

Sidon Syria

Oct 24<sup>th</sup> 1879

Dear Friend.

I have not written to you for a long time but I have been very busy and have had very little time for anything except work. I am away from here a large share of the time and hope this week to leave for my sixth long tour and be gone nearly two weeks.

You will understand something of the pressure of the work when I state that sixteen years ago there were always two missionaries for this field but now that the work has greatly increased there is but one. I constantly receive requests for teachers and more instruction from villages where they have no one at present. An incident occurred lately which you might like to hear of.

There are three villages not far from here quite near together in which are a few Protestants. Lately a priest came

to that region claiming to have studied in Rome and to have learned seven languages, he greatly troubled our people by his eccentric, his bold statements and lies. The faith of some was very much shaken especially by his repeated assertions that our Bible was lacking several books. In a large meeting held in Eljidaluna the priest urged this point and wanted to know if they would agree to become Catholics in case they had not the real entire word of God, promising to leave his religion if the contrary was proved.

A document was drawn up & signed by Catholics and Protestants to this effect and it was agreed that the Jewish teachers in Sidon were to be the judges of the case. So Monday a deputation headed by the priest came down and went to the Jews school and there the teachers gave a written and signed decision that the Protestant canon was the true one and that

the Apocryphal books are not found in the Old Testament. Great was the triumph of the Protestants and the Priest fled and has never gone back for a day to his parish. The result has been that the Protestants have been encouraged and their number increased and their adversaries have been put to shame and confounded.

A good Christian man preaches among those people without a cent of pay and he is now urging them to build a church for themselves. But of course there are very many discouraging features, persons prove unreliable and churches split up or show a bad and worldly spirit. Open persecution is not so injurious to the spread of Gospel truth as the backsliding of the church members. More oil of grace is needed that these ignorant people may may let their light shine before men as they are commanded to do. I may also

say a few words about the political state of the country about here. The trouble of last autumn seemed to increase till about Jan 1. when after the burning alive of two Christians the government was aroused to doing something and several of the worst desperadoes were seized and one of them has been hung this week. So that now we hear of fewer robberies and murders and touring is safer than previously but oppression and wickedness rule the day to all outward appearances and the progress of good is rather slow. Last year 31 persons united with the churches of this station an increase of 15 over the previous year. Twenty schools were under the station supervision and they must have had about 1100 scholars in them. The text book for those who can read being the Bible there is reason to hope that much good has been done in this way also.

I find that the people in most

places do not buy and read the  
books of our Press as they should. I  
have thought that a small library  
of religious books might be placed  
in one or two places and the books  
taken out on the payment of a  
fee by those who cannot afford to  
buy them or who at present are  
not in the habit of reading. Should  
any one wish to help in this  
matter I would be very happy to  
take charge of the <sup>selection & purchase of books</sup> ~~operation~~ here.

I wish people in comparing the receipts  
of the various Boards would remember  
that the Foreign Board includes school  
teaching, Higher Education, Theology training  
Church Erection Sustainment etc in its  
scope of work while in America these  
things are all provided for by separate  
Boards. In like manner also the  
missionary has to be linguist  
preacher, trustee deacon elder and at  
times the whole choir, not to  
mention his duties as superintendent of

schools and general paymaster and  
accountant. All the books for the  
schools mentioned pass through my  
hands and I am to keep track  
of their sale. But if speaking of  
work is not the way to interest people  
in Syrian affairs I could tell of  
the beauty of the groves outside of  
Sidon at this season of the year.  
When the almond trees are a mass of  
white blossoms and orange lemon  
and other trees load the air with the  
fragrance of their blossoms. Bananas  
and pomegranate palms & olive all  
flourish in this plain together with  
the most beautiful of wild flowers.  
A week ago Monday in Tyre I entered  
a long series of underground passages  
just opened which evidently belonged  
to the ancient city. The Arabs are  
busily engaged in stripping the walls  
of their fine stones & so ruining  
even ruin themselves. In a few  
days I expect to leave for the part

of the field about Mt. Hermon and  
be gone two Sabbaths administering  
the Lords supper each Sabbath and  
admitting members to the church.

Please excuse my delay partly on  
the ground that I have not heard  
from you since leaving America.

Give my kind regards to the kind  
friends who have proved their interest  
in the work here and believe me  
ever your sincere friend

Wm. H. Eddy.