

MISSION FIELD.

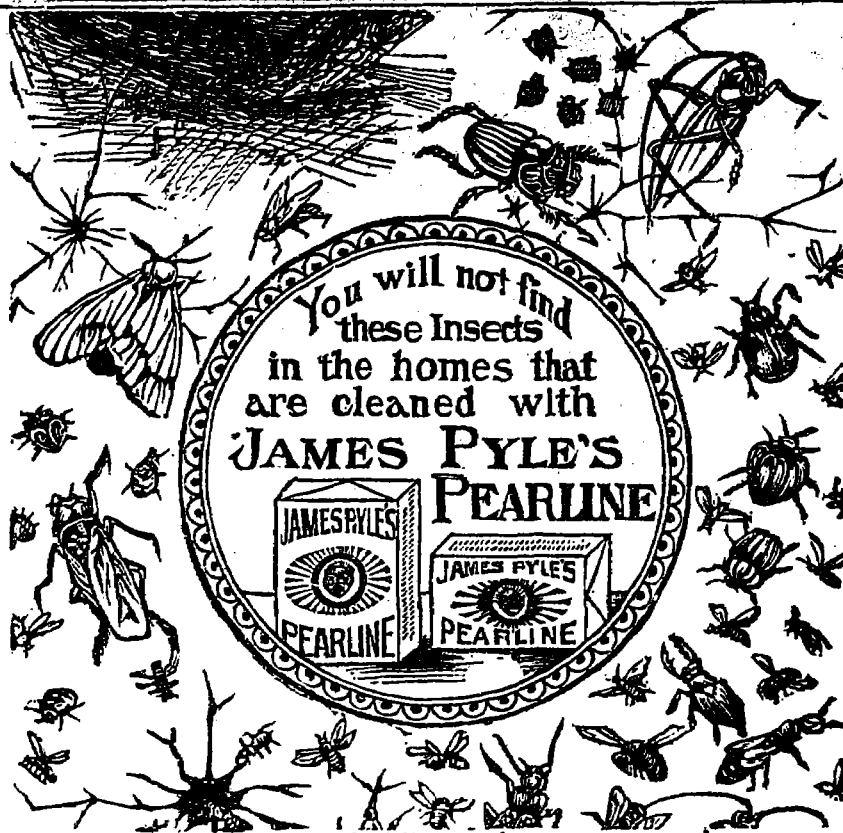
THE SYRIAN CHURCH.

At a drawing-room meeting recently held in Edinburgh, Mar Gregorius, Bishop of Hama (Emesa) in North Syria gave the following account of the Ancient Syrian Church to which he belongs.

The chair was taken by the Right Rev. J. Dowden, Bishop of Edinburgh.

The Bishop welcomed the Syrian Bishop, who has come over to England by invitation of the London Committee formed 14 years ago under the auspices of the late Archbishop of Canterbury, when the Syrian Patriarch of Antioch (Ignatius Peter III.) and Mar Gregorius (then Syrian Bishop of Jerusalem) came to England at the Archbishop of Canterbury's invitation. The Bishop of Edinburgh spoke of the comfort and pleasure which it has given to eminent theologians in this country—among them Canon Liddon—to hear from the Syrian Bishop the Articles of Belief of the Syrian Church, which shows that on the great and essential points—such as those concerning the Persons in the ever blessed Trinity—the Syrian Church is in agreement with the Beliefs of our own Church and with that of the orthodox Greek Church. (Copies of the 15th Article of the Syrian Articles of Faith were distributed in a translation made by the late Rev. Dr. Badger from the original text furnished by the Patriarch when in England in 1874.)

The Syrian Bishop then spoke, in Arabic, his address being translated sentence by sentence into English by Mrs. Frim (formerly of Jerusalem). After expressing his gratitude to God Who had brought him in safety to this country, and his acknowledgments to the Bishop of Edinburgh and all those whose kindness had been the means for giving him this opportunity, the Syrian Bishop went on to describe the territory within which the Syrian people and the Syrian Church are to be found. The district is North Syria from Lebanon to Asia Minor, and from the Mediterranean Sea on the west to the Tigris on the east,—of course, including Mesopotamia between the two great rivers of Euphrates and Tigris, which fall into the Persian Gulf. This great tract was the territory of the ancient nations of Aram in Syria. Within it lie the places through which Abraham passed when on his way to Canaan—and Haran, where he and Jacob sojournd. To this people belonged Naaman the Syrian. Their language, called Aramaic or Syriac, is closely related to the Hebrew and Arabic languages. The land is so near the Holy Land that what occurred in the one was soon known in the other,—indeed, it includes a portion of the land of promise given to Abraham, as may be seen in Numbers xxxiv. and Ezekiel xlvii. Thus it came to pass that the wonderful works of our Lord Christ were known, not only in Judea and Galilee, but also in Syria; and the people were in a sense prepared to receive the Gospel when it was



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preached to them. This happened after the martyrdom of Stephen, when the disciples were scattered abroad. Then Paul and Peter and Barnabas, Silas and Jude, came even as far as Antioch, which was then the maritime capital of Syria. Then was founded the first Gentile Christian Church at Antioch, where the disciples were first called Christians (see Acts xii). From thence the disciples went abroad, northwards into Asia Minor, and eastwards not only over Syria, but to the confines of Persia (where the daughter Church of the Nestorians or Assyrians still exists), and further east of Asia, the Church spread, and the word was received with joy. But in time the words of the Lord were fulfilled. Division arose within, and persecution came from without. Heathen and Mohammedans sorely distressed the Syrian Church. Many martyrs were found who were ready to give up their lives rather than deny their Lord. But the church was reduced in numbers: "unless the Lord had been with them according to His Word, and had left them a remnant, verily they had become even as Sodom and Gomorrah." He had preserved them. Although driven from Antioch back into the interior, among the mountains of the north—the Church has been preserved. The present Patriarch is the 144th chief Bishop, reckoning from St. Peter as the first Ignatius the martyr and saint was the third in succession. Among the fathers of the Syrian Church were Eusebius, Chrysostom, Ephrem, Syrus and others. The Syrian Church has been in successive persecutions, despoiled of most of its churches, its property, its precious manuscript books, including copies of Old and New Testament scriptures; but the

faith in the Saviour is firm and ardent, like the grain of mustard seed, small yet warm at heart. The Bishop then recited the article of faith concerning the Trinity and our Saviour; and he then described the condition of the people—without printed books, and without schools and colleges—until the Committee formed under the late Archbishop Tait enabled the Patriarch to open elementary schools in the Mesopotamian district. Here, above 2,000 children have been given the first rudiments of learning. But in the diocese of the Bishop himself, there are as yet no schools at all, nor a woman or girl who can read at all. The Bishop pleaded for help to carry on the good work which has been begun. The schools already opened have to be kept up, and new ones opened where there are none.

Money is needed; for in a country where the income of a Bishop is scarcely £40 a year, and where the other clergy have to work for their own daily bread, it is impossible to establish schools without help. Two Committees (one of gentlemen) have been formed in London to carry on this work. The chairman of the committee is Rev. Dr. Tremlett, St. Peter's, Balaize, London. The Treasurer of the Ladies' Committee is Lady Monier-Williams, to whom contributions may be sent, care of Messrs. Coutts, Bankers, Strand, London. £1,000 is all the Bishop asks for, to enable him to start and carry on several schools for some years.

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