

which they have once borne, and which it is to be hoped they may bear again. The Oriental Churches as a whole were not as active in the spread of the Gospel as the Latin Church: but the Nestorians were an exception. "In the East," says Mosheim, "the Nestorians with incredible industry and perseverance laboured to propagate the Gospel from Persia, Syria and India among the barbarous nations inhabiting the deserts and remotest shores of Asia. In particular the vast empire of China was particularly enlightened by their zeal and industry, with the light of Christianity." From the 5th to the 9th century the Nestorians had churches among the mountains of Malabar in India, and in the vast regions of Tartary from the Caspian Sea to Mount Imaus and beyond, through Chinese Tartary, and even in China itself.

Early in the 11th century a Mogul Prince in Cathay (Northern China) was converted to the faith, and taking at his baptism the name of John, gave his royal influence to the Christian cause. Some of his successors also were at least nominally Christian, a son-in-law of Prester John—the well known *Ghengis Khan*, gave his support to the Christians as late as the early part of the 13th century. But toward the close of the 14th century the sword of the Moslem Tamerlane destroyed the Tartar churches and overthrew the Nestorian Christianity in the principal seat of its power. It was not till the close of the 15th century, however, that some unknown persecution and massacre destroyed the Nestorians in China. There is still found at *Si-ngau-fu*, in North-western China a large stone tablet, giving an account of the faith and history of the Nestorians. It presents their doctrine of the Trinity, and some account of the books of the Old and New Testaments, and records their progress for one hundred and forty years.

For the degradation and real moral darkness of these people for the last three centuries there would seem to be some reason. They have been crushed by invasion and slaughter and constant tyranny, and at the same time have been subjected to the immediate contact of all the sensuality and debasement of the dominant Moslem races.

But how significant is the early history of the Nestorians of Persia as bearing upon the question of their future relations to Tartary, and even China? Why may they not again be useful in carrying the Gospel even to Mongolia and the Corea? They have physical energy and hardihood, though ground to the very dust by bad government, and every species of wrong; they are capable of a high civilization, and their susceptibility to the power of religious truth, has had numerous attestations in modern as well as in ancient times.

It is this view of their character and position that gives to the mission among the Persians a peculiar interest. They are at the western gateway of China and India. They are stationed along a great highway of nations which must ere long be opened. They are moreover in the centre of Asiatic Mohammedanism, where they only wait in sore distress for some great overturn, in the providence of God which shall give them governmental protection and the conditions of prosperity. Meanwhile it is the duty and privilege of the Christian Church to promote among them the resurrection of a dead and buried Christianity.

WHY THE TERRIBLE FAMINE.

Famine now wastes the land, especially the Moslem districts, and its havoc must ever recur at intervals until there shall be such a government as shall protect and encourage irrigation, instead of speculating in breadstuffs while the people perish. The immediate cause of the present suffering is found in the successive droughts of the last two or three years. But the real and fundamental causes are found in the wretched administration of public affairs. The government is an absolute despotism, in the hands of a Sultan or Shah. He has two chief ministers—one a sort of deputy executive in peace and in war, and the other a lord high Treasurer. The evil lies in the fact that the latter of these is so much more diligent than the former. There is vastly more of tax-gathering than of civil or military protection. The sole end for which the Persian government exists is the collection of revenue—the fleecing of the people. Large portions of the land, confiscated from time to time, belong to the sovereign, and are farmed out on terms well nigh ruinous to the tenant. Even where property belongs to the subject, it is taxed to the last degree as a starting point, while the successions of subrulers and collectors make still further drains upon the moiety that must save the labourer's family from absolute want. The whole burden of taxation thus comes really upon the labouring class. Added to this extortion is the constant uncertainty as to whether the planter will be permitted to reap his crop at all. Down-right robbery of fields or households by the retainers of petty chiefs, is of frequent occurrence, and the poor are liable any day to be deprived of their very last resource. Agriculture and other industries so discouraged and paralyzed, barely sustain the lives of the people at the best, and when as now, drought is added, thousands must perish from want.

"Still worse," says Rev. J. H. Shedd, "there is no Joseph in Persia to make any systematic provision for such a crisis. There is no public channel of supply. On the contrary the tender mercies of the wicked