

MISSION FIELD.

Twenty-six Years in Turkey.

BY REV. LYMAN BARTLETT, OF SMYRNA.

In reviewing a period of more than a quarter of a century of missionary life in Turkey, we would begin with a song of praise to God for what he hath wrought, for only through direct divine agency could the results we are permitted to record have been realized. It will be well to remember at the outset that we are not called upon to estimate and record the progress of Evangelical Reform from the beginning, for then we must go back to a much earlier period in the history of Turkey.

At the time when our review begins there had been much fruitful preaching of the Word for a period of some forty years, and in many sections with most encouraging results. Many devoted men and women, both foreign and native, had labored and prayed and suffered and died, leaving behind them most important fruits to the glory of God.

In many places the difficulties and hindrances which always attend pioneer work had been largely overcome; the Bible had long been translated into the modern languages of the country, and from the presses at Smyrna and Constantinople had been issued a large number of religious books and tracts, besides many school books. The Word of God thus furnished in the language of the people had been widely circulated, many churches had been organized, and numerous schools of various grades established. So pronounced had been the progress of the truth that in many places severe and long-continued persecution was resorted to as the most efficient means of crushing the new heresy. It was not at first the plan of the missionaries to establish separate churches or congregations, nor was it the desire of the native brethren who accepted a pure gospel, untrammelled by the rites of their ancestors, to separate themselves from the mother Church. On the contrary, they hoped to be allowed to remain within the pale of the Church, seeking by quiet and kind endeavor to secure the enlightenment of their own countrymen. But this could not be; for they were driven from the Church because they could not conform to its rites and ceremonies, and hence they were obliged, in self-defence, to establish separate churches and congregations; and as their children also were excluded from the schools of the community, there was no other way but to open and provide schools for themselves. It was thus that the spirit of intolerance unintentionally aided in the spread of the truth. But to our review.

A few statistics will indicate to some extent the progress of reformatory work in Asia Minor and Bulgaria since 1867, the period under review. The number of places where the gospel is regularly preached in the language of the people has increased from 155 to 348; organized Evangelical Churches, from 59 to 124; the membership of such churches, from 2,484 to 12,674; average Sabbath congregations, from 10,439 to 33,749; Sunday school pupils, from 6,656 to 25,752; enrolled Protestants, from 15,000 to 48,736; common schools, from 165 to 400; pupils in the same, from 5,511 to 16,563; and including those in high schools, colleges, and theological seminaries, there are now under evangelical instruction about 20,000 pupils. But statistics can never show the full progress in any direction. It has been remarked that there is more Protestantism outside than within the Protestant ranks. In the matter of education, as here indicated, the progress of evangelical principles is especially apparent, for the word of God not only leads to a higher moral standard but it quickens the intellect as well and awakens a desire for mental improvement.

The true progress of any people may be pretty accurately measured by noticing the change in the social position of its women, and in Turkey this change is most marked. More than twenty years ago when we organized a girls' boarding school in Talas, near Cesarea, it was with much difficulty that we were able

to secure six girls, paying all their expenses for board, clothing and books; now that same school has from sixty to seventy boarding pupils, in good part paying their own expenses. Many schools in all parts of Turkey have had a similar history. This progress is by no means confined to the Protestant communities; it is seen also among non-Protestants, both Greek and Armenian, whose schools of various grades and for both sexes are found in all the larger towns and cities. Among the Mohammedans also many girls' schools have been established, even a normal school for Turkish girls having been opened at the capital under government patronage. Within the period now under review, such institutions as Robert College and the American College for Girls at Constantinople, Anatolia College at Marsovan, Euphrates College at Harpoot, Central Turkey College at Aintab, the College for Girls at Marash, and the Theological Seminary at the same place, and a Collegiate and Theological Institute at Samokov, in Bulgaria, have all come into existence, besides a large number of high schools, with a general advance of common schools through the length and breadth of the land.

But not only in the matter of education is this marked progress visible. A very noticeable change is apparent also in the Oriental churches, more especially in the Armenian churches. That a very large number in the church are intellectually convinced of the truth is seen in the fact that many of the rites peculiar to the church but not taught in the Word of God, are so extensively ignored that in many of the churches the consecrated pictures have been removed or are held in little esteem; that in many churches the Bible is read in the language of the people, and that much more attention is given to the systematic study of the Word.

A marked instance of this is seen in Cesarea, where for about twenty years a congregation of enlightened Armenians have maintained separate worship, with weekly preaching of the Word, entirely ignoring the distinctive rites of the old Gregorian Church, taking the Word of God as the only true exponent of Christian faith and practice. At their worship five or six hundred persons are often present, and their example has been followed in many other places. There seems to be everywhere a general recognition and acknowledgment of the errors of the Church, and, though it is not universal, there is a widespread desire for reform, accompanied also with an *expectation* that this reformatory element will at no very distant day gather strength sufficient to assert itself for positive and open reform. We do not anticipate that either of the Oriental churches will as a body accept the name of Protestant, and perhaps this is not desirable. Protestantism is not always Christianity; but we do hope for such a reform as will demand that the Bible and not the traditions of the Fathers be taken as the acknowledged rule of faith and practice; that the clergy be educated so as to instruct the people in the truths of the divine Word; that the Sabbath be better observed and that men shall be allowed to study the Bible and to teach it to others, and that within the pale of the Church, without losing their social standing.

There are also material improvements which should not pass unnoticed, for in the last quarter of a century some marked changes are visible. Twenty-five years ago there was hardly a well-built road in all the interior of Asia Minor, nor were there any four-wheeled vehicles in use, except two or three which were brought in and used by missionaries; now good macadamized roads have been built from almost every important seaport to the larger towns and cities in the interior and between the most important centres of trade. Some of these roads are hundreds of miles in extent, while thousands of vehicles of different styles and degrees of comfort are constantly running, furnishing ready transit for both freight and passengers between the seaports and the interior and between the railroad lines and the surrounding country. Within the same period its progressive railroad construction is worthy of notice. The extension of both the Ottoman and the Cassaba railways, the building of the Constantinople and Angora road, of the