



A SCENE IN KURDISTAN

Bedr Khan Beg and his followers which shortly after reduced them to submission. Mar Shimoon, meanwhile, having succeeded in a second attempt to escape, took refuge with the Church in Persia, whence, as soon as peace was made, he returned to Kochanes, after an absence of five years. No compensation was ever granted by the Porte to the Nestorians, nor was the Patriarch officially recognized by it.

Notwithstanding his gratitude for the kindness and sympathy shown by resident Englishmen, both lay and clerical, to the suffering Assyrians, the disappointment of the Catholicus at the withdrawal of English aid must have been deep and bitter, and it was not until 1868 that any formal appeal was again made. In that year a petition was sent to the Archbishop of Canterbury (Dr. Tait) and the Bishop of London, signed by three bishops, five maleks or chiefs, thirty-two priests, and eleven deacons, in which they forcibly depicted the deplorable condition of the Assyrian Church, and entreated for help and guidance to avert its threatened extinction. Moved by their earnestness, the two archbishops, in 1876, commissioned Rev. E. T. Cutts to go to Kurdistan, and there obtain more definite information as to the best method of assisting the Nestorians, with the result that, in 1881, a clergyman was sent out, but for various reasons this attempt to help did not prove successful.

The archbishop was deeply anxious to re-establish the Assyrian mission on a firm foundation, feeling that so earnest and persistent an appeal laid an imperative duty upon the Church of England, notwithstanding difficulties of various kinds with the Turkish and Persian authorities. In 1885 two clergymen volunteered for the work, Rev. W. H. Brown, of St. Columba's, Haggerston, and Rev. Canon Maclean, now Dean of Argyll and the Isles, the latter offering himself for five years.

After preparation and due consultation with the Patriarch of Antioch, the mission, conducted by Mr. Athelstan Riley, who had already visited the Assyrian Christians in 1884, set out in June, 1886, and in August reached Urmi, in Persia, where they were warmly welcomed by the Bishop of Urmi and his people. Soon after they crossed into Kurdistan to visit Mar Shimoon, the Catholicus of the East, at his village of Kochanes, and present to him the letter of the English primate. Mar Shimoon came to a place some six hours distant to meet and welcome them, and, returning together, they were met by Rabban Johnan, the "Hermit of Kochanes."

This remarkable man, the last of the theologians of "the Church of the East," whose reputation for saintliness and learning spread far beyond his own country, had taken up his abode in a cell attached to the Church of Kochanes in 1883, in the forlorn hope of saving the Assyrian Church from destruction. His time was spent in training Mar Amaham, the young Patriarch-designate, teaching the children, and copying old Assyrian MSS. Rabban Johnan had seen Mr. Athelstan Riley on his previous visit, and had pressed upon him the urgent need of assistance from England, deploring his own age and helplessness. He was now overwhelmed with joy and thankfulness at the sight of the longed-for English priests, whom he had come forth to welcome with affectionate greetings. They, as it proved, were among the last persons to whom the aged recluse ever spoke, and they followed, with the sorrowing Nestorians, when, very shortly after, he was laid at rest in the little cemetery of Kochanes. *A nunc dimittis* indeed.

After consultation with the Patriarch and his bishops, the clergy decided to open a college for thirty priests and deacons and a school for twenty boys at Urmi that winter, but so numerous were the applications that the numbers had to be increased. Printing was to be begun as soon as possible, service books being much needed, and the first pamphlet struck off was the Nicene Creed, in its Oriental form, printed in ancient and modern Syriac. While estab-