

American missionaries constantly render clerical services to British missions that have no ordained missionaries. They also supply all the other missions to the best of their ability with the Scriptures and other books and tracts they need, as the American Press at Beirut is the only considerable Arabic publishing house of which I know for the religious world. And they furnish the other missions to no small extent with needed native helpers, trained by them, 'having as they do the most complete and extensive educational system in the Arabic-speaking world.

The other missions reciprocate not only by their large patronizing of the American Press, but also by contributing a good proportion of the congregations and membership attached to the American Mission, and so the good work goes on. One instinctively asks how so strong an agency in so small a country is justified. The missionary importance of the Syrian field is not mainly sentimental. It does not hang chiefly upon Syria's unique prominence in sacred history. Nature has made this little land the link that binds together the three great Eastern continents, and the gateway to Asia, the most populous of those continents. Hence it has always been a sort of metropolis of war and commerce for the world, a national junction, so to speak. What country was ever swept so often and by so various contending armies? What country ever changed masters so many times? What country ever dominated for so long a time the world's commerce, whether by sea, through centuries of Phœnician maritime supremacy, or by land, through the world-famed caravan-routes to India and the East? Just at present the opening of the Suez Canal has deflected that immense Oriental trade, but when the inevitable railroads to Bagdad, Persia, India, and China are opened, Syria is sure to recover some of the commercial laurels that De Lesseps and his coadjutors have wrested from her. Considering also the paramount historic and religious interest that attaches to Syria in the minds of the followers of the three great book religions of the world—Jews, Christians, and Muslims—and remembering that her people are not unfitted, physically, mentally, and morally, to play an important part in the history that is to be, we may confidently assert that the attention already bestowed upon Syria by evangelical missionary agencies is no weakness or accident, but the guidance of the Divine Spirit whose leadings they all have sought, and who, in the early dawn of history, fixed upon Syria as peculiarly the land of His choice. In so large and so romantic a missionary constellation as that of the "Holy Land," one must make some discount for the comet, the meteor, and even the *ignis fatuus* classes; missionary luminaries who are either eccentric, temporary, erratic, spasmodic, or even injurious.

Of the whole force, three fifths are ladies, one sixth of whom are Americans, one half are British, and one fourth each German and American. One fourth are "medical" missionaries and one half "educational" missionaries, while a large proportion of the time of the remaining one fourth is also devoted to the educational branch. Two cities, first Jeru-