

## MISSION FIELD.

## AN OLD-WORLD CHURCH.

The present condition of the Assyrian Church, in regard to its documentary standards, is one of what may be called arrested development. After having been out off from the Catholic Church of the East it seems to have made no changes, and adopted no innovation. It does not accept the canonical Scriptures as they are accepted by the Eastern and Western Churches alike, but holds the Apocalypse and some of the Epistles to be of doubtful authority, thus perpetuating the uncertainty which ruled in orthodox Christendom at the period of their separation. The Nestorians have seven sacraments, but differ in their enumeration of them from any other Christian Church, Eastern or Western. The three-fold ministry has always been upheld by them as essential, and the bishops, as in the Orthodox Eastern Church, must be married. They are very rigid in the observance of fast days, and are also strict Sabbatharians, refusing either to labour or travel on Sundays, except under the compulsion of urgent necessity. Their liturgies have never been printed, and one of the first things to be done for them by the Anglican Missionaries will be the production of printed service-books. Both priests and people are mostly in a condition of abject poverty, as well as in gross ignorance. Hardly any laymen can read or write, and a large proportion of the clergy are equally without the elements of education. Parish priests, and, in some cases, even bishops, have to earn their daily bread by labour in the fields for Mahomedan employers.

The mission which is now at work among the Assyrian Christians owes its origin to no proselyting impulse on the part of any body of English Churchmen. On the contrary, it is the result of successive appeals from the heads of the Assyrian Church themselves, dating as far back as 1842. Three Anglican clergymen, designated by the Primate for the work, are now resident among the Nestorians, and it is hoped that a fourth may be sent out this year. The missionaries live upon their own means, receiving no stipends, and all the money subscribed is devoted to the purposes of the mission. These are mainly educational. As already stated, there is no desire to make proselytes; but (to use the Archbishop's words) 'to encourage them in bettering their religious condition, and to strengthen an ancient Church which, through ignorance within and persecution from without, cannot any longer stand alone, but without some assistance must eventually succumb, though unwillingly, to the external organizations at work in its midst.' The Missionaries assert that the Metropolitan, at least, does not hold the heresy for which his Church was excommunicated, but for the present there is no intercommunion between Anglicans

and Assyrians; nor will this be permitted until the latter shall accept the decisions of the Council of Ephesus.

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