

lishing themselves at Urmi at first, the English clergy saw the absolute necessity of forming a permanent station in Kurdistan, as the only means of reaching the people there; indeed, it was an express condition of the Metropolitan, Mar Isaacs, that they should return in the spring, "and never leave us again."

Before returning to England, Mr. A. Riley visited various places, and, among others, Mosuh, where he was surprised to find a separate Assyrian communion. It had abjured the Roman obedience in 1873, owing to the promulgation of a papal bull which ran counter to the old Assyrian canons, and thenceforth remained an isolated Catholic communion under the care of the Matran Mar Elias Malus. In conversation, Mar Elias said that his hope was for ultimate reunion with Mar Shimoon's Church on a Catholic basis, the obstacles being the Nestorianism of the mountain Church and the ignorance of its bishops and clergy. He expressed warm sympathy with the work of the mission, and an earnest wish for the presence of an English clergyman at Mosuh, to aid in reorganizing the educational system there. This discovery of an Assyrian Church, similar in all respects, save one, Nestorianism, to the old Assyrian Church, was considered of the highest importance to the work of the mission.

Comparatively small as is the district occupied by the Assyrians, the two portions of it differ widely in almost every respect. Their country in Persia is flat and well cultivated, comprising the two plains of Urmi and Salmas, which are separated by a ridge of hills, running from the Turkish frontiers to Lake Urmi. The population is Persian, Assyrian, Kurdish, and Armenian; and the relations with the Persian authorities being, on the whole, satisfactory, the dwellers on these plains have never been called upon to face the terrible modern persecutions which have so harassed their brethren in the mountains.

Quite different is the home of the Assyrians on the Turkish side of the frontier, where bold mountain ranges, separated by deep, narrow valleys, are the fortresses where the Christian faith has been preserved in a very stronghold of Islam.

Since 1844 the country has been under the rule of the Porte, though Kurds are usually employed in the government of the province; a cause of much suffering still to the Nestorians, as the Mohammedan Kurds have thus practically remained their masters, and have it in their power to oppress them in many ways. The Assyrians of Turkey are divided into two classes—Ashireths, or tribal Assyrians, and the Rayahs, or non-tribal. The former inhabit the valleys, and are under maleks, or chiefs; they are brave, and comparatively independent in their rocky homes, but terribly ignorant; even their priests and deacons are frequently

unable to write, or, sometimes, to read; and the holy mysteries, though celebrated according to the ancient rites, are grown almost meaningless to both priests and people.

The Rayahs are in a most pitiable condition, being little more than slaves to the Kurdish chiefs; they are cruelly taxed, have scarcely food and shelter, and, in the bitterest cold, men, women, and children are often barely covered with rags; yet apostasy, which would insure relief, is almost unknown.

Mr. Riley speaks of the touching sight of one of their poor churches, with the old priest clad in a vestment of meanest material, hesitatingly repeating by heart the prayers that have come down from the earliest Christian days; the congregation chanting in low murmurs, lest they should be heard outside; and the little wooden cross, sign of the common faith, reverently kissed by the poor villagers.

Strange to hear of in this nineteenth century, when the very name of Christian, in so many lands, suggests power and protection of the weak, surely these poor people, ignorant as they are, "have kept the faith" in a way that puts some of our halting, speculative Christianity to shame. This pitiful ignorance, however, is the stumbling-block that must be removed before this ancient communion can be restored to her place in the Church Catholic. The form of religion has been marvellously kept in the midst of the most hostile surroundings; little wonder if its influence seems to have been small upon the lives of those who, for generations, have had little or no teaching or explanation of the truths of the Gospel.

The Assyrians hold the Holy Scriptures in highest reverence, as well as the "sign of the life-giving cross"; Sunday and the Christian fasts are also strictly observed. Their liturgies are ancient and beautiful, and they have maintained the apostolic ministry to the present day, though, unfortunately, with an hereditary episcopate for the last three hundred years.

A recent report of the work of the mission states that there are now twelve persons at work in Kurdistan under the direction of the clergy; and that, after a silence of nearly two hundred years, preaching has again been begun by the native priests in the plains.

The clergy live together, and receive no stipends, only a small sum yearly, £25, for personal expenses.

All the money given is spent in actual missionary work; the village schools, of which there are about eighty, cost only something like £4 per year each. At Urmi, also, there are schools for the girls under the care of the Sisters.

The work of the mission is indeed unique, for never before in the history of Christendom has the restoration of an ancient Church to her rights and privileges been undertaken.

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