the Nuseiris in the Alaouite mountains. I first heard of them through our Blind School, where Sheikh Kamil, a Nuseiri, was converted. Later, the news about Nuseiri converts in Antioch, and open doors among this sect, confirmed my leading.

"I thought of going with my tents for a month among these tribes, preaching Christ. But how could this be done? I had no one to help me, and it was impossible to go alone. We began to pray about it, asking God, if He wanted me to go to the Nuseiris, that He would provide helpers after His own choice." After some time, two helpers volunteered.

"A car proved to be too expensive for our modest funds in hand for the trip, so we did all the village visiting on foot, using a car when the camp was changed to a new centre. Looking back, I feel that this was the best way, as most of the forty villages we visited could only be reached by narrow mountain paths, and, besides this, we learned by and by how important it was that our work should be carried on in as quiet a way as possible, so as not to rouse more than necessary opposition. How good it is to have a Father who knows!"

The first centre visited was Dreikish, reached only after some adventures, and getting stuck in the mud! The tents aroused much interest, and the curious crowd offered an opportunity of preaching Christ. Later, a third helper, a strong, middle-aged man, arrived, and then the workers were able to divide forces, two going out to villages, and two staying in the camp, preaching, teaching, selling books, cooking, and doing medical work. "People used to come as early as 5 a.m., going and coming all day until bedtime." The women were pathetic - so "overworked, with pain in their arms and legs from constant strenuous walking, carrying big burdens. They were so ignorant, these women, so unaccustomed to listen and to take anything in. The Nuseiri faith does not acknowledge a woman as a proper human being. She has no religion. ... The men were far more intelligent and could grasp a new thought, so it was easier to talk to them."

Among men and boys there was some response and some were willing to purchase New Testaments. There is mention of one village, where "a big group of men used to gather morning and evening.... If we were not on the spot, they would send for us. 'We are here: please come and teach us.' . . . One day Jalal (the evangelist) had given the message about salvation in Jesus Christ, and His atoning death for us. This was too much for an aged sheikh.... God Himself died? Impossible! . . . but later the same old man appeared from the dark ... and before he left, he turned to the Lord with a simple, touching

prayer: 'Oh, Lord Jesus, give me the strength to accept Thee.' Such a prayer will surely be heard.... Again and again they asked, 'Send someone to teach us', 'We need one who will live with us and help us.' And so their need was put on our hearts and we all began to pray for them, asking God to provide for these multitudes who seemed as sheep without a shepherd. He has opened the doors, surely He wants us to enter with the fullness of Christ."

That was in the spring of 1936. Another trip was made in the autumn, a camp being established at Husn Sleiman. "We did indeed feel God's blessing hand during our stay there. . . . Visitors from morning to evening. Many had walked for hours and stayed all day long. What opportunities to make known God's love to mankind and the way of salvation in Jesus Christ! The Nuseiri religion is secret, and a mixture of the old heathenism and Mohammedanism, and here the crowds came thirsty - perhaps unconsciously - for something that would satisfy their souls, left empty by their secret worship of sun and moon in the sacred groves on every hill-top. Poor as they were, they bought Gospels and Bibles; and when at one time the store was exhausted, a young sheikh came three days running from his village and paid in advance to be sure to get the treasure. Later on, he brought his uncles and brother, who also bought Bibles."

It was pioneering indeed! After three weeks in Husn Sleiman, they went on to Tres, hoping to take rooms there, as the rains were due. "We left early in the afternoon, mules and donkeys well loaded with our bedding, tents, books, etc. . . . We were soon in the midst of wild, rugged mountains. The path was indeed rough: one scarcely realised there was a path at all, big stones being constantly in the way.... Then a thunderstorm broke, and it began to rain violently. It was hard for the poor donkeys to find their way in such weather; one of them fell, and we were further delayed by unpacking and reloading him. Black clouds covered the sky, so that the moonlight could not penetrate. . . . Now only lightning showed our path, and neither we nor our good muleteers had ever been in this part of the mountains before.... I turned to God with a quiet prayer that He would protect." . . . Eventually they reached the village and were received "with great kindness and true Eastern hospitality. We warmed ourselves around a brisk fire on the mud floor of a hut, which we shared with two sick women, each on a bedstead of rough boards, and each with a baby in her lap, two other women, several children, and four or five menfolk going and coming. Furthermore, the room provided shelter for four cows, and some small lambs which ran in and out amongst us.... We all joined in thanksgiving to God for His loving care for us in bringing us safely to Tres, and providing us with shelter for the night. We had gained another experience of His faithfulness and love."

Here is a picture which shows how deep was the need of the Nuseiri people. "The Nuseiri live in dark houses in which ... everything is filthy.... The smoke from the fire has no outlet, so adds to the blackness of everything.... The people who gather round the fire are ignorant to a degree one can scarcely imagine, and the sisters of ignorance - superstition and fear - rule freely; fear of men, fear of wild beasts, fear of dark, fear of ill-fate and fear of God, because they do not know that He is love.... Washing and tidying of hair is not a daily performance, but takes place once in a while, when there is nothing else to do. If you are ill, it would be certain death to go near water. You must not drink it, however much the feverish body is crying out for liquid, and you must not wash. Imagine the result after months, sometimes years, of illness! . . . The woman, according to Nuseiri belief, has no soul, no God, and no hope. She lives and dies like an animal. A man may take one, or more than one woman, whom he buys at a price. They are made to work far beyond their strength. They plough the fields and dig the places where the plough cannot work, they fetch wood, grass and hay, carry the crops, carry the corn to the mill, and perform every possible task for which otherwise a donkey would be used. If a donkey is available, the man will ride it, and the woman will carry the burden behind him."

On one occasion, Miss Paludan and her evangelist, riding through rocky mountains, met six wolves. Miss Paludan says: "They did not move but watched us intently. . . . My first thought was to turn and go back ... but instinctively I felt we should have them after us, and we had not even a stick with us.... So we proceeded slowly. I turned to my God and told Him that, if He wanted me to die by the teeth of wolves, I was here, and I was sure it would be good for some thing. ... The wolves were now so near that a second or two would bring them upon us, but God in His loving care protected us, and put the invisible wall around His children. As we drew near, the wolves slowly trotted a little higher up among the rocks, from where they watched us till we could see them no more. The danger was over - the Everlasting Arms had been underneath us all the while."

Miss Paludan's heart was burdened for these people, and she pleaded that the Mission might open a centre for work among them. In the early summer of 1938, a trip was made by a tiny band of workers to select a site for a small Mission-house, since funds had been given for such a purpose. It was a great venture of faith to go so far from our other bases, but it was clear to all that God had led Miss Paludan there and the possibilities were immense. Earnest prayer was offered that workers might be found ready to join Miss Paludan in that needy field. In the following year, Miss Paludan and an evangelist and his family settled in the Alaouite country; but almost immediately, Miss Paludan fell ill and had to go to hospital, and after a few months went on furlough.

In November 1939, Miss Paludan established a centre in Meshta, a Greek Orthodox village, where she had been welcomed, and used this as a centre for the work amongst the Alaouite people in neighbouring villages. Everywhere there was a readiness to hear the Gospel. It was a joy to see young men boldly confessing their faith in Christ, and ready to suffer loss for His sake. The people constantly asked for schools, but the Mission was unable to supply the needed funds or personnel.

The following year, a man and a woman evangelist joined Miss Paludan and so the work was more firmly established. Alas! the fortunes of war made it advisable for the foreigners to withdraw from Syria for a short time, and most were evacuated to Palestine. Miss Paludan was one of the first to return, however, in August 1941. News came of the conversion of a Sheikh of whom Miss Paludan writes: "He has suffered much persecution and his life has often been in danger....

He was carried away in the darkness and questioned. He thought they would kill him: but he was asked to prove that God acknowledged him either by the candle or by lot. He chose the latter and prayed that the Lord would stand by him. This the Lord graciously did, and the lot turned in his favour. Since then he has been treated a little better, and a few people have come to see him. Some have also come to be taught secretly." At this time the work was centred in Dreikish in the heart of the Alaouite country, where Miss Paludan ran a small dispensary. In nearly every house there were people with severe malaria or with eye disease, and there were also typhoid patients. Food was scarce, and many people underfed, for they were too poor to buy enough to eat.

The converted Sheikh was asking for baptism, but there were grave difficulties in the way. His sons were at first opposed, but later their attitude changed and the eldest was willing to accept a Gospel. The need of a school was met by a permit being granted to the Mission to open a school in a nearby village, Breikhieh, and a young man, a Protestant trained in a mission school in Latakia, engaged as teacher. The school was opened in March 1942 - right in the middle of the Second World War! There were only boys in the school, as the Alaouites considered it waste of time to teach a girl. Miss Paludan describes a visit to the school:

"The school is a revelation to the people. A schoolmaster without a stick? How will this turn out? But there are the children, obeying every word, and more anxious to learn than I have ever seen before. Indeed a new thing has begun."

Gradually, as more trained evangelists were available, work was begun in Jenin also, a village half Orthodox and half Alaouite. At first, there was opposition, but gradually Christian and Alaouite would gather for an informal meeting in the evangelist's house. The teacher of the village and his wife were the first ones to enter into newness of life. Miss Paludan writes: "By his wise conduct (the evangelist) has come into friendly relationship even with the priests: he has been asked to give the message at the church service, and the priests come to see him. On one such occasion, the villagers questioned the priest, but he referred them to the evangelist, and he gave the answer by the Word of the Bible, for they all now recognise that only God's Word has authority in matters that pertain to man's relationship with Him."

Miss Paludan had to leave in 1946, through ill-health, and retired to Denmark, where she died four years later. No foreign missionary was available to carry on her work, and it soon became impossible for foreigners even to visit the Alaouite country. However, the work has been very ably carried on by national evangelists, making their homes first in Jenin, and later in Meshta. Of late years the work has been more or less confined to the nominally Christian population. There has been a certain amount of opposition from authorities in the Oriental Churches, but the testimony of God's servants has borne fruit and lives have been changed. When the evangelist is taken to the police station and questioned and asked about his books, he is only too glad to show the Gospels and tracts: thus a hindrance is turned into another opportunity to preach the Gospel. It is noteworthy that villages of this area have furnished a succession of students for the Lebanon Bible Institute, and at least four or five have been in service with the Mission as fellow-labourers. From this field, the Lord has called forth labourers into His Harvest.

## Chapter 2

### Pioneering: A New Medium – Men

IN the autumn of 1935, the Mission entered upon a new phase of its history in the appointment of the Rev. Evan R. Harries as Chaplain to the Mission on the Field. Mr. and Mrs. Harries first visited their daughter who had joined the Mission from New Zealand the previous year. They accepted appointments on the Field Staff after having reached what might be considered retiring age in the service of the Kingdom in Wales and New Zealand. This appointment was the answer to the prayers of those responsible for the Mission sixty years before. In 1875, the need of a "clerical superintendent" to take charge of the religious training on the Field had been voiced, but no one suitable had been found.

Mr. and Mrs. Harries made their headquarters in Beirut, but visited each station, holding special meetings. The previous summer the first Mission Conference was held in Shemlan, under the leadership of the Rev. William Lytle of Antioch, and Pastor Marcus Abdel Messih of Egypt. This was a wonderful experience for all, so the following summer the Chaplain arranged a "Summer Camp" which was attended by about sixty people associated with our own Mission, as well as many friends from other missions. It was followed by a short-period Bible School lasting three weeks, during which about seventeen students, mostly teachers and evangelists, undertook studies in the Word of God and church history. The encouraging response showed "both the need and the desire for such an institution - perhaps for a permanent school".

The next spring, Mr. and Mrs. Harries left for an extended tour, including the Sudan, New Zealand and Canada, with the object, in the case of Canada, of stirring up interest there in this Mission's work. They were reappointed to the Field for a further period of service.

Meantime, plans were developing for a permanent Bible School, and a meeting was held in London on November 16th, 1937 to announce the inauguration of "A Bible School in a Bible Land". It had been decided to use the Shemlan premises for this purpose, namely for a Bible School in which national evangelists could be trained to carry the Gospel to their own people. It was estimated to cost approximately £200 per annum, but a special appeal for £500 was made for initial expenses, since a good deal of renovation and refurnishing had to be done. Mr. Harries prepared a leaflet called "A Bible School for Syria", in which the reasons for starting such a project were set forth.

The same issue of the magazine in which this was reported, announced another important new venture. We quote it, for it is indeed historic, after seventy-seven years of being a "women's mission to women":

"Some time ago the Committee decided to enrol men for service in the Field, and they are anxious to receive applications from suitable candidates." Apparently there was little response, for in the magazine for October 1938, we find the following note: "There is a comparative absence of applications from men for service in the Mission. This is due, we believe, to the fact that there is still an idea that only women candidates are recruited. We desire, therefore, once more to emphasise that the Committee some time ago declared their willingness to accept offers from men."

Meanwhile, the Bible School was successfully launched on January 17th, 1938, with Mr. and Mrs. Harries in charge, and Zaki Effendi from Egypt as tutor. That first year there were six students, five men and one woman; lectures were mostly given in English and translated into Arabic and Armenian. Mrs.

Harries organised the domestic side of the school, allotting to each student daily duties. This proved a valuable part of the training, though most of the students were unaccustomed to such work! Very soon the school was given the name it still bears - "Lebanon Bible Institute". The students found scope for valuable field work in the surrounding villages.

The second year eleven new students were enrolled, two women and nine men. January 1939 brought another missionary man to join Mr. Harries, the Rev. Kenneth Cragg. The new medium was being enlarged. But 1939 saw also the outbreak of the Second World War, so it is not surprising that the next man candidate did not come forward till 1947, when Mr. de Smidt, the present Principal, joined the Mission. Since then the trickle has continued, but has not yet become a steady stream. It is interesting to note that of the nine men who have so far served as missionaries, six have been from the Dominions (New Zealand, Australia and South Africa).\*

*\* Late in 1960 another married couple sailed for full missionary service in Lebanon.*

The next development of the Institute was to offer a shortened course for teachers with a view to their becoming more efficient evangelists-through-education. From time to time some teachers availed themselves of this offer and proved its value, especially in preparing them to take a more active part in the leadership of camps and conferences, and in Sunday School work.

The first "Diploma Day" for the Institute was a great event in June 1939, when five students left the Institute, two to minister to Armenians, two among Syrians in Damascus, and one to find his sphere of service in the Institute itself. To quote the words of a magazine article: "In these young men and women faith sees an expanding circle of action for Christ and for the souls of Syria, expanding beyond the geographical and mental limits of any Western agents."

With the outbreak of war, Zaki Effendi had to return to Egypt, but visiting lecturers were found to help, and Mr. Cragg also joined the staff, after his time of language study, for a year or two. Eventually, Miss Harries joined her parents on the staff, and so was able to be the connecting link between the "Old Covenant" and the "New" - to use the familiar language of the current students!

Throughout the war years, by the grace of God, the Institute was able to continue. In 1942, Mr. Harries stated afresh its aims: We are aiming at giving a systematic and thorough training in Bible knowledge, and in methods of evangelism as well as theory: at inculcating the spirit of service; and at developing the world vision."

One of the problems facing the administration of the Institute is the fact that very few students have been able to make even a contribution towards their board: for, "those who are rich enough in faith to come and train as evangelists are usually poor as to this world". So wrote Mr. Harries in 1943. Costs increased rapidly with the rise in the cost of living. In 1938 the cost of a student's board was reckoned as £10 sterling; in 1944, it became £50. For this reason a Bursary Fund was started specifically to help towards students' fees, through gifts contributed to the Fund for this purpose.

By the summer of 1946, Mr. and Mrs. Harries felt that the time had come for them to retire, and since there was then no one to take their place, the work of the Institute was temporarily suspended. Mr. and Mrs. Harries had endeared themselves to the whole Mission, and their going left a great gap; but we were indeed full of praise to God for what they had accomplished under His hand in so short a time, especially in laying such sure foundations for the training of evangelists. The ranks of our Mission, as well as many others, have been strengthened by the students whom they sent forth.

Mr. Harries died in New Zealand in 1954, but Mrs. Harries continues to serve the Mission by her constant prayers, as well as in other ways.

In 1952, Mr. Leslie de Smidt of South Africa was appointed to undertake, as Principal, the important work of reopening the Institute. Miss Harries was re-appointed on the staff. A new feature was the establishment of a National Advisory Council of those in full spiritual accord with the principles, aims and doctrinal position of the Mission, to advise on all matters affecting the Institute and to administer the Bursary Fund. This has proved of immense value since men and women, endowed by God with gifts of wisdom and business acumen, as well as spiritual zeal and discernment, representing various Christian groups, have been willing to serve on this Council. The Institute owes much especially to the Chairman of the Council, Mr. F. E. Accad of the Bible Society.

In the magazine for January 1953, we read of the reopening in November 1952, with three students in residence, and a few more expected. Of these three, one (a converted Moslem Turk) is now serving as a pastor of the Nazarene Church in Jerusalem (Jordan). Another, after having served some years as an evangelist, was ordained by the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon, and is the pastor in charge of the Merjayoun Parish in South Lebanon.

Since then the Institute has continued to send forth year by year a small group of men and women trained for the service of the Master, and we are happy to hear how the Lord is using them in different parts of His harvest field. Alas! the number is still small; the need is for more students, and students with a better educational background to fit them for the task of evangelism in these modern times. At the request of the Evangelical Synod, the course is being extended to a third year, for those who are hoping to go on towards ordination as pastors.

Another problem connected with the Institute is its accommodation. For various reasons it would be advisable to move from Shemlan, and plans are afoot for the erection of suitable buildings nearer Beirut. We look to God, who called the L.B.I. into being for the preparation of His servants, to guide and provide in the days to come, as He has in the past.\*

*\* As a Centenary project, a new and larger "Lebanon Bible Institute" accommodating 30 students, is to be built at Hadeth on the southern outskirts of Beirut city.*

Mention must be made in this Chapter of another institution concerned with the training of men - the Boys' School. Readers will remember that from 1860 to 1903, the Mission carried on a Boys' School in Beirut, providing for elementary studies; but in the latter year it was closed for lack of funds. However, during the second quarter of this century, the demands of parents that the Mission open a school for boys comparable with the Training College became constant and insistent. In 1945, when the matter seemed to be becoming more urgent, the Mission was offered, for a merely nominal rent, the use of premises vacated by an Armenian orphanage, in the Sana'a quarter of the city. The premises were spacious enough to accommodate also the Blind School and the Mission office, and a furnished flat was made available for the residence of the Field Secretary. Step by step the way opened, and in October 1945, the English School for Boys came into being, with four elementary classes, under the supervision of one of the missionary ladies of the Training College, Miss Farquharson, since there was no missionary man as yet on the educational staff. There were sixty-four boys the first year. Gradually the classes were increased, until the school provided a complete ladder of education from Elementary II to Secondary VI, University Entrance.

Naturally there were difficulties. A new school at first attracts the "cast offs" who cannot get in anywhere else. The Principal and staff found difficulty in bringing them to a right way of behaviour, and in some cases the parents had made no effort to train their sons in good conduct. Gradually, however, as the reputation of the school was enhanced, largely owing to the firm but understanding discipline of the present Principal, Mr. Kalim Kurban, appointed in 1948, competition for places became keen, and graduates of the school began to compare very favourably in academic standard with those from other schools.

In view of the rising tide of nationalism in Arab lands, it will readily be understood that a boys' school conducted by a foreign mission presented peculiar problems. It was not easy to steer clear of politics when students' strikes involving many schools were the order of the day, and our boys were incited to join the strikers. Our aim, as in every school of the Mission, is to centre young lives in the Lord Jesus Christ, by instructing them in the Word of God, and pointing out the Way of Salvation, for Christian and Moslem alike. We praise God for victories won in some lives, but there is need for constant vigilance and perseverance.

Two major needs constantly faced the school - adequate staff and adequate premises. It was not until 1956 that the first missionary teacher from abroad joined the staff, and he could be only part-time at the beginning till he had passed his language examinations.

In 1952 we were obliged to give up our tenancy of the orphanage premises. Through the generosity of a local friend, the Engannon premises were completely "reconditioned" to provide, on the ground floor, spacious accommodation for the Blind School, and, on the upper floor, two flats for the Field Secretary and the Master of the Blind School, as well as Mission offices. These were begun in 1951 and completed in 1952. Meantime a building was rented for the Boys' School not very far away from the Training College. It was barely sufficient for our growing needs, and we missed the large playground we had enjoyed. This meant that the Boys' School could no longer expand, but every effort was made towards acquiring more suitable accommodation of their own. In 1955 a piece of land was bought in Mosaitbe, a suburb of Beirut. It was small, but a good investment. A few years' later, plans were begun for the sale of this piece and the purchase of a larger one on the outskirts of the city, where eventually a hostel or boarding department might be erected also. Perhaps the Centenary will see these dreams come true!\*

*\* This is, in fact, one of the projects to mark the Centenary.*

In the Boys' School and the Lebanon Bible Institute, as well as in the Training College, the Mission has its share in preparing young people to take their place in the leadership of their country, with right ideals and principles, and with the power of Christ in their lives to direct and enable them to put these principles into practice.



## Chapter 3

### Pioneering: With New Resources – Overseas

THE story to be told in this Chapter really begins in 1924 or even earlier, but the major part of it belongs to the second quarter of this century. In that year, one of the older missionaries on the Field, Miss Ethelwyn Harrison, asked permission to spend her furlough in New Zealand, in which country most of her relatives had settled. Permission was granted and Miss Harrison sailed for New Zealand via Colombo and Australia. In Dunedin, she was met by Miss Werner, a former B.S.M. missionary, who ever since her retirement in 1901 had been working among Syrian settlers there. Before Miss Harrison left a Council had been formed to further the interests of this Mission, and a President and Treasurer chosen to help the Secretary. In other cities also secretaries were appointed, and later on an Executive for the North Island was formed.

Miss Harrison then went on to Australia, visiting Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth, in each place leaving an organised base for the support of the Mission. This was the first real "deputation tour" undertaken in these lands by one of our missionaries, and much of the success of later developments is due to this intrepid pioneer. In the accounts for 1925 in the magazine, we read of £91 contributed by Australia and £77 by New Zealand. Small, you say? Perhaps so, but we do not "despise the day of small things", knowing that such gifts were backed up by earnest and believing prayer, offered by hundreds of humble folk, and their faith has been abundantly rewarded.

In 1928, Mr. Maitland-Kirwan, the General Secretary in London, embarked upon a tour to extend and deepen the work thus begun. It is on this tour that we first find mention of a Branch Association in Ceylon. When Mr. Kirwan visited Ceylon early in 1928, he spent a week speaking at meetings arranged by the Honorary Secretary, Mrs. D. H. Unwin. This Branch continued until 1947.

After touching at the Australian ports, Mr. Kirwan went to New Zealand, where he was able to assist in the strengthening of the Council in Dunedin, and to recruit the first Overseas missionary, Miss Lilian Jeffreys, its first representative on the Field. When a Council for the North Island was formed with Miss M. W. Turner as its Honorary Secretary, Mr. Kirwan felt that "seeds of missionary interest" had been sown, "and seed previously dropped by Miss Harrison ... watered". It is no doubt significant that this Council, whose secretary has been for so many years connected with the New Zealand Bible Training Institute, has sent to the Field seven missionaries.

Returning to Australia, Mr. Kirwan visited New South Wales, Tasmania, Victoria, South and Western Australia. He spoke at many meetings and secured fresh interest, magazine subscribers, and box-holders in every centre. Existing Councils (in New South Wales and Western Australia) were strengthened, and new Councils formed in Tasmania, Victoria and South Australia. The Honorary Secretary for North Tasmania, Miss Joy Jones, offered herself for service in Syria and arrived on the Field in 1930. Mr. Kirwan wrote at the conclusion of this tour: "Someone has written somewhere about building a cottage of grey stone out of the ruins of our castles in the air, and that is what I feel I have been doing. I had my castles in the air.... That a cottage of grey stone is being built I cannot doubt, for those who have joined our newly-formed Councils are those who, being in full sympathy with the basis of our Mission, are therefore really keen on promoting its work to the best of their ability."

In the autumn of 1928, Mr. Kirwan continued his tour by visiting South Africa, where there was then no regular B.S.M. association. Shortly before this, a lady in Windhuk, Mrs. Fairweather, had interested a

group of boys and girls in our Mission, and they had been making donations to the work. As a result of the meetings arranged by Mrs. Fairweather for Mr. Kirwan, a Council was organised in Cape Town to function for the whole province. Many centres were visited and local secretaries and committees arranged to consolidate the work. The aim of the tour was "to create real interest in the minds and hearts of people who, for the most part, had never heard of the Mission, and to appoint honorary secretaries and in the large centres to form Councils who should carry on the work.... Every centre seemed unpromising at first, and yet not a single place was left without an honorary secretary, not one headquarters of a State or Province without a Council" - surely a magnificent achievement and the assurance of God's blessing on the tour. Financially, too, the Mission gained; whereas in 1927 the income received from Overseas was £248, in 1928 it was £1,033.

But the seeds needed watering still, so in 1930 the Misses Fitzpatrick, two of the senior missionaries on the Field, volunteered for a tour of Australia and New Zealand. Travelling via India and Ceylon, they reached Fremantle on February 24th, to be met by friends of the Mission and entertained in Perth by the Western Australia Council. Similarly at other ports they were hospitably welcomed, but went on to Dunedin, New Zealand, for the beginning of their deputation work. The chief centres in South and North Islands were visited, where local secretaries had arranged extensive tours of meetings and many new friends were made.

Then followed meetings in Sydney, Tasmania, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth. The ladies spoke in many churches, Sunday Schools, Bible classes, schools and colleges, and gave out between 5,000 and 6,000 new thanks-boxes. They felt it an advantage to belong to an interdenominational mission, as different churches invited them to speak, as well as united groups.

But the journeying was not all "one-way traffic". During 1931-2, Miss Turner, Honorary Secretary for New Zealand, spent a year in Scotland and spoke at a number of meetings.

On her way back home she visited the Field and saw at first hand the work and workers for whom she and her friends in New Zealand were so vitally concerned. She was able to spend time in each station and all appreciated her ministry and fellowship. Since then she has visited the Field twice, in 1946 and 1954, when she had the joy of bringing two new recruits to the Field. For many years past she has been the indefatigable Deputation Secretary for New Zealand and Australia.

In 1933 Mr. Kirwan paid another visit to South Africa and gave fresh impetus to the work of the Mission there. He returned to England by way of Syria, so renewing contacts with those on the Field as well as with supporters overseas.

Canada's interest in our Mission began with the visit of the Rev. and Mrs. Harries in 1938. Mr. Harries spoke specially of the project of starting a Bible School. A Dominion Council was formed with Miss Theresa Robson as secretary, and so "the Canadian Branch of the B.S.M. was already shaping as an active agency for the spread of the Gospel in Syria and Lebanon". Miss Robson paid a visit to the Field to see conditions and needs for herself, and the Mission owes very much to her zeal and unselfish labours. Miss Robson passed into the presence of the Lord in 1955, but she had already associated the Rev. R. M. Gordon with herself in the work. He carried on as Secretary-Treasurer till his sudden death in 1958. He also had been able to visit the Field, and, while there, was impressed with the Mission's need to have its own transport. As a result of his active interest in this particular need, the Canadian Council arranged for the despatch to Beirut of two splendid Chevrolet station-wagons (purchased with money bequeathed by Miss Robson), together with a considerable sum to cover expenses, for use in evangelistic work on the Field. Mrs. Gordon is now carrying on her husband's work as General

Secretary for Canada.

Miss Robson was not content with deputation work only in Canada, but invaded the States also, and was able to create centres of interest there too. During one of Miss Turner's world tours, she also visited North America and at that time (1947) a separate Council for U.S.A. was organised with the Rev. Lloyd Fesmire, Pastor of Western Springs Baptist Church, Illinois, as its Chairman. It sent out its first missionary to the Field in 1950, and a second in 1952.

Of the thirty missionaries at present in active service, nineteen have been sent out by Overseas Councils. It will thus be evident how in the last decade the work of these Councils has deepened and extended. At the time of writing, all the foreign men in the Mission come from overseas! The presence of so many overseas missionaries has meant that during the past ten years, much more deputation work has been possible in these countries; thus fresh centres of interest and support have been created. This is particularly valuable, since in these lands the areas to be covered are so vast.

## Chapter 4

### Pioneering: In New Conditions – War and After

THE outbreak of the Second World War caused the Mission authorities to wonder whether again the work on the Field would be disrupted and missionaries evacuated, as in 1914. The Field was under French Mandate and anything might happen in the Mediterranean. The Field Secretary, Miss Lepper, was at home at the time as well as the Principal of the Training College: but when they were allowed to return a few weeks later, they found that those on the Field had re-started the work in almost every station with the staff available. It had not been possible to reopen the school in, Baalbek. "The people of the country, having suffered so acutely in 1914-18, were naturally filled with the worst apprehensions, and for a short time conditions were very difficult, until it was realised that this country was not to become immediately a war zone; so fears were allayed and confidence restored." So wrote Miss Lepper in the spring of 1940.

Owing to our position on the shores of the Mediterranean, lines of communication were often broken, and letters to and fro were few and far between. Mr. Kirwan has a note in the magazine for July 1940: "We have had no letter from Syria for some time, owing no doubt to the situation in the Mediterranean; but we have no reason to suppose that the work is not proceeding as normally as circumstances permit." So indeed it was, but not without "alarms and excursions", the digging of trenches in the Training College garden, and attempts to "black out" our enormous expanse of windows!

News of the capitulation of France came in June 1940, and we were asked to close school earlier than usual, though those taking certificates were able to complete their examinations. We even had Diploma Day, after much hesitation. "All other schools had decided against having their usual functions. But Government made no objection, so we decided that for the girls' sake we would keep it. It was held on June 18th, and proved to be a very happy day, and this place was an oasis of peace and calm amid the whirlpool of rumours and tumultuous fears which were seething all around us. Nearly 400 visitors came and they enjoyed it so much that after the ceremony was over they lingered on, reluctant to leave the quietness of a place which seemed permeated with the sense of God's presence." So wrote one who was present.

Lebanon and Syria fell under "Vichy" control, and throughout the summer threats of evacuation came nearer. We made our preparations, sorting and destroying papers, packing trunks, and so forth. Most of the missionaries remained in Shemlan, and we held our Mission Conference in Choueir as planned. Though several British families left, we felt surely guided to remain. "One day at Shemlan a young man (a former student of L.B.I.) came in to see if anybody was there, as he had been told emphatically that fourteen cars full of B.S.M. missionaries had passed through by night on their way to the frontier. He was relieved to find it was not true." God's hand was upon us and we were able to reopen the schools at the usual date in October with full registrations. So the work of preaching the Gospel through schools was able to be carried on, and the staff rejoiced in knowing of definite professions of faith.

By the following spring, the position of citizens of Allied countries became precarious, and in May 1941 the order for evacuation came. As there were only a few weeks left of the summer term, most of the schools carried on under the direction of the national staff till ordered by the government to close. By special permission of the British Consul we were allowed to betake ourselves to Palestine with visas for three months. There we were overwhelmed by the kindness of the Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem and

Mrs. Graham-Brown, Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Clark, and others who arranged homes for us and welcomed us as brothers and sisters. Some of the younger ones were able to profit by the language courses given at the Newman School of Missions, by the kindness of its Director, the Rev. Eric Bishop. Others found plenty to do in canteen work and caring for other refugees.

The brief campaign of the summer of 1941 led by British and Free French forces succeeded in securing these lands for the free world and guaranteeing the independence of the two Republics of Syria and Lebanon, which had up to this time existed independently only on paper. This meant that by August 1941 the evacuees began to return, but to very different conditions. Everywhere were British soldiers, especially Australians and New Zealanders. The various welfare services were glad of volunteer help till it could be known what mission work could be reopened. Some overseas missionaries whose furlough was almost due were sent off from Palestine, and so it was with a seriously depleted staff that the work was recommenced. In view of this, our Baalbek house was rented to the Y.M.C.A. for work among the troops, and we were glad that it could thus be used for Christian work, though of another kind than usual.

In the magazine for January 1942, we find mention of this kind of Mission work being done in Damascus, where teachers and evangelists contributed to provide social evenings for the British soldiers, who were glad to find someone who spoke English - "the first touch of home" since leaving home. The evenings ended with hymn-singing and "Family Prayers". Similarly, in Beirut, on Tuesday evenings soldiers were welcomed for talk, games, singing and light refreshments: again the evening ended with a reading from the Word and prayer. On Sunday evenings, too, many gathered for hymn-singing and prayer, and close links were forged as men came, passed on, and returned on leave. The "Beirut Family Fellowship" became quite an institution and not a few found Christ as their Saviour through this ministry. Some of the staff joined in Gospel meetings organised and conducted by the soldiers. The real interest taken by these men in the Mission work in the various stations led in some cases to their becoming regular supporters, and on their return home, even local secretaries for the Mission. Some had heard of the Mission already. Missionaries remember "the chocolate man", so-called because he invariably slipped into one's hand a packet of Cadbury's chocolate - a real luxury in those days - who in Australia had been for years giving to our Mission. Stationed for some time in Tripoli, he often came to Beirut and visited the College, that he might understand more particularly the needs of the work and its problems. The sympathy, understanding and generosity of such men were a great encouragement to the missionaries, especially when communications with the Homelands were so intermittent.

On the other hand, some who were brought by friends were obviously puzzled. "This is a government school?" "No, a mission school; we are missionaries." "Oh! this is what we hear about at home, 'FOREIGN MISSIONS'?" - and one could feel it was the last place in the world where he expected to find himself! On another occasion, as I was walking along the road near Shemlan, an Australian soldier caught up with me and we began to talk. "Is it safe for you to be walking alone like this?" "Oh yes, I live here." "You live here?" "Yes, I'm a missionary; we have a house in the next village." He stood stock still and looked me up and down. "You're a missionary? I don't think I've ever seen a lady missionary before!" I wondered what mental picture he had of the species!

One of the men from South Africa who was campaigning in Syria returned as a missionary, Mr. Leslie de Smidt, whose mother was until recently our honorary secretary in the Transvaal. But alas! through the war the Mission lost the services of two lady missionaries, as well as some of the national staff, who married members of the Forces and left the country.

Except for the brief campaign of 1941, these lands were not a theatre of war, though there was a so-called "black-out" and air-raid shelters appeared everywhere. The greatest difficulty was the rationing of flour and sugar, with its attendant business of dealing with ration-cards - a real problem in the case of the boarding schools, where pupils were apt to appear with the wrong card or with the current coupons removed already, and where one quarter one might receive the ration in wheat instead of flour. Not only was storage a problem, for example, when asked to take a three months' supply for nearly 100 people! but also the milling process was far from simple and required special permits. Then, too, prices of even the simplest necessities such as ink and toothpaste and reels of cotton went up at an alarming rate. Salaries and allowances were raised somewhat, though by no means in proportion to the increased cost of living. The presence of H.M. Forces with various headquarters in Beirut, as well as the numerous welfare services, raised a demand for English-speaking clerks and typists, to whom high salaries were paid. It says much for the loyalty of the national staff that so many of them remained with us, in spite of receiving comparatively lower salaries, when much more remunerative jobs were open to them.

The rise of popularity of the Anglo-Saxon powers during the later years of the war resulted in a greater desire to learn English. Our schools were crowded: in 1940, we had 923 pupils in all our Mission schools: in 1942, 1,156. A larger variety of posts was open to girls than before: even those who went on from high school to college and university frequently sought secretarial posts in business houses, embassies and other organisations.

With the end of the war in 1945, a number of adjustments had to be made. Some missionaries were overdue for furlough, and with the gradual release of shipping for civilian purposes it was possible for some to go and others to return. One big change was the retirement of Miss Lepper from the post of Field Secretary which she had held since 1933. We quote from the tribute paid to her in the announcement of her retirement:

"Miss Lepper has held the post during what has perhaps been the most difficult period through which the Mission has passed. She has been conspicuously successful in steering the work in the Field through the war years, when every day brought fresh problems. Calm in judgment, economically minded, and always solicitous for the welfare of her staff, Miss Lepper has ever sought to forward those high aims for which the Mission exists, and her hand at the helm will be much missed."

Although the Committee felt that, as they intended to recruit more men on the Staff, the leader in the Field should eventually be a man; such a leader was not then forthcoming. They therefore appointed Miss L. M. Simonsen, who had joined the Mission in 1931, to the post of Field Secretary. She held this arduous position for seven years, before asking to be relieved of the responsibility. At her own request, she was seconded for a time to work among refugees in Gaza. Later she returned to work in Tyre and Baalbek. Her health was never very strong and towards the end of 1944 serious trouble developed. After months of pain and weakness most patiently borne, she passed into the fuller life on January 2nd, 1957. She stood out among us for the depth of her spirituality and her prayer-life. Even amid the pressure of office business, she always had time for individuals, and she had a wide circle of friends of many nations.

Unfortunately, the years following the war brought a new element of distress and bitterness into the area of our Mission Field. Owing to the political situation in Palestine in 1947-8, thousands of refugees poured into Syria and Lebanon and most of them have been there ever since. Their plight was pitiful, and along with other voluntary agencies supplementing the work of UNRWA,\* our Mission has been privileged to bring to them both physical relief and spiritual help. This has perhaps been done most

notably in Tyre, where our Mission station is within reach of three camps which our evangelists have been able to visit, and in some cases to hold Sunday Schools and meetings for women, as well as to visit in the hospital.

*\* United Nations Relief and Works Agency.*

Our schools have offered help by way of scholarships to many children of refugees, and we have been glad to welcome on to their staffs a number of competent and spiritually-minded teachers. In many other cases, refugees have found work in these other Arab lands and have acquired a new citizenship; but there still remain large colonies of refugees who subsist only through the help doled out to them by the various Refugee Relief Agencies. Among most of these, no direct Christian witness may be given.

This Chapter cannot close without mention of two outstanding missionaries who have passed from our ranks after many years of active and devoted service. Miss Olive Shaw joined the Mission in 1921 as Matron of the Training College, and quickly accumulated a variety of other forms - of service, because of her versatility. For thirty-six years, in an honorary capacity, she exercised a vital influence over generations of students for whom she had an abiding love. Her lively, gracious personality, her vigorous and alert mind, her great capacity for friendship, and above all, in the years of pain and suffering, her selfless courage, will long be remembered by all who knew her.

Miss Rose Fitzpatrick came to the Field in 1909, and spent the greater part of her missionary service in the Training College, as teacher and Principal, building it up to take an outstanding place in the pattern of Near Eastern education. After relinquishing the post of Principal in 1937, she took charge of the work in Tyre, and was specially energetic in the manifold ministry among refugees. So valuable were her services (and they had been given throughout at no cost to the Mission) that she was granted an extension beyond the age at which it is the rule that missionaries should retire from active service. She retired in 1952 and was awarded a Gold Medal by the Lebanese Government, and the O.B.E. in the King's Birthday Honours of that year. Miss Fitzpatrick's energies, however, were not to be laid to rest in retirement. Almost immediately she "retired" to Jordan and spent some active years in refugee work there under the auspices of the Church Missionary Society. Since 1956, she has been in England, and as a member of the General Committee in London, is able to be active still for the work on the Field which she so much loves.

Mention should also be made here of the retirement in 1952 of Miss Amy Sahyoun, Vice-Principal and senior Arabic mistress of the Training College, after more than forty years' faithful and devoted service. Fortunately, she remained at hand as Arabic teacher of young missionaries, and was available to help with translation and other work, where her encyclopaedic knowledge of the Bible was unsurpassed. Generations of girls value the loving personal care she gave them while they were in her classes. Her death in February 1960 brought a deep sense of personal loss.

In August 1959, one of the Mission's most devoted workers was suddenly called to higher service. Miss Shafika Freijie came to the Training College as a small girl, and in a sense she never left it. After taking her diploma, she became a teacher and will be specially remembered for her teaching of geography, drill and needlework. For many years she was the Secretary of the College Union (for Former Students) and was at all times keenly interested in all that concerned the College and its personnel. At the time of her death she was Director of its Junior Department, and her passing left her colleagues and pupils with a sense of tremendous loss, while at the same time with a deep thankfulness to God for her life and witness.

It is interesting to look back over the recruitment figures for missionaries for the past three decades: but it is saddening, too, because for various reasons so many are no longer with us. In the 1930's, seventeen new missionaries joined the Mission, of whom seven only are still in active service. In the 1940's, sixteen were recruited, but only six remain on the Field. In the 1950's sixteen have been recruited and only one of them has left. From this it will be clear that at the present time there is a lack of senior missionaries. Perhaps in these modern days that may be an advantage, since younger people adapt themselves more easily to rapidly changing conditions.

During the last decade, the Mission has faced new problems and new opportunities: but one thing remains unchanged - our unshakeable belief in and committal to our unchanging God, in whose Name we continue to "dare and persevere"!



## Part V Present and Future

### Chapter I

#### Present Realities

A few years ago it was decided on the Field to departmentalise the work both for convenience of budgeting, and also for greater efficiency in carrying out our basic purpose. So the work of the stations was divided into four departments - Administration, Education, Evangelistic Work and Property. It will be convenient to review the present position of the Mission under these headings.

**Administration.** With the death of Mr. Maitland-Kirwan, the General Secretary, in 1952, there followed an interregnum, when the business of the London office was competently carried on by Miss Daisy Hickey, who had been working under Mr. Kirwan for a number of years. Finally in 1956, another General Secretary was appointed, Mr. R. H. W. Pakenham, C.B.E., M.A. The Field Executive requested that in future the General Secretary should visit the Field each year so as to keep thoroughly au fait with the workers and the work; and this has proved of immense value in cementing closer ties between "Home" and "Field".

In recent years, too, the General Council in London has endeavoured to draw the Overseas Councils into closer cooperation on matters of policy affecting the whole Mission. Even in these days of aeroplanes and air-mail, correspondence with such far-flung countries is often delayed and unsatisfactory. Repeatedly it has been proposed that personal visits should be made to the Overseas countries by the General Secretary, and by the Field Leader (when appointed). The whole constitution and administrative machinery of the Mission have recently been revised, for there is a feeling in the Mission that the pattern laid down almost a century ago is no longer suited to its present circumstances. Of the thirty missionaries in active service in 1959, nineteen have been sent by Overseas Councils. These Councils are endeavouring to be responsible for the support of their own missionaries, but it will be realised that the cost of furlough passages to and from New Zealand, Australia, South Africa and the United States is a heavy item in the Mission budget, and even the cost of the missionaries themselves is not the whole picture, for the cost of maintaining the work which they and their national colleagues do, with all the expenditure incidental to it, amounts to about as much again.

On the Field the affairs of the Mission are in the hands of an executive committee elected by the Field Council which consists of all the missionaries and some national colleagues. The Mission's Field headquarters is in Beirut, and the Field Secretary-Treasurer with a very capable national assistant comprise the staff until such time as a Field Leader is appointed.\* The Field Secretary visits the stations regularly and keeps in touch also by telephone and correspondence. The Assistant Secretary-Treasurer keeps all the Mission "books" and audits the accounts of the stations.

*\* Under the new Constitution, where no Field Leader exists, it is the obligation of the Field to recognise leadership in not more than two of its members, acceptable to the General Council, one of whom shall be a man.*

The Field Executive is responsible for the allocation of personnel in consultation with those concerned, as may be best for the prosecution of the work. It is also the Finance Committee of the Field, keeping a watch on financial "ways and means" of continuing and developing the work of each station. In a Mission such as ours which has been shaped by experience into its present form, policy has evolved gradually and principles were laid down as needs arose; but there has been no single document covering the whole ground. This deficiency is now being remedied.

The Mission's church policy was redefined in 1958. We have always been an interdenominational Mission and have worked alongside the local church wherever that was possible. During the greater part of the life of the Mission, the "local church" was a branch of the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon, as it is now called, Presbyterian in doctrine and organisation. In recent years, however, national churches of other denominations have sprung up, as well as independent groups of believers with no "church" affiliation. Members of the Mission associated themselves with such groups, and the question arose: "Into which branch of the Church of Christ are we to build our converts?" In some stations, this became a vital question. The Mission's church policy, therefore, had to be thought out more definitely by those on the Field in the light of the new circumstances and subsequently approved by the General Council in London and by the Overseas Councils. It is stated now as follows:

"(1) The aim of the Mission is primarily evangelistic, and so the Mission co-operates with existing churches and church organisations which are both evangelical and national, and will not establish a new church organisation. The interdenominational character of the Mission should permeate all relationships with Christian bodies and individuals both within and without the Mission.

"(2) As a group responds to the Gospel message and the need for an organised local church arises, the church is established in affiliation with one of the existing evangelical and national church organisations, as decided by the Field Executive, in consultation with the workers in the area, taking into consideration the local churches there.

"(3) Once affiliation with a particular church organisation has been decided, its establishment becomes Mission policy. Workers located there would be expected to co-operate with that particular church organisation, and the Mission workers would normally remain as long as the church needs their help.

"(4) When the spiritual needs of the group have been reasonably provided for through this affiliation, the Mission workers move to new centres to initiate evangelistic work there."

The political situation which resulted through what is known as the "Suez Crisis" of 1956, and its consequences, had a profound effect upon our Mission. Although at the time of the crisis, our missionaries were officially asked by the Department of Education to remain and continue the school in Damascus, their movements were restricted, and until recently it was not possible for the Field Secretary, being a British subject, to visit them, since diplomatic relations with Britain were broken off. Political differences separated the two Republics of Syria and Lebanon and the former became part of the United Arab Republic. This meant that the national workers of the Mission there were under different laws and working conditions from those in Lebanon. It was made clear also that while foreigners could be permitted to reside in the United Arab Republic as teachers of languages, they would not be allowed to carry out evangelistic work. Moreover, legislation passed in September 1958 prescribed that in future all private schools must be owned and staffed by subjects of the United Arab Republic. It was, therefore, found necessary to hand over to the National Evangelical Church in Damascus the work for which the Mission had been responsible for some ninety-two years, although we are permitted still to keep two or three of our missionaries on the staff as teachers of English. We

praise God that there are many national Christians in Syria witnessing to the Gospel of the grace of God and seeking to build up His Church there. It is fitting that the education of young people from evangelical homes should be their responsibility and henceforth in their hands. So St. Paul's School has become an Evangelical Church school (the "National Evangelical School for Girls"), and our national evangelists pastors in charge of churches. Although the responsibility passes from Mission to Church, yet we have still a share by gifts and personnel and prayer in the work of God's Kingdom in Syria.

**Education.** In many ways this would seem to form a much smaller part of the Mission on the Field than formerly. Where are the twenty-three schools for which the Mission was responsible at the time of its Founder's death in 1869 or the thirty-three that were in existence in the summer of 1914? At the time of writing, the Mission has three regular schools, a Blind School and a Bible Institute. What has happened?

One thing that has happened is that at the present time there are far more organisations and private individuals opening schools than ever before. It is true to say that in our area the Missions were the pioneers of general education, but, particularly in the last thirty years, many have followed in their train. Schools of every kind, government and private, religious (all religions) and secular, primary and secondary, national and foreign (several nationalities), have sprung up in Beirut, and also in many of the outlying places.

Another thing that has happened is that standards have been raised, and consequently costs. It is no longer possible for the Mission to run a school on £50 a year. Teachers' salaries are regulated by the government scale, and it is important to follow a government syllabus. Increasing costs were largely responsible for the closing of our school in Ainzahalta.

A third factor which has entered into the situation is the fact that, whereas in the early days the village schools were staffed by older women, usually married, nowadays this does not seem to be a possible arrangement. Very few girls are willing to go back (after completing their education in the city) even to their own village and teach there, far less to go to another one. It is even difficult to persuade teachers to serve in centres like Baalbek. It was very largely for this reason that our school there was closed in 1958. In Hasbeiya, when the older teachers who had served for many years retired, it was decided that the Mission's school should no longer be maintained, and that the schoolrooms should be lent to the Synod, for use as a church primary school. This is still the position there.

The educational work of the Mission is now represented in Lebanon by the following schools:

At Tyre there is a primary school of over 285 children, ranging in age from babies of three and four to young folk of twelve and thirteen working for the Government Primary Certificate. The demands of the syllabus for this examination necessitate a policy of "one class, one room, one teacher", in order to attain greater efficiency, and this has largely accounted for the increase of numbers. The school is a mixed one, comprising boys and girls at all levels, and mixed also as regards religion, including both Christians and Moslems. True to foundation principles, the school presents the Word of God daily to all its scholars, and they are trained in its words, and in the practice of prayer. A few of the girls, when they leave, go on to secondary education in the Training College and eventually return to Tyre as teachers. It is a great strength to the school and to the work of the Kingdom in Tyre that well over half the staff are resident there. The few teachers from elsewhere, who board in the school house, appreciate the friendship and hospitality of the homes opened to them in the town: this makes their boarding life more pleasant. The present Head of the school, Mrs. Elaine Abboud, is herself a former pupil of the school and of the Training College, and Tyre School owes much to her careful supervision

and skilled leadership.

The Training College in Beirut continues still in its old premises, though much enlarged. Its name is perhaps misleading, since it comprises Kindergarten, Primary School, Secondary School and Teacher Training Department, all together close on 700 students. In view of the political distinction between the two countries in which we worked, and the fact that the College is situated in Beirut, the capital of Lebanon, it was found advisable to change the name to "British Lebanese Training College"; but, in conformity with the new name of the Mission, this College is to be known in future as the "Lebanon Evangelical College for Girls". At many levels, parallel divisions are made so as to have smaller classes, though this ideal is not always achieved. The greater number of classes has meant an increase of staff and especially of missionary teachers for the upper classes. Expansion of accommodation will be mentioned later.

The boarding department, under the care of Miss Salina Morhige, its Matron for many years, gives the opportunity for girls from other countries to profit by the education we offer. The demand for English and for an Anglo-Saxon type of education accounts for the presence of a wide variety of nationalities in the school (the latest applicant being Japanese!), together with the fact that Beirut contains numerous foreign embassies whose officials often seek for their children such a school as ours. The Junior School, under the care of a national Director, for many years the late Miss Shafika Freiji and now Mrs. Dalai Haddad, works towards the Government Primary Certificate, while the Senior School prepares girls for entrance to the American University of Beirut, the Beirut College for Women, or our own Training Department. Our senior course leading to a General Certificate of Scholarship is recognised by the University and recommended students enter without further examination.

The Training Department continues to provide one and two-year courses of training for the teaching profession. It has been disappointing to see the smaller numbers who year by year apply to take these courses. The demand for teachers is always in excess of the supply, but most schools are content to take as teachers those who have a college degree or diploma, even if they have had no professional training.

Though these modern times have necessitated many outward changes in the College, wisely undertaken by the Principal, Miss H. M. St. John, in order to meet the changing conditions, yet the inward life and spirit remain unchanged. The basic message and purpose are still the same, namely to present to every scholar the Gospel of Jesus Christ, through Scripture lesson, special meeting or personal talk, so that all may have the chance to found their lives on Christ, the Rock of Ages. Year by year, as Founder's Day comes round and special opportunities for decision are presented, we know of some who take the important step of acceptance and committal, and Lighthouse meetings are held regularly to help forward in their Christian life those who belong to the Lord. At a Lighthouse Service in 1959, sixteen girls gave their testimonies: several had come to the College only that year, and two were not ashamed to say that, although of Moslem families, they had accepted Jesus Christ as their only Saviour.

The Boys' School, Beirut, under its Principal, Mr. Kalim Kurban, continues to provide for boys what the Training College provides for girls beginning with the second primary class, and completing high school. Like the sister institution, its leaving certificate is recognised by the American University of Beirut, for entrance under certain conditions. For the past few years, the school has attempted to prepare boys for the Lebanese Baccalaureate Examination, which is a requirement for those entering the professions of law, medicine and engineering. A few girls have attempted it also. The syllabus in some subjects, such as physics and mathematics, is extremely full, and for many reasons the course

does not fit very well with our Anglo-Saxon ideas of education, but it seems advisable at least to give our students the chance of taking it. We have so far had moderate success.

For the same reasons as in the case of the Training College, the Boy's School will in future bear the name of "Lebanon Evangelical College for Boys". Lack of space, as well as shortage of suitable teachers, has prevented the Boys' School from expanding beyond the present figure of 350, but the demands for admission are constant and show that the school is carrying on in the right tradition. Its students are drawn from many religious groups and various nationalities, but they are all one in their need of the best we have to give, namely the Gospel of Christ which is "the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth".

The third school in Beirut is the Blind School. It affords a home and education to some eighteen boys and youths, where they learn how to adjust themselves, though handicapped, to a normal life and to take their place in the world as ordinary citizens. Under the guidance of the Principal, Mr. Salim Garboushian, and his blind assistants, they learn to read and write Arabic Braille, and in some cases, English as well, and the usual school subjects studied by sighted boys of their age. They are also taught simple forms of cane work, so that when they leave the school they may be able to make at least a scanty living. The plight of the blind always arouses sympathy, and the school receives many generous gifts. Some schools in the city undertake to provide the support of an individual boy.

At the present time UNRWA sends and supports a few blind refugees. One day our evangelists, when visiting in the refugee hospital in Tyre, were talking to a patient and telling her a Bible story. "Oh", she said, "my little boy reads those stories to me in the holidays." "Yes? Where does he learn them?" "Oh, he is in the Blind School in Beirut." So a little Moslem "child shall lead them". More than half our pupils come from non-Christian homes, and we praise God that almost all of them find the Saviour before they leave the school.

It is becoming increasingly difficult for blind people to make a living by cane-work: competition from sighted workers is too strong for them, and also cane-seated chairs are going out of fashion. Some find employment in factories, marry and set up homes, but for others life seems precarious, and it is pitiful to see them begging or selling lottery tickets to gain an uncertain livelihood.

**Evangelistic Work.** The evangel has not changed, but to some extent the methods of presenting it to different groups of people have changed. In most stations, women's classes have been replaced by women's meetings, either on Sundays or during the week. Nowadays most of the women even in the villages can read, and so the meeting often takes the form of Bible study in which all take part. Special occasions such as the Universal Week of Prayer, Home and Family Week or Holy Week, offer opportunities for sharing in planned services with other Christians the world over. Leadership in such services is provided by the national evangelist (the term "Biblewoman" is no longer used), and by the Christian women themselves.

One piece of evangelistic equipment which is new is the lantern, run by electricity or kerosene, by means of which religious slides or film-strips can be shown in out-of-the-way places, the screen being perhaps the white-washed wall of a house or garage. The Mission has built up a small "lending library" of such film-strips which are available to supplement station supplies. The eternal message of God's love and grace comes home with greater force when seen through picture and story. In Beirut, the schools have been able to make use of religious films kindly lent by other Missions, and the possession of a film-projector of our own has meant, especially for the boarders, the pictorial presentation of religious truth through a medium too often used for base purposes. It is good to show them that "the

movie" can be of spiritual value if rightly used.

Another visual aid that is proving effective is the flannel-graph. This is most often used in Sunday Schools and children's meetings, which are conducted, as ever, in most of our Mission centres. As in other countries the responsibility for teaching in Sunday School usually falls upon the day school teacher, but the evangelists here include it in their work. In most cases through our Sunday Schools we are reaching children who would not otherwise hear the Gospel or know the Word of God in its purity. So the seed is sown in the hearts of the young and we water it with prayer, trusting to our Heavenly Father to give the increase. We are able to make use also of Gospel Recordings of Arabic stories from the Bible and simple hymns.

Our Mission has greatly profited by the much greater production in recent years of good Christian literature in Arabic. Especially have we been helped by the work of the Nile Mission Press (now known as the Arabic Literature Mission) since it set up in business in Beirut. Our evangelists have found over and over again that the printed word can penetrate where the human agent cannot go, and the Gospel or tract may be the "thin end of the wedge" to force an entry into "Mansoul" for the Kingdom. £100 a year is set aside in the Mission budget for the Literature Committee to use, whether for literature, i.e. tracts and books, or for film-strips and other evangelistic material. Many of the Mission personnel contribute also in the production of literature, writing, translating, designing tracts and posters. These latter, displayed in house or shop, are a further means of carrying the Gospel message and arresting the attention of some who might otherwise be unreached. The spread of education has raised the standard of literacy and the reading public is being exploited to the full by every political party within the country, as well as by propaganda from outside. It is our purpose as God's messengers to utilise this means also to the full that those who can read may, through their reading, come to know the Lord Jesus Christ, the Living Word of God.

There are some people living in such a condition of enforced idleness that they have time to read. These are the prisoners: very little attempt is made to provide them with any kind of occupation. Some are awaiting trial, others are serving their term of punishment. One of our special privileges as a Mission is to have access through one of our number, Mrs. Garboushian, to the Women's Prisons in and around Beirut. There women are herded together in poor conditions with nothing to do all day long. How they welcome the visits of one who seems to care for them and is willing to "sit where they sit" and speak with them words of comfort and life. Many gladly receive a Gospel or a tract. Our friend can speak three languages well and a few words in one or two others, and we have been glad to be able to supply her with Christian literature in English, French and German, as well as Arabic, Armenian and Turkish. Usually during the weekly visit there is an opportunity to pray with these sad women and perhaps to have a personal word with one and another who show some response. Through the gifts of friends we have been able to supply clothes to the specially needy ones who have no one to help them or whose families have ceased to be interested in them. The Government permit to visit is granted only to Mrs. Garboushian and has to be renewed each year.

A few years ago an attempt was made towards a "Forward Movement" in evangelism. Its two dominant ideas were team-work and mobility. In the course of the year, a small team of evangelists from one station may spend a few days or a week visiting another station. During the visit the strengthened teams launch out into villages perhaps formerly unvisited, and hold special meetings when the message is given through a fresh voice. During the summer evangelistic camps are held in different districts, when again workers from different stations combine for evangelistic outreach. The time is spent in classes and meetings for children, visiting in homes, shops or harvest fields, and evening meetings with lantern and accordion accompaniment. In this way, a small band of evangelistic

workers is able to reach out to a wide field. The team's work in each station is usually under the direction of a national evangelist.

The need for mobility has been impressed upon us much in recent years. While in many cases, villages have become more accessible by means of new motor-roads and public buses and service cars, this has not always been of help to the evangelist. The public transport is usually going the wrong way! Public buses leave a village in the morning for the city or market town and return in the evening. The evangelist must start towards the village in the morning, and so by using public transport for evangelistic work in the villages, much valuable time is spent waiting by the roadside for a passing car, and these pass but seldom in some areas. How glad we are now of the valuable gift from our Canadian friends of two station wagons. One was sent over to Syria and the other was kept for Lebanon; evangelists learnt to drive and somehow in at least two stations a garage was built on the premises. When opportunities for evangelistic work on a wide scale were curtailed in Syria, the station wagon there, appropriately named "Boulos" (Paul), was sold and with part of the proceeds a smaller Volkswagen was bought for Lebanon and named "Timothy". The original Lebanon station wagon is called "Bishara", an Arabic name meaning "The Gospel". These two cars were shared by the three stations Tyre, Hasbeiya and Baalbek, all centres of evangelism and village visiting, until 1960 when another Volkswagen was purchased: thus each out-station now has its own car. Private cars are a costly item in the expenditure estimates, when one reckons the cost of registration and insurance, but they enable more work to be done over a wider area by a small team of workers at a great saving of time and physical effort. The car used by our Bible Institute was supplied through private gifts for this purpose.

Under the heading of Evangelism must be mentioned the former being responsible for seeing that approved plans are carried out. In every station we are fortunate in possessing our own land and buildings, though some of them are now proving hardly adequate for their purpose. The Tyre compound, though large, has not sufficient accommodation for school and residence, and plans have been made for building a second storey. It is interesting to remember that this was part of the original plan for which permission was granted by order of the Sultan in 1883. Generous gifts from friends in Arabia have formed the basis of a special building fund for this purpose.

The premises in Shemlan, acquired by our Mission in 1898, are probably older than any other of our buildings. The old stone house is delightful in summer, but damp and draughty in winter, and is rapidly becoming uninhabitable from the point of view of the requirements of a Bible Institute. Much money has been spent on it, but it is poor economy, and the L.B.I. Advisory Council is rightly planning to provide new premises for this important part of the work.

We remember with deep gratitude to God how wonderfully our property was preserved from any permanent harm during the "troubles" of 1958, though some loss of goods was suffered in Baalbek, and damage to the fabric in Tyre, and the property in Beirut was often under fire. We felt sure that this protection was God's loving care surrounding us that He might use us further in His service.

In view of the general insecurity in the Middle East, especially in regard to foreigners, the matter of the transfer of our property to national ownership has been under discussion during the last few years. At the time of writing, a beginning has been made by the agreement to transfer to the Synod of Syria and Lebanon our property in Hasbeiya, for in that area our workers collaborate in the closest fellowship with the Synod in the task of evangelism. The church school is using part of our premises, but the Mission will retain the use of as much as it needs for as long as it remains in Lebanon.

In Syria the ownership of our property in Damascus has been transferred, in the first instance, to the Damascus Evangelical Church but may eventually vest in the Synod if a Synod of Syrian evangelical churches is formed. In this way it is hoped to ensure that the premises will continue to be used for the spread of the Kingdom of God.



## Chapter 2

### Future Hopes

*"Peace, perfect peace: our future all unknown? Jesus we know, and He is on the throne."*

THE words "insecurity" and "instability" seem to be frequently on people's lips to-day in relation to the Middle East, and when we speak of future hopes and plans they say, "Is it safe? Is it wise?" Particularly is this true when we speak about building projects. Those friends of the Mission at Home and Overseas whose daily newspapers and radios resound with threats of war and news of revolution find it hard to think of launching an extensive building project in such circumstances. Looking at Middle Eastern and other countries from which missionaries have been expelled, they may be forgiven for saying, "God has allowed us the privilege of 100 years in His service in Syria and Lebanon, but we may not have much longer. Is it a time to put money into new buildings?"

Those of us who are in the thick of the work on the Field cannot share this view. We see our schools crowded with boys and girls and hundreds turned away. We have never yet closed a school for lack of pupils: lack of money or lack of staff - yes; but never lack of pupils! We see the National Evangelical Churches looking for trained and dedicated young people to share in the work of evangelism and education, and seeking the help of our Mission and missionaries in this great task.

For this reason the combined building project for a new Boys' School and a new Lebanon Bible Institute is a matter of urgency. The long-term plan includes a hostel also to benefit boys from outside Beirut and even Lebanon. It is vital that our young men be captured for the Lord Christ and give their lives to Him whose service is perfect freedom. Our vision is to have all these institutions in one place, governed by a national body of Christian men and women, so that whatever happens to the missionary the work will go forward under national leadership and the purpose for which the Mission has existed all these years will be fulfilled. This purpose of training boys and training men and women evangelists cannot be achieved without buildings adequate for their needs, and hitherto we have not had such buildings. The provision of these is in the forefront of our future hopes, because we are vitally aware of the tremendous opportunity and privilege which are ours as a Mission, to undertake this task. These projects should command the earnest prayers and sacrificial giving of all who truly love the Lord and seek His Kingdom.

The provision of adequate staff, fully equipped and qualified spiritually and intellectually, is another part of our future hopes. We wish to see more national members of staff with the necessary academic qualifications to carry out the education programme which the country needs, and with the spiritual preparation and consecration necessary for the achievement of our basic purpose, namely, to bring our students to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Under consideration are ways and means of making further training available to those who are ready for the sacrifice which is involved. It is not difficult to earn money as a teacher, but it is difficult to delay the earning period in order to prepare oneself more fully for the service of the Master; yet it is essential for the continuation of our education programme that we staff our schools with trained teachers.

On the directly evangelistic side of our work, we hope for stronger teams equipped with transport and modern audiovisual aids to reach out more regularly and widely to the many villages that so far have hardly been touched with the Gospel, yet have already been reached by the raucous clamour of the radio with its specious propaganda of other ideologies. This programme, too, demands dedicated

lives - people who are willing to live in remote places, without some of the refinements of the larger cities, and are ready to face opposition, perhaps persecution, for the Gospel's sake, but who "count it all joy" for love of their Lord and the souls for whom He died. So long as there are those who need Him, there must be those who go to meet that need. Our hope is that the nurturing of converts and the upbuilding of the church of Christ may be left in the hands of one branch or other of the organised National Evangelical Church, and that from such branches teams of evangelists may go forth in collaboration with the missionaries to establish new stations for the proclamation of the Gospel. "There is yet very much land to be possessed."

A powerful evangelistic instrument is Christian literature, and it is our hope and prayer that God will raise up from among us writers and artists, who will prepare and distribute the written word which will penetrate into homes and shops and business houses, in city and town, in village and harvest field, and awaken men and women to their need of a Saviour. Much is being done, but much more might be accomplished by those who have eyes to see and hearts to respond. Our ideal is also to build up in each station a kind of circulating library of good Christian books in Arabic, Christian stories and biographies of Christian men and women, as well as commentaries and books of devotion.

The Field is a small one, but it is situated where its importance is out of all proportion to its size. Culturally, Lebanon reaches out to all the Arab lands through those who come to it for their education. Commercially, through its traders it stretches even further afield. Spiritually, since it constitutes the only Arab State with even a partly Christian government, it holds many possibilities for Christian witness. Freedom of speech and liberty to carry on Christian printing, Christian broadcasting and Christian worship are a priceless privilege. We cannot make the fullest use of these opportunities unless as a Mission we are united in purpose and policy with those in the Homelands who, under God, are our life-line. Our hope is that in each of the "sending countries" there will continue to be strong Councils and local secretaries, prayer groups and "Friends of Lebanon", who will send out and maintain a steady stream of missionaries to strengthen the hands of national colleagues in the carrying out of our responsibility.

We are happy that nearly every "sending country" has now its own missionaries, who return there from time to time to stimulate interest and to reassure supporters as to how the money is being spent. It is much to be hoped that occasional tours will be made of all overseas branches of the Mission by a representative of the General Council in London and also by the Field Leader (when such has been appointed), in order to draw closer the ties of fellowship and co-operation between headquarters, Field and overseas friends, and to bring the latter into more living touch with the work being done on the Field.

The message our Foundress took to Syria 100 years ago is still true: "The only balm for a broken heart is the love of Jesus." There are broken hearts and hearts that need breaking, of all kinds, Christian, Moslem, Druze, in our Mission Field, and to all we offer the same message - the love of Jesus so deep that He died on the Cross that all might live, and rose again that all might share His victory over death, and lives to be our glorious Lord and Leader.

Till that glad day when all shall so acknowledge Him, let us unitedly in His Name and might

**DARE AND PERSEVERE!**

Photographs taken from Book



Place des Canons, Beirut



General Map of the Middle East

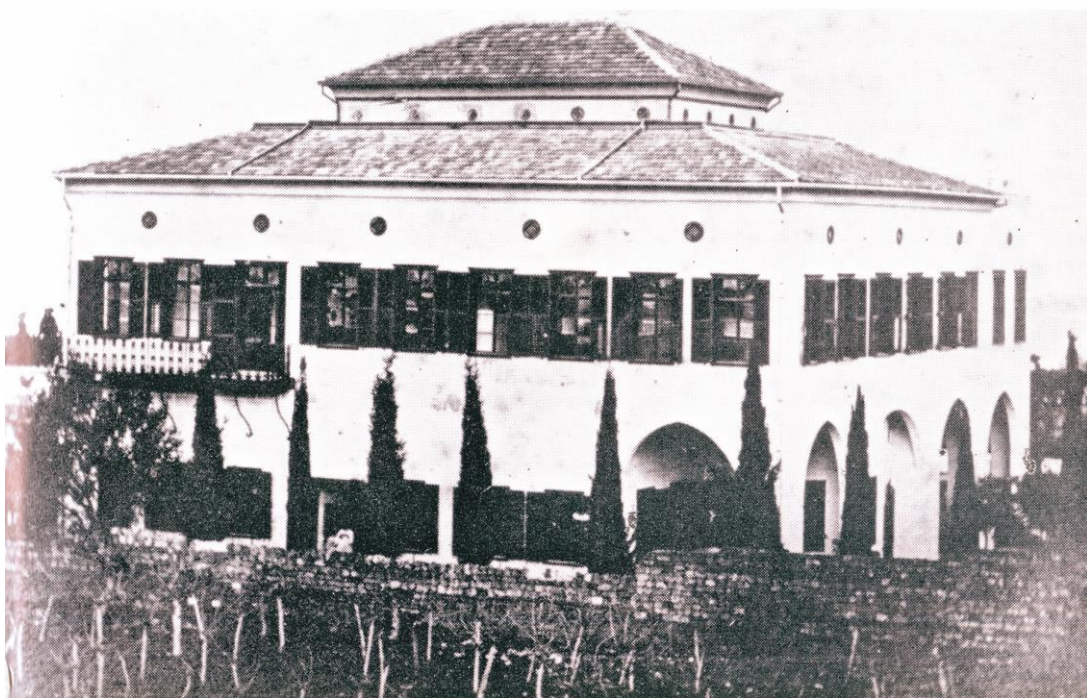




Mrs. Elizabeth Bowen-Thompson,  
foundress of the Mission

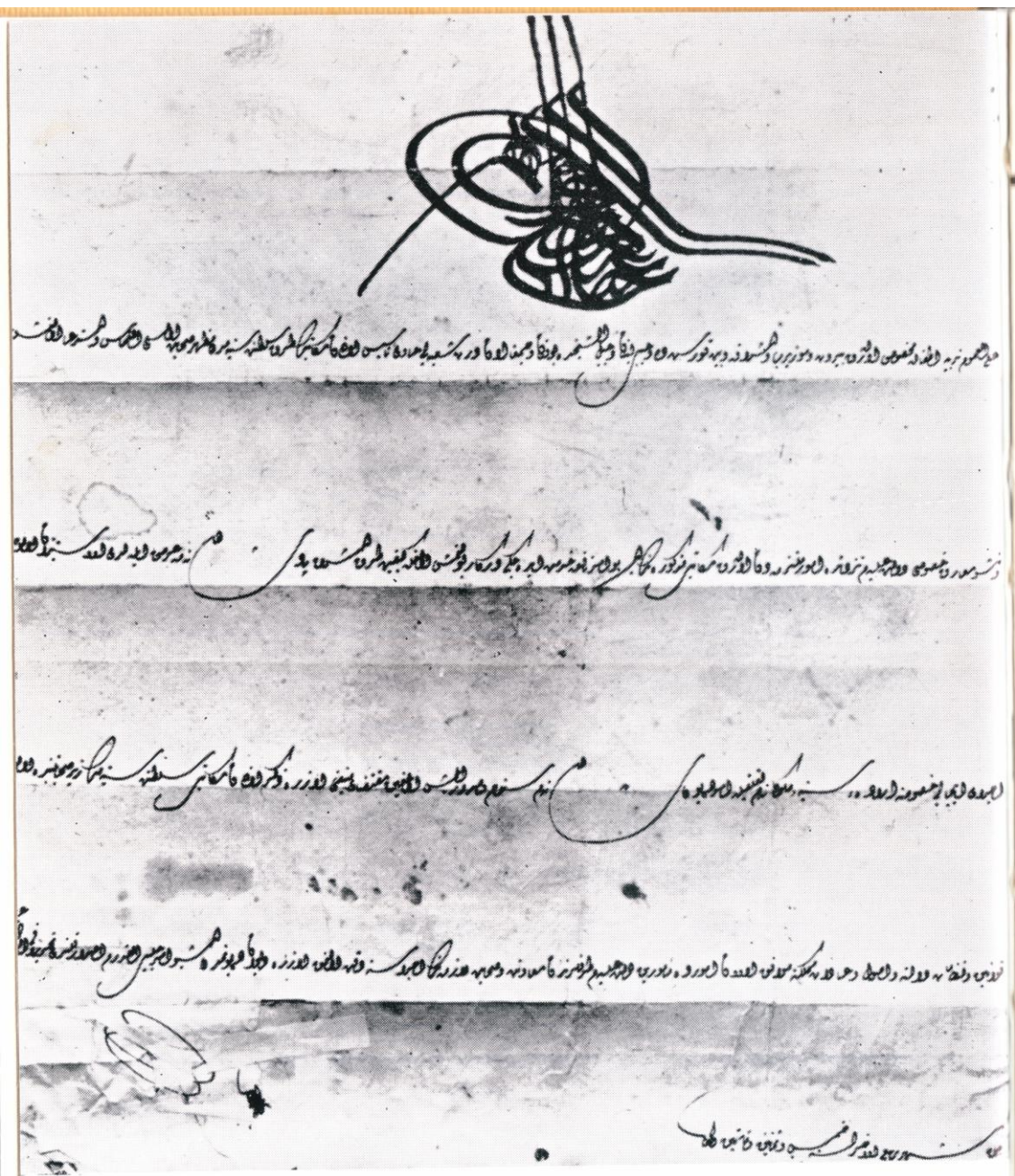


Mrs. Henry Smith



“The Institution”, where the work began





### The Imperial Firman given by the Sultan of Turkey

In behalf of the fourteen places devoted to the teaching of little children in general in Beyrout, Mezerib, Musaitbeh, Beit Kourish, Mount Lebanon and Mount Hermon. A petition and a supplication have been presented that they may be countenanced and encouraged by my Imperial Government. As the propagation of sciences in my Sublime Kingdom is most indispensable and as the said schools are proved to be useful for this benevolent object, therefore my Imperial Command and high will are now being issued for the execution of the same according to the request of my most noble royalty. That the said schools shall be countenanced by my Imperial throne in conformity to my high will, so that minute attention shall be paid and all assistance and necessary help given by the plenipotentiaries of my Sublime Empire in conformity with the canons and regulations of the Government as well as the customs and usages of the country.

Therefore this noble command has been issued from my Imperial Divan on the 13th of Rabia Akbir 1285.





Lebanon

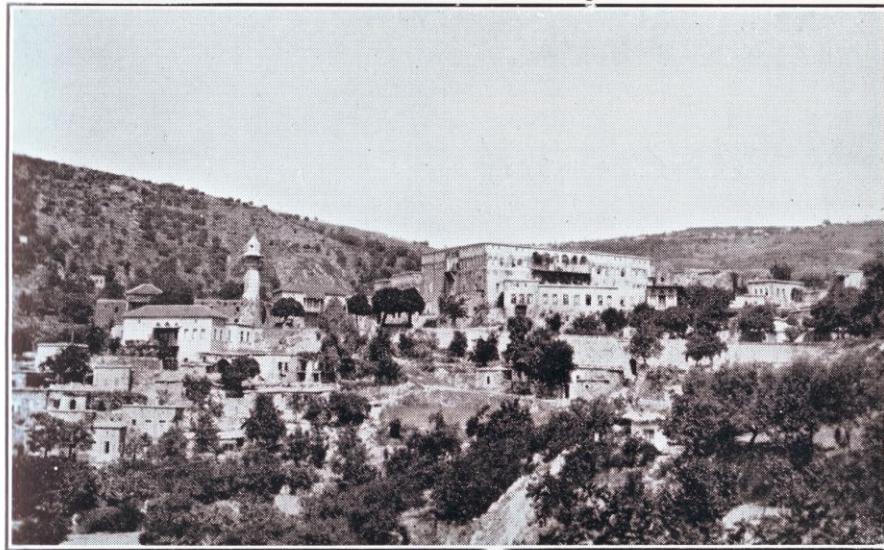




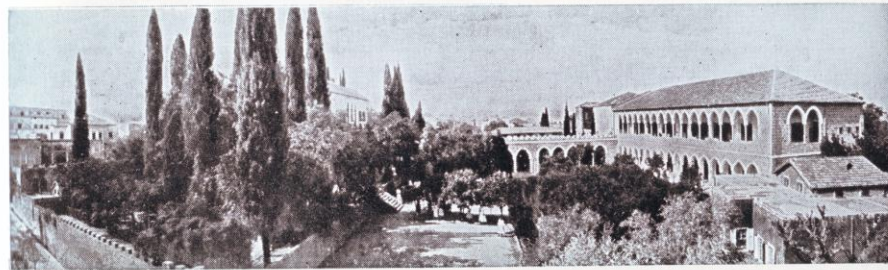
Mrs. Mentor  
Mott



Mr. Mentor  
Mott



The Castle or Saraya in Hasbeiya



The Training College in the early days





Miss M. L. Johnston

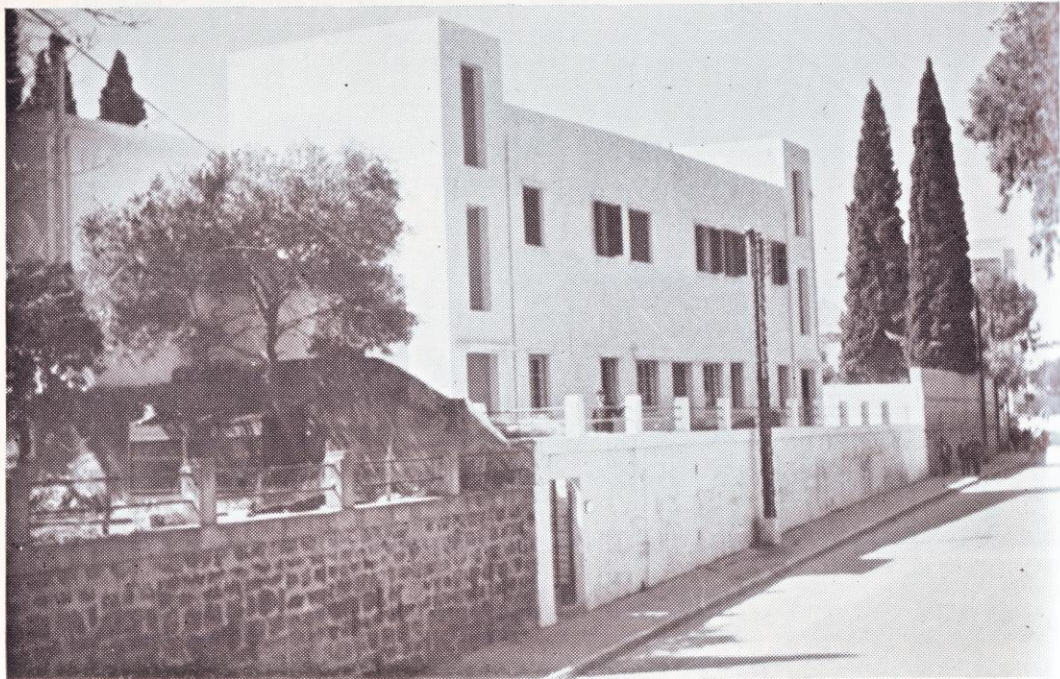


*Top right;* Miss Caroline Thompson

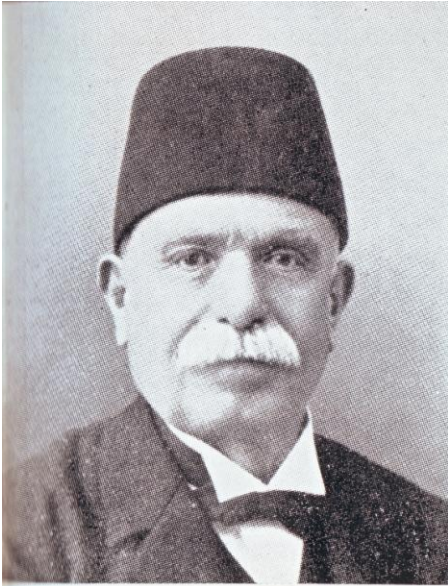
*Right:* Yat Sen of Hong Kong



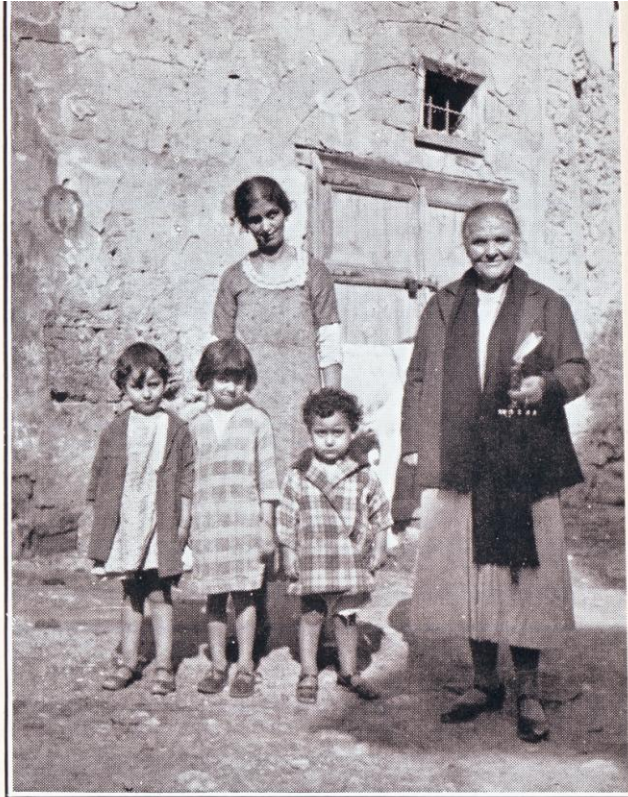
*Below:* Engannon, the present  
Field Headquarters







Muallim Selim Kessab



A Biblewoman (Mrs. Bejjani)  
visiting in Beirut



Blind Men's School

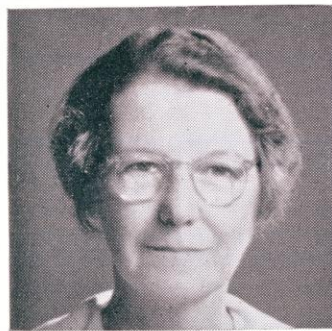




Mr. J. D. Maitland-Kirwan,  
General Secretary, 1924-52



Miss M. W. Turner, Hon.  
Secretary, North Island, New  
Zealand, and Deputation Sec-  
retary for Australia and New  
Zealand



Miss F. E. Scott,  
Field Secretary



Rev. Evan R. and Mrs. Harries





Evangelists I. Fakhoury (mounted),  
M. Jarjour, and Z. Makhoul in Syria

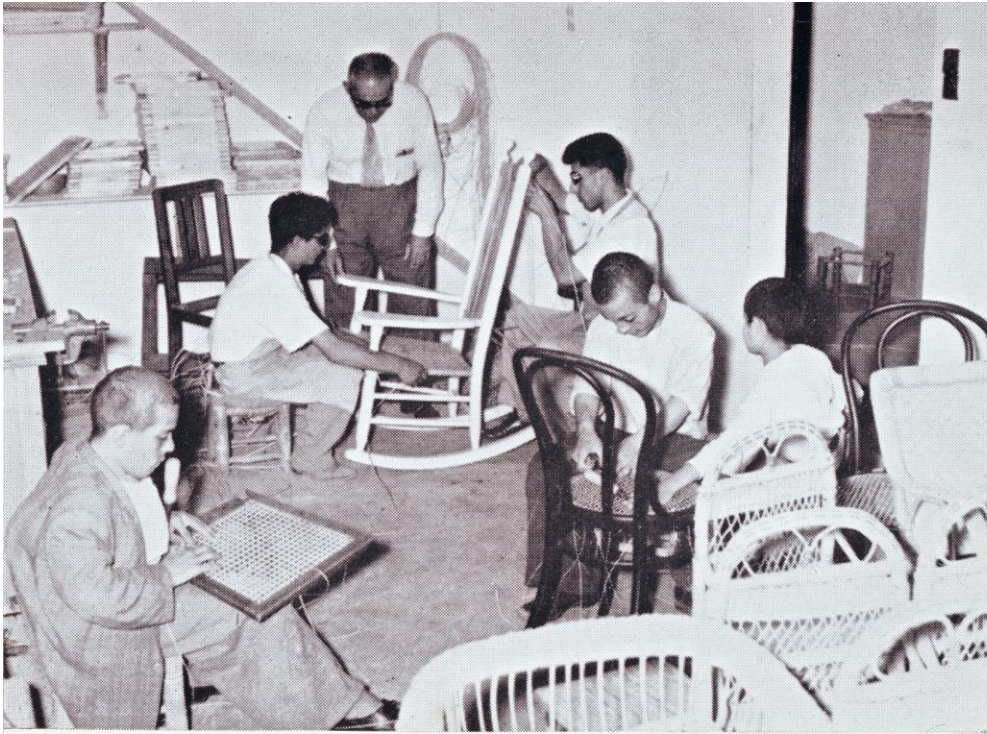


Miss S. Paludan in the  
Alaouites with evangelists  
M. Jarjour and W. Basna (mounted)



Sister M. Becker at  
Baalbek dispensary





Cane work at the Blind School



Drill class at the Boys' School





The Mission House, Baalbek

*Bishara*, the station wagon at Tyre



First graduates from St. Paul's High School class, Damascus, with Miss Scott

Summer work among the children, Ain-zahalta







Some teachers-in-training 1958-9

Lebanon Bible Institute, Shemlan.



The Christian quarter, Tyre (Mission compound in foreground)





Typical group of L.B.I. students

Headquarters staff, Beirut  
(left to right Mr. and Mrs. Garboushian, Miss Scott, Mr. Tleel)



A tract for a Druze sheikh, Hasbeiya





The Training College (among the cypresses), St. George's Bay, and Lebanon mountains

Diploma Day gathering at the Training College

