

By
Miss Caroline E. Bush



Out-Station Schools in Turkey



Woman's Board of Missions
Congregational House
Boston

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PRESS OF R. H. BLODGETT & CO.,
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STATION becomes the educational center of a Mission Field, as well as the home where the missionary workers reside, and from which they reach out to carry on the various activities of their Field. Intensely interesting as each Station is on its educational side, even the smallest Out-Station seems a world in itself.

Each Station is responsible for the Protestant schools in the cities, towns and villages that belong in its district or Field. It may be a city, of which we have no less than five in our Harpoot Field, or a town, of which we have a large number, or a village, with little ready money and one main object in existence—to make the old, worn-out soil, dating back to the time of Adam and Eve, yield enough for daily bread. Yet there is the school committee, which Adam and Eve never thought of, chosen from the very choicest young men of the church; if possible, those who have been to the educational center for a few years' training.

Of late years some of the best informed and most intelligent women have been chosen as trustees of the girls' schools, and it is beautiful to see how well they carry their new responsibilities, in addition to heavy family cares. When one calls to mind the fact that it is not a great many years since the excuse for not putting a girl into school often was, "Is my daughter going to be a priest that she should learn to read?" and that these trustees are the daughters of those despisers of education, one sees what strides civilization is taking.

These schools, in our Out-Stations, whether of city, town or village, are not free; each pupil pays something, according to his or her grade, and if the parents are too poverty-stricken to furnish even one piaster (four cents) a month, some benevolent society of young men, or women, often stands ready to take the burden upon itself, or some rich man, or woman, is found who, in addition to the expense for a half-dozen of his own children, considers it a privilege, even a work of merit, to pay for such a child.

The highest tuition asked in one of these Out-Station schools in the Harpoot Field is possibly five piasters (twenty cents) a month. This came hard in years gone by, but now it is given by most as a matter of course.

The hindrances to attending school are great, the lack of money being the chief. In the

northern part of our Harpoot Field is a mountainous region, where some of the hardest of the Armenian race are found. Of late years, so great has been the fame of Harpoot for its temporal and educational advantages, that not a few of those ruddy, stalwart women have walked to Harpoot, a distance of four days, over the roughest road imaginable, hiring only one animal for the conveyance of children and household effects. Arrived at their destination, shelter is found in some wretched hovel, and the mother goes to work shovelling, sifting and carrying earth to make sun-dried bricks for building, or carrying heavy timbers, or hods of bricks, to earn a livelihood. Clean garments and books and money for the tuition of the children must be found, and, if it fails, a weeping crowd appears at the missionaries', the pastors' and physicians' homes, in turn, importunate until the children are all fitted out for school. Many from even such ranks of life have gone out to preach and teach, and the foundation for their education was laid in their far-away home school in an isolated mountain village. Perhaps there they had failed to find the pittance for tuition and books and could not find work, as at Harpoot.

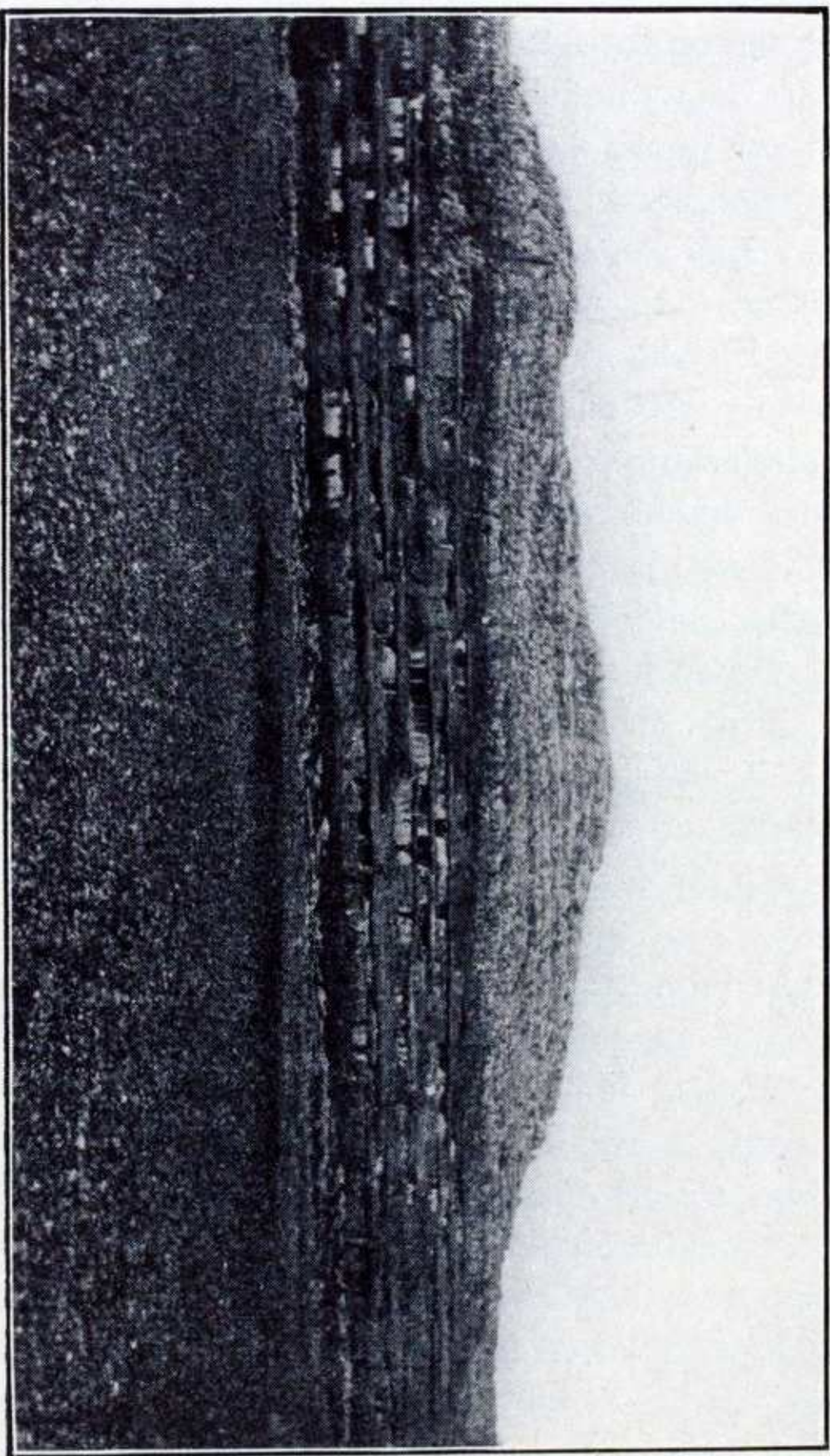
Another hindrance is the size of the old-fashioned family, numbering frequently twenty, forty, sixty souls. One of the more high-minded and enlightened sons may finally desire

to send his bright little boy to school, but the grandfather, the head of the house, or an uncle, sets his big foot down that this shall not be. The boy is needed to tend sheep, drive the cows to pasture, or learn to weave. The result has been that, in modern times, families have early divided, each son forming his own household and thus gaining independence to Christianize and educate his own children as he wishes.

Imagine the condition of a girl who is not allowed to go to school. She must wear her working clothes all the day, so as to bring wood and water, tend baby, go to the field with food for the laborers, sit cross-legged on the floor to wind bobbins for the loom and, grief to tell, possibly be married to a man far older than herself, or far younger, without consulting her choice, simply for the sake of gaining property or a stout son-in-law to work for the family.

All is changed when she is educated. She is allowed to attend religious meetings, to have some part in the work of the church, to dress well, and when she marries, to take them an of her choice.

These outside schools, in prosperous cities and towns, and even in large villages, are often well graded and progressive, and yet the children are still sitting on the floor, with a little, precious bundle of books wrapped in a square of calico, close to their knees, and nothing of beauty or comfort about them. Perhaps the



ADOBE VILLAGE IN TURKEY.

floor and walls are of earth, paper in the window frames instead of glass, a wornout matting on the floor, a crippled stove, in which a fire is lighted only in the coldest weather, and the pupils bring the mats on which they sit, from home, while the teacher occupies the one chair before a coarse deal table. The children are many of them bare-footed and clad in blue homespun. Poor, patient little mortals, too uncomfortable to be mischievous or disturbing.

In our city and town schools, of course they will have glass in the windows and clean, bright rooms, and the children be neatly, some even daintily attired.

These schools are often self-supporting; that is, the tuition supplies the money for the salaries of teachers, and if it falls short, the church, or a young men's or women's society makes up the deficiency, thus freeing the Board from that responsibility. But the poorer schools must still be assisted by the Board, and if new buildings, or additional rooms, are needed, it will be called upon for aid, even where we call the church self-supporting.

The children do not now study aloud, all of them together, as in former years, neither is each one allowed to bring the text-book of his own choice, one boy coming to the reading class with a Third Reader, another with "Pilgrim's Progress," and a third with the Bible, in

which to test his elocutionary powers, but there is the proper quiet for study at a regular hour, and the books used are those provided for like grades in our College Preparatory Departments. Thus these Out-Station schools become feeders for our College and, in turn, the College sends to them from their own pupils, well-trained teachers, better and better prepared to lift these schools to a higher grade and more thorough work.

Colored picture cards, calico kittens and paper dolls sent by friends from America are the incentives for earnest study in our outside schools, though most pupils do not need any incentive to appear at sunrise before the school-room door for study hour, and to stay on until sunset in the afternoon without a murmur.

The pupils have their own little weekly prayer meeting, in which they pray and speak before their teachers without shrinking. They have their little benevolent societies, in which they contribute their paras, wheedled out of their fond fathers' long-suffering purse, or earned by tending the sheep, or irrigating the fields. The money goes to help some orphan pay tuition, or to buy clock, map, or stove, for the schoolroom.

Can you imagine what a sacrifice any Armenian parent makes in sending daughter, or son-off into Koordistan, or up to Geghi, a four days' journey from Harpoot, or even down

into a low, uncultured village on our plain, for six months of teaching among total strangers? They must board, or keep house for themselves in a poor, unsatisfactory way in the one room each occupies. There is little quiet from school cares, little relief from the monotony of the life, for one teacher with a school of from sixty to ninety pupils is bound to be overworked, if at all ambitious to excel. Dangers meet them on every hand, from the peculiar conditions of Oriental society. The boy and girl must beware of looking at, or conferring with each other, even in regard to their work. They must not use their epistolary talents; indeed, some exceedingly ignorant and conservative parents decidedly object to their sons and daughters learning to write, lest they shall be tempted to pen notes of affection to the opposite sex.

They must not dress in too modern, Frank style, lest there be made the charge of extravagance; they must teach in the Sabbath School, lead the young men's and the women's meetings, and give of their money for every good cause in the community. To be sure, they are the privileged and highly respected personages of that community. They write the important letters, translate law and government documents, entertain strangers, and give trend to the local opinions, and communicate the news of the world. One young teacher once said to



KOORD, BRINGER OF WOOD.

me, "I have no vineyard, yet all these vineyards are mine. I have no donkey on which to ride, yet I can ride a donkey to the city any day in the week. I have no house, yet all these houses are mine." And it was literally true.

Yet with all the blessed work to do and the privileges to enjoy and the bit of salary to send home, any mother would dread to send her child off on a long and dangerous journey of days, on horse-back, to people of whom she knows nothing, where one little inadvertant act of youthful carelessness might create a scandal which would cling to the child through life. It is positively harder than for any of you to send a son or daughter to China or Turkey. Yet many brave parents do it.

The early age at which girls are married makes it difficult to keep our graduates, or even those of lower grades, for work outside of Harpoot. They are willing to delay marriage somewhat for teaching in that centre of all good things. They are apt to be sought as the most desirable of wives wherever they go to teach. In spite of these little side issues, many of them are thoroughly in earnest in their spiritual influence upon their scholars and the women of the church. One lowly grave in the isolated, rocky, mountain town of Choonkoosh is still shown to the stranger with pride and affection, — the grave of their first female

teacher from Harpoot, gentle, faithful Mariam, who was but a short time among them, but won the love of all, and then went on to higher service.

What I say of our field is essentially true of all the fields in Turkey, save that conditions vary in some particulars. In Van I suppose no girls can yet go out into the wide field to teach, and the work in boys' schools is mostly done by orphan boys educated in that city. In Mardin, Sivas, Marsovan, Aintab, and other interior stations, the outside work in schools is conducted by pupils, both boys and girls, sent from these centers.

Not a few graduates go from one large center to another to work. Harpoot has several times sent teachers on to Erzroom and Sivas, and a large city in the Harpoot field has had teachers from Aintab. The Central Turkey Mission sends on some of its advanced pupils to Harpoot College to perfect themselves in Armenian, their language being Turkish.

And so the light of the Gospel and the civilization, given by means of our network of schools, spreads throughout the vast Turkish Empire. They have had an incomputable influence upon the Gregorian Armenian schools all about us, obliging them to elevate their standards, grade their schools and employ far better teachers. Indeed, in order to compete with us, they have been led very often to em-

ploy teachers educated in our schools, and some of these teachers are allowed to open school with prayer, and give Bible lessons.

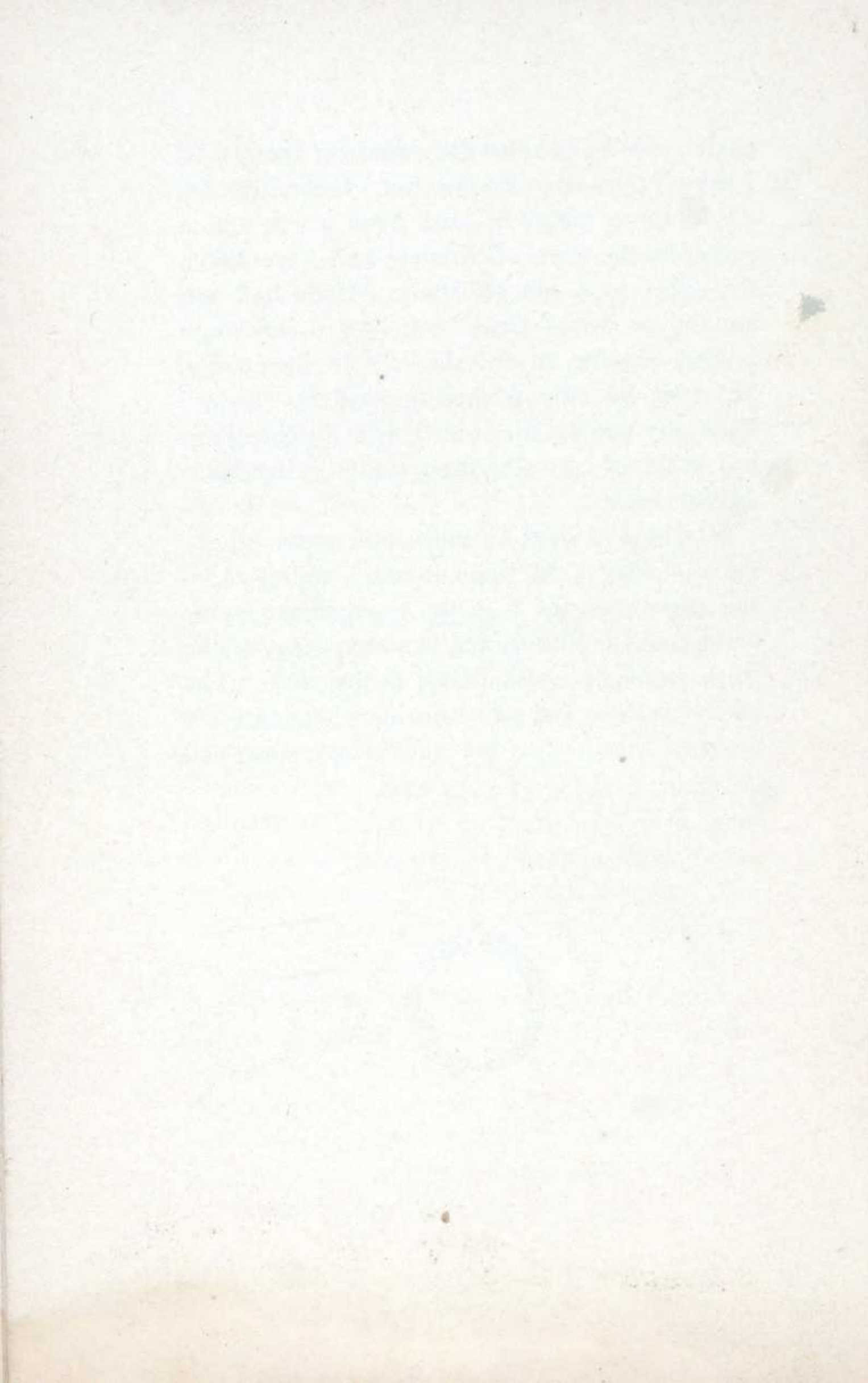
With joy I write that for a number of years past the children of our Protestant orphanages in Diarbekir have had most satisfactory training in the large Gregorian schools of that city, the wife of the Principal, herself a graduate of our college, being a teacher there. With equal gratification I relate the fact that most, if not all, of the Armenian text books now used in our Protestant schools are compiled and printed by Gregorian Armenians, though during the first twenty years, or more, of our schools it was necessary for our Board to do this work.

Turkish schools have also advanced greatly in the last few years, owing, we must hope, to the general advance of Christian schools. There seems to be a somewhat better class of teachers, and a higher grade of studies in them also. I was once stopping for the night on the roof of a house in a Koordish village. The children ran about the streets rude and unkempt, but I noticed one fine little fellow who sat beside his mother in the group of Koordish women gathered about me to listen to the Scriptures and words of counsel. He was neatly dressed, and had a bag of books flung over his shoulder. "Who is this nice little boy?" I inquired of our inn-keeper. "That is my brother's boy," he answered, with an air of

pride. "Why is he so different from the rest?" I asked, turning to the brother. His reply was, "For three years I have been a cook in a school in the town of Konieh, and have taken this boy with me to study. If he had not studied he would have been like these rough fellows playing in the dirt out in the streets, but now he only wishes to read his books." This was said by the Koord with all the glowing pride of any Christian father in his son's advancement.

Missionary work is more and more educational. May God bless it more and more, to the promotion of a truly evangelistic spirit among all Christians, and to a knowledge of the truth among peoples of all faiths, that "The earth" may be full of "the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."





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