

THE EVANGELIZATION OF ARABIA.

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"And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are these *all* thy children?"—1 Sam. 16 : 11.

"And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, for as much as he also is a son of Abraham."—Luke 19 : 6.

Arabia, like ancient Gaul, is divided into three parts, Petrea, Deserta, and Felix. As is the land, so has been its history. The caravan trade, which brought all the wealth of Ormuz and Ind to the marts of the West, left large blessing on the desert and made Arabia commercially *happy*, for, as Sprenger naively puts it, "The history of early commerce is the history of incense," and the land of incense was Arabia. When commerce left the land and chose the sea, the entire peninsula suffered and became, in a sense, *deserta*. And when Islam triumphed it *petrified*.

Christianity in Arabia has had only two short chapters ; the first is completed, the second has not yet been written full. The first tells of a superstitious, almost pagan, form of Christianity in Yemen, before the advent of Mohammed. The second is the story of Christian missions in Arabia. The first is faithfully chronicled in that rare and interesting volume, Wright's "Essay on Early Christianity in Arabia" (1855). It is our purpose now to sketch the geography of Arabia in its relation to missions, give an outline of what has been done by missions, and present these facts as a plea.

Physical Arabia is as wonderful in its diversity as is the opinion of modern critics on the ethnology of its peoples. In the Far North and along the Mesopotamian valley there are vast fertile plains covered in winter with luxuriant grass, on which flocks of sheep pasture. Brilliant with flowers in spring, all dries dead when the rains cease ; then, too, the nomads fold their tents and steal away. Central Arabia is a tableland two to four thousand feet above sea level, rocky and barren for the most part, and again adapted to pasture and herds or the date palm. The Western coast begins with lofty Sinai and extends to the volcanic rocks that give Aden strength. It is, however, low, hot, rainless, and, but for a few oases, nearly barren. The interior rises to become mountainous and desolate, as near Jiddah and Yenbo, or mountainous, well-watered, fertile, and densely populated, as in Asir and Yemen. At Jiddah the highest inland peaks are only two days' journey ; from Hodeida it takes six days' climb for mules and ten for camels to reach Sanaa, the capital.

The Southern coast line resembles the Western, but is altogether more fertile ; from Aden to Makallah the country inland produces tobacco, coffee, and gums ; from Shehr to Muscat the interior is least known ; but Arabs from Sür tell me it is fertile and populous ; here was the *Regio Libanotifera*, the incense country of antiquity, and to-day the best maps even write Roba Ki Khaly (the empty place) to conceal ignorance ! North