

FOREIGN DEPARTMENT

God's Providence in the History of the Syria Mission.

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[As Dr. Webster, the missionary of the Canadian Church in Palestine, has been transferred to the Syrian Mission of the American Presbyterian Church whose headquarters are at Beirut, the points brought out by Dr. Jessup in the following paper, condensed from *The Church at Home and Abroad*, will be of special interest to us.]

He who observes providences will have providences to observe. Christian missions are a part of God's great plan in history. His hand controls them in their inception, progress and final triumph. He raises up the right men at the right time, and gives to each his place and his work.

In the history of the Syria mission we can note several striking illustrations of this Divine and definite adaptation of places and men to a Divinely ordered object and end.

I. In the selection of Beirut and the Lebanon as the strategic base of operations, instead of Jaffa and Jerusalem.

The mission began as a mission to Palestine, and Jerusalem was first occupied, but after a few years, it was found to be ill adapted to the various objects of an aggressive mission.

The population were then as now, largely pauperized by living on the revenues of mosques, convents and ecclesiastical funds. The Mohammedans depended upon the revenues of the great Haram esh Sherif, known as the Mosque of Omar; the Latins were mere dependents of the Latin Convent; the Armenians received food, rent and support from the Armenian Convent; the Greeks from the Greek Convent, and the Jews were almost without exception, men, women and children, drawing their food, rent and clothing from the Rabbis' charity fund, sent from Europe, so that the Holy City had become a holy almshouse. There was little hope of raising up a self-supporting mission from such a pauperized population. And the surrounding villages in Judea, largely Mohammedan, gave little hope of spiritual results. In addition to this, Jaffa was neither a healthy city nor a good harbour.

Beirut was therefore selected, being a thriving commercial town, with a fair harbour, the seaport of Damascus, and behind it the industrious farming population of Mt. Lebanon, consisting of Maronites, Greeks and Druzes supporting themselves by honest labor.

It was hoped that Beirut would become in time a great city. This hope has been realized. Pliny Fisk, Isaac Bird, Jonas King and Wil-