

Egypt contains a population of about 7,000,000, of which more than 6,000,000 are Mohammedans. The Copts number not far from 400,000, and the other nominal Christians are divided between the Greeks, Syrians, and Roman Catholics. The ruling language of the country is Arabic. Alexandria is a city of 300,000 inhabitants, while Cairo approaches to 500,000, is much the largest city in Africa, and next to Constantinople the largest in the Turkish Empire. Here is the seat of the chief Mohammedan university, with its more than 300 teachers and 10,000 to 12,000 students, attracted thither from well nigh every country of the East.

The first efforts to redeem Egypt to Christ were made by the Moravian Church, and began as far back as 1752; but, on account of various obstacles, connected especially with the political situation, no lasting impression was made, and after about thirty years the missionaries were recalled. Next, in 1824 the Church Missionary Society sent its representatives to undertake the evangelization of the Nile Valley. As the fashion then was, they proposed to reform the Coptic Church by fraternizing with the higher clergy, and securing their countenance and co-operation. But the plan failed; life from the dead was not to be wrought by such methods, and by 1860 the effort had ceased. It was about this time that Miss Whately, daughter of the famed Archbishop of Dublin, began in Cairo her devoted school work, especially for Mohammedan boys and girls, and which she continued to carry on at great cost to herself until her lamented death only three years since.

But 1854 is the true Christian era for modern Egypt, for it was in that year that the American Mission was founded by the entrance into Cairo of Rev. Thomas McCague and Rev. James Barnett, sent out by the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, which four years later, by organic union with another branch of the same ecclesiastical tree, became the United Presbyterian Church. In 1857 Dr. Lansing, transferred from Damascus, fixed himself in Alexandria, to be joined in 1860 by the Rev. John Hogg. These last names will always be held in honor as representing the distinguished wisdom and energy and persistence which, beginning to display themselves in the trying day of small things, have ever since continued. As soon as possible schools were opened for boys and others for girls, religious services were held, though for years with a meagre attendance, and tours through the villages were commenced for the sale of Bibles and religious books. No direct notice was taken of the Coptic Church as an organization, for the effort now and from henceforth was not to seek to resuscitate or reform that, but rather to compass the regeneration of individual souls. But the difficulties were many and great, and of necessity progress was slow. Among the discouragements was this, that on account of the failure of health, several of the missionaries were compelled to retire.

Dr. Lansing was able to preach in Arabic almost at once. He also found mission schools already started by the zeal of certain Scottish disciples, and these were soon turned over to his care and direction, though for