

AMERICA
SAVE THE NEAR EAST

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"MILITANT AMERICA AND JESUS CHRIST"

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PREFACE

who has intimate knowledge of Syria's problems and of the spirit of American institutions, and a fair acquaintance with Europe's dealings with the East, I have spoken my own conviction on this subject and advocated what I believe to be the best plan of government for my mother country.

At the same time I believe that I have advocated that which the majority of enlightened Syrians in this country and the much afflicted "old home" would approve. If the repeated declarations of such Syrians in America that it is "the best country in the world," "the land of true freedom," "the home of justice," "the country of fair play," and that "it has done for us what no other country

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could have done" are as sincere as I believe they are, then my countrymen cannot conscientiously reject my plan. Nay, I have every reason to believe that they will join me in the appeal to this great country to carry into our motherland the blessings which she has bestowed upon us as immigrants, and which we prize as highly as life itself. In this way only, as it seems to me, Syria can be permanently saved not only from Turkish misrule, but from European complications also, and made to take her place among the free countries of the world.

The brevity of the present volume is intentional. Its purpose is not to give an exhaustive treatment of its subject, but to voice the desire of an oppressed

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respect. Wherever the work of liberation and enlightenment is needed, there is the place where free men, whether as soldiers or as teachers and missionaries, should be.

Can the land which has given the human race its greatest prophets and noblest scriptures, and which cradled Christianity, be to America a strange and alien land? Can the glory of Lebanon, the coasts of Sidon and Tyre, Galilee, Olivet, and Zion be called by America common and unclean? Is not the soul of a people which has made so rich contributions to the spiritual treasures of the world worthy to be redeemed and restored? Let America's generous soul answer! Syria, Christendom's Holy Land, martyred Armenia and Asia Minor, where the whole history of the "early

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WILL AMERICA GO?

Church" is buried under the iron heel of ruthless rulers, are moaning under centuries of oppression and crying for deliverance. Their redemption, besides being a divine act of mercy toward them and a rich blessing to their rescuers, would contribute materially toward the doing away with the causes of future wars.

As will be seen in the following chapters, the needs of the peoples in whose behalf I am speaking are peculiarly appealing. They differ materially from the needs of Belgium, and even from those of Russia and the Balkan States. Those peoples of the East need to be mothered by a nation which shall be free from self-interest in her dealing with them, and which shall lead them tenderly into that coveted state of "self-determination."

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was not long after the Young Turks had come into power before it became very evident that their main purpose was to Turkify or, failing in that, to exterminate the non-Turkish elements in the Empire. When the Balkan war deprived the Turks of almost all their European possessions, the only "alien" provinces which remained under Turkish rule were Armenia, Syria, and Arabia. The unofficial protection which France and England had extended to those countries before the present war served to a considerable extent as a deterrent to the Turks. When the war came, the Turkish demons were unchained, and, supported by Germany, they proceeded to carry out their long-cherished designs against the helpless non-Turkish peoples under their sway. The unspeakable horrors of the

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vast tragedies of Armenia and Syria are current history.

Syria and Armenia are often spoken of by the majority of Americans as though those countries were one and the same. Their two names are supposed to be interchangeable terms. The facts in the case, however, completely contradict this opinion.

Syria and Armenia are two separate countries which differ from one another in every essential. They are, as the map will show, two distinct geographical entities, Armenia lying to the northeast of Syria, which occupies the region between Egypt and Arabia on the south, Asia Minor and Armenia on the north, the Arabian desert and the Euphrates on the east, and the Mediterranean on the west. The Armenians are Aryans

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by race, and, as such, they hold a closer kinship with the Americans than with the Syrians. They have an ancient native language of their own, which is one of the Indo-European family of languages. They have a national Church, the Armenian Church, whose origin goes back perhaps to the second century of our era. For many centuries before and after the Christian era the Armenians were ruled by kings of their own blood, a fact which has been to them, ever since they lost their independence, a mighty incentive to free themselves again from the yoke of alien rulers.

The Syrians, on the other hand, are Semites by race, with a liberal inclusion of alien peoples which the many conquests of that country by foreign powers left behind them. The present language

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of Syria is the Arabic, which is one of the Semitic family of languages, and is no more like the Armenian than it is like the English or the French language. While Syria is the mother of the Church universal, unlike Armenia it has never had a national Church. In it are represented all the ancient and several of the modern Christian sects. The Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholic, Maronite, Syriac, Jacobite, Coptic, Armenian, Nestorian, Latin, Lutheran, Anglican, Presbyterian, and other churches are domiciled in that birthplace of the faith. As might be readily inferred, the Jewish faith is strongly represented in Syria, also the various Mohammedan sects, the Druses, and other less conspicuous non-Christian faiths. So far as numbers are concerned, Mohammedanism is the dominant faith

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peace comes, and will perhaps ally herself with Russia. Syria, which occupies the most significant position among those provinces of the Near East, remains, so far as its future government is concerned, without a definite prospect.

But before addressing myself more fully to the subject of government, I will give a brief survey of what I have termed "the human assets" of Syria and its neighboring provinces.

Intelligent Westerners find no valid reasons to class the Syrians and Armenians with the "backward peoples" simply because they are not rich, highly educated, and well organized politically. If what is meant by "backward peoples" are those human groups which are mentally incompetent to advance beyond a certain stage of social progress which

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civilized man has left far behind, then the peoples of my subject are emphatically not of those groups. So far as the native individual gifts are concerned, the Syrians and Armenians possess the proper credentials for admittance into the company of civilized thinkers anywhere in the world. It is true that the Orientals in general have not been very successful as nation-builders and their ethical standards have not been *uniformly* high; nevertheless their capacities for progress are as unlimited as those of their Western cousins.

In my judgment the failure of the Oriental to rival the better European type on the main lines of progress has not been due to intellectual inferiority nor to moral degeneration, but to a lack of genius for organization. The East-

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erner is a good thinker and no mean philosopher. He is certainly a poet and a spiritual genius, but, compared with the better European races, he is indifferent to system. His indifference to system, like a real dreamer, has been the chief cause of his failure as a nation-builder. He has not been able to see things in the large, and to subordinate partial interests and provincial allegiances to national interests and the common welfare of the whole people. As a result of this the political and social life of the Near East has for centuries been unstable and insecure, and this insecurity has rendered systematic progress, whether in education, ethics, or industry, impossible.

Yet satisfactory progress along these lines is not utterly beyond the Easterners. They are very teachable, and under

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proper guidance many of them have been found capable of appreciating and successfully dealing with the privileges and responsibilities of a highly organized social life. As immigrants in this country, the Syrians even of the "first generation" have given a very gratifying account of themselves. It is neither possible nor desirable to remove from an immigrant all his "foreign" characteristics in the course of a few years' residence in this country. To empty a foreigner of all his inherited tendencies and Old World habits is not, in my judgment, to "Americanize" him. The better method is so to guide him as to have him retain the nobler traits of his old simple and poetical life — traits which America needs — and to adopt in addition such American tendencies as are fit to be perma-

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nently incorporated into the national character.

Judged from this point of view, the Syrian in America will be found to be an asset and not a liability to the country. The criminal records of the country will show that on the whole he is a peaceful, law-abiding citizen, utterly free from the stain of the revolting crimes committed by some European immigrants or even native-born Americans. In educational circles his record is a source of pride to him and of deep gratification to his teachers. He makes a very creditable use of the ballot, he is an ardent lover of his adopted country, and, as the present military records show, a sacrificing patriot. While the majority of the Syrian immigrants of the first generation follow ordinary commercial pursuits, and lack in

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a measure the steadiness and endurance which characterize the hardier type of European and American industrial workers, yet the Syrian has entered successfully many of the professions — the ministry, law, medicine, dentistry, teaching in schools and colleges, engineering, and other professions — and proved his fitness as a skilled worker.

Even in his native land, under most adverse conditions, when he came in touch with European and American culture, the Syrian responded to its incentives most creditably. As a thinker he soon merited the respect and admiration of his Western teachers. His talents blossomed even in a land cursed by rulers who had no affinity whatever for culture. No national ideals were there to spur his genius to great achievements; no politi-

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simple fashion of "biblical times" soon distinguished themselves as thinkers and men of affairs, and won the admiration and loud praise of the English.

In his noted work, "Modern Egypt,"¹ Lord Cromer, for many years head of the British forces in Egypt, says: "Whether from a moral, social, or intellectual point of view, the Syrian stands on a distinctively high level. . . . A high-class Syrian is an accomplished gentleman, whose manners and general behavior admit of his being treated on a footing of perfect social equality by high-class Europeans. His intellectual level is also unquestionably high." In the same book² this distinguished author adds: "I may say that those few Armenians with whom

¹ "Modern Egypt," Vol. II, p. 218. The Macmillan Company, 1908.

² Ibid. p. 220.

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I have been brought in contact appear to me to constitute, with the Syrians, the intellectual cream of the Near East."

From this brief survey of the human assets of the Near East it may be readily seen that its peoples can, under proper guidance, bring themselves to a high level of social and political progress, and become the companions, instead of remaining the wards, of the civilized people of the earth.

CHAPTER IV

“SPHERES OF INFLUENCE”

I HAVE already stated that the deliverance of the Near East from ages of misrule, by America, would contribute materially toward the removal of the causes of future wars. I have chosen Syria as the most strategical theatre of such action, because I believe the improvement of her lot would work most effectively for the betterment of the fortunes of the other Near Eastern countries, from Persia to the Mediterranean and from the Black Sea to Arabia.

Among those countries Syria is a pivotal point. Chiefly because of its

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geographical position as a passageway between the Empires of the Euphrates and the Empires of the Nile, and as a connecting link between Europe and the Far East, this country has been for ages the coveted prize of ambitious conquerors. Its control, if not absolute possession, has been the cause of many wars from the days of Sennacherib and Cyrus to the days of the present German Kaiser.

Syria's most holy city, Jerusalem, is unique among the cities of the whole earth. It is the Holy Place (Mackdis) of the three great Semitic religions — Judaism, Christianity, and Mohammedanism — and the only city in the world where every Christian sect has a shrine. As long as the Bible lives, Syria will remain the most enlightening commentary on the contents of that Holy Book.

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from the hands of one tyrant to those of another for so many centuries, is crying for a strong and beneficent deliverer, for a real friend to guide her to enlightened self-government.

In my judgment America is the country which is best fitted for this humane task. I do not say that America is the best "colonizer," nor that Syria's real need is to be "colonized" by being tied to the chariot of a strong and *conquering* nation. The cry is rather for a big-hearted, disinterested helper, whose motives shall be above suspicion, and whose reward, the joy of helpfulness.

France and England have been in Syria through their educational, commercial, and political enterprises for many generations. They have rendered that country most valuable service. Their

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schools and colleges have exerted upon the minds of its youth the ennobling educational influences which their incompetent and cruel rulers have always denied them, and their fleets and armies warded off many calamities with which those rulers would have visited their helpless subjects. Whatever turn events may take in the future, the Syrians never can be too grateful to the French and the English for their efforts in behalf of that oppressed people.

Nevertheless, "European complications" have always served to qualify in the minds of the peoples of the Near East the intentions of all the European Powers in their dealings with those peoples. To my knowledge the Easterners never could have complete confidence that their own welfare ever was the sole incentive for

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of the various nations as favorable to the consummation of Zionist hopes. The world is being refashioned. The majority of the great and enlightened nations claim to be fighting for the freedom of all peoples. Never before was the heart of the world so responsive to the cry of the oppressed as it is now. All signs, also, point to the permanent separation from Turkey of her Near Eastern provinces. Palestine has already fallen to the British. Zion has been delivered from Turkish bondage.

Is not the time, therefore, very opportune for the friends of Zionism to press its claims with greater vigor than ever before, and secure, if possible, the coveted land of Palestine as a free and permanent home for Jewish nationalism? So it must seem to the ardent supporters of

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this Jewish movement, and their hopes cannot be pronounced elusive.

Christendom, also, is deeply interested in the Zionists' expectations. This interest springs not necessarily from the Christians' love for the Jews, for hatred for the Jew has been one of Christendom's gravest offences against God and humanity. Christian interest in the Zionist movement comes chiefly from the fact that there are millions of Christians who believe that Christ's kingdom will not come upon the earth until the Jews have been "restored" to Palestine. To such the success of Zionism means the long-awaited regathering of the chosen people to their "promised land."

There are many others whose interest in this significant movement is purely romantic. The thought of a "restored

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Israel" to the land of its origin seems to reinvest for them the ages of Hebrew history with compelling charms. The picture of the sons of Abraham regathered as a people, free and strong, to "build the old wastes, and raise up the former desolations," and sing again the psalms of their faith and hope among the hills of Zion, is to the lovers of romance a most enchanting vision. This expectation for the advent of Christ's kingdom upon the final restoration of the Jews to the Holy Land and the legitimate romantic interest are shared also by many of that minority of Christians who are deeply interested in the improvement of the Jew's lot, and the restoration to him, as a man, of his lawful right of social and political equality with the other enlightened members of the human race.

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And it is not at all strange that the Christians in general, as well as many among the Jews themselves, should have only a superficial knowledge of the aims and purposes of Zionism. Zionism is not a general movement to "restore" the fourteen million Jews from all the regions of the earth to the Holy Land. Such an enterprise would involve, to say the least, a physical impossibility. Even if it had no other inhabitants, Palestine could not properly sustain one fourth of the Jews of the world, even if they could all be led, or driven, into it. Again, the Jews are very far from being all Zionists. Only a minority of them is deeply interested in this movement. Millions among them are perfectly indifferent to it, and many are decidedly opposed to it. But the leaders of Zionism are among the

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foremost men of this remarkable race, and their followers can by no means be called "only a few."

The purpose of the Zionist movement is to provide the Jews, who refuse to relinquish their claim to being a nation, a national centre and a "legally secured home" which they may call their own. I can do no better in presenting the purpose of Zionism than to quote the words of the honorary president of this movement in America, Justice Brandeis of the United States Supreme Court.

"Let us bear clearly in mind," says Justice Brandeis, "what Zionism is, or rather what it is not. It is not a movement to remove all the Jews of the world compulsorily to Palestine. In the first place there are 14,000,000 Jews, and Palestine would not accommodate more

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than one fifth of that number. In the second place, it is not a movement to compel any one to go to Palestine. It is essentially a movement to give to the Jew more, not less, freedom, — it aims to enable the Jews to exercise the same right now exercised by practically every other people in the world: To live at their option either in the land of their fathers or in some other country; a right which members of small nations as well as of large, — which Irish, Greek, Bulgarian, Serbian, or Belgian, may now exercise as fully as Germans or English.

"Zionism seeks to establish in Palestine, for such Jews as choose to go and remain there, and for their descendants, a legally secured home, where they may live together and lead a Jewish life, where they may expect ultimately to con-

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stitute a majority of the population, and may look forward to what we should call home rule. The Zionists seek to establish this home in Palestine because they are convinced that the undying longing of Jews for Palestine is a fact of deepest significance; that it is a manifestation in the struggle for existence by an ancient people which had established its right to live—a people whose three thousand years of civilization has produced a faith, culture, and individuality which enable them to contribute largely in the future, as they had in the past, to the advance of civilization; and that it is not a right merely, but a duty of the Jewish nationality to survive and develop. They believe that there only can Jewish life be fully protected from the forces of disintegration; that there

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alone can the Jewish spirit reach its full and natural development; and that by securing for those Jews who wish to settle in Palestine the opportunity to do so, not only those Jews, but all other Jews will be benefited and that the long perplexing Jewish Problem will, at last, find solution.”¹

Zionist writers dwell upon the fact that notwithstanding the improvement of his lot in many western European countries and in America, the Jew remains a “man without a country.” Many countries have admitted the Jews into full equality before the law with other citizens; nevertheless, the social mind of non-Jews in

¹ “The Jewish Problem. How to Solve It,” by Louis D. Brandeis; pamphlet published by the Federation of American Zionists, New York City, 1917.

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tine. In the first place, the universal prejudice against the Jews is shared by those sects in the East. The Jews "crucified Christ" and "dealt treacherously with Mohammed." Until they abjure the sins of their fathers and are converted to the faith of their persecutors, the Jews will remain in disfavor.

But, in the second place, this inhuman attitude toward the Jew is not the sole reason which impels the Christians and Mohammedans of Palestine and Syria in general to resist Zionism. Its possible political consequences afford a more rational reason. The Syrians perceive that the goal of Zionism is the establishment of an independent Jewish state in Palestine, or at least the establishment of an autonomous Jewish state under the protection of some foreign Power. Under

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the auspices of the Zionists, Palestine must either be detached from Syria and "given to the Jews," or become a "sphere of influence" of some Western Power. Either prospect is repugnant to the non-Jewish population of the "land of promise" and to intelligent Syrians in America.

The process of reasoning in the case is very simple. The Zionists' ultimate purpose is to establish a Jewish national centre for all the Jews of the dispersion. To this centre the Jews of the world are to look, not only for inspiration, but for redress in time of trouble. In Palestine the Hebrew language is to be revived and, in course of time, made the language of the land. In Palestine a vital Jewish atmosphere is to be created through the spread of Jewish culture, — an atmos-

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pletely merged with the general Syrian population.

Another, and less personal, reason upon which our Maronite friends base their proposition is that, owing to the diversities of race and creed among them, the Syrians could not be really free if they were forced into an unnatural unity under one government. The interests of the Mohammedans, the Christians, the Jews, and the Druses are not identical, therefore could not be properly served, except through such plan of government as is here proposed. Let, therefore, the Jew rule in Palestine, the Christian in Mount Lebanon, and the Mohammedan in the other parts of Syria. I am not certain what sphere, according to this plan, is assigned to the Druses, who dwell largely in the Lebanon.

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It is no part of my present task to undertake to prove or disprove the validity of our Maronite friends' claim to the definite separateness of Mount Lebanon from Syria. My only word on this point is this: I was born and brought up in the province of Mount Lebanon. I am not aware that as Lebanonians we ever thought of ourselves as other than Syrians, or of our province as not being a part of modern Syria. Lebanon has always enjoyed certain privileges which the other parts of Syria have been denied, but that has never been thought sufficient to separate definitely that province from Syria, or to put it outside the Turkish dominions.

However, be that as it may, our present and more vital question is: Would such a plan of government serve the end

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aimed at and solve Syria's problem? Would it bring the various sects together as coöperative citizens, or divide Syria, as of old, into warring principalities? What a misfortune it would be for a country numbering less than three millions to be split into little "nations," each having its own army, border line, custom-houses, foreign relations, etc.! Again, the Maronites would make the Lebanon a free state "under French protection." The Jews would have Palestine for their state "under English protection." The Mohammedans would naturally seek some other nation's "protection" in order to keep the "balance of power" in the country. Again there would be produced in Syria the ancient petty kingdoms which in ancient times sought alliances with Egypt, Babylon,

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and other powerful dynasties. The hateful "spheres of influence" would be established by sheer force of circumstances and the various "sovereign states" of Syria swayed to and fro by the fortunes of the protecting Powers. Sectarian narrowness would grow ever more narrow; bigotry, more keen; and the danger of war between those states more threatening, as they grow in power and are urged by the ambition to enlarge their dominions.

This being, as it seems to me, the case, I believe that the most advantageous scheme of government for Syria, and safest for the world, would be a federal union of states, something like the American Union. I do not assert that this form of government, applied to that country, would be free from difficulties

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— it has not been so in America — but the *most advantageous*. It would give all necessary latitude to racial and religious interests, without disorganizing the country by emphasizing its divisions and by placing its fragments under the protection of half a dozen European Powers.

A federal union of states centred in a national government, with Damascus, perhaps, as capital, would give the various provinces the necessary freedom of local self-government and at the same time bind them all to one national ideal. The provinces, or states, of Palestine, Lebanon, Damascus, and Aleppo could then elect their own governors and legislatures, undisturbed by outside interferences, and at the same time remain united as members of a greater commonwealth than their own small principality.

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Under such a system of government those people who speak the same language and have the same general habits of life could establish a strong modern national university that should be free from all sectarian influences, where their sons and daughters might be educated, not as rulers and subjects, but as cooperative citizens. Sectarian interests could be served in other ways — as they are served in America — without interfering with national interests, and a new nation would arise in the Near East to greet the light of the new day.

With the sectarian and racial interests so guarded, through free action as regards local matters, the national government could then be organized on purely secular lines. Its officers would be chosen with reference to fitness, and not to creed and

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