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THE ASSEMBLY HERALD.

OCTOBER, 1901.

Foreign Missions---Persia.

Eastern Persia : Teheran, Hamadan.
Western Persia : Urumia, Tabriz.

Missionary Forces in Persia.

By Rev. W. A. Shedd, Urumia.

A resume of the forces of missions at work in Persia will be of interest to the readers of the Assembly Herald. In forming an opinion of the sufficiency of the forces at work, it should be remembered that the area of Persia is nearly one-fifth the area of the United States, exclusive of Alaska and the insular possessions, that the population is seven to nine millions, and that the intellectual, social and religious conditions are peculiarly complex.

The societies at work in Persia are the following: Our own Presbyterian Board, the English Church Missionary Society, the Assyrian Mission of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lazarist Order of Roman Catholic Monks, the Holy Synod of the Russian Church. Working in co-operation with the Protestant Missions are the American and the British and Foreign Bible Societies. The number of foreign missionaries in Persia is about 120, of whom two-thirds are Protestant and working in co-operation.

It will be noticed that this list contains all the great divisions of Christendom—Protestant, Anglican, Greek and Roman Catholic. A curious fact is that all of these divisions are at work in the same place and for the same people, in Urumia and for the Syrians. In Urumia there are also native Syrians or Nestorians supported by the Lutherans, Baptists and others. Outside of Urumia, Teheran is occupied by the Roman Catholics, and Salmas is another centre of their work. The C. M. S. occupy Ispahan, Shiraz, Yezd and Kirman. The Protestant missionaries thus occupy eight cities in

Persia, the Roman Catholics three, the Russians one, and the Archbishop's Mission one besides two points in Turkish Kurdistan among the Syrians. Of these missions ours and the C. M. S. are working in close harmony, while the others are based on ecclesiastical principles that preclude any general co-operation. The most recent of these missions leads in the number of native adherents, for there are not far from 20,000 nominal adherents of the Russian Church among the Syrians of Persia. The Archbishop mission works within the Nestorian Church and reports no church statistics. There are probably not far from 5000 adherents to the Roman Catholic Church in Persia, including children. It is unnecessary to recapitulate here the statistics of the Protestant churches.

One remark from the above is that the co-operating forces of our Board and the C. M. S. are wisely distributed so as to reach as large a portion of the population as possible and with such a division of territory as to reduce waste to a minimum. They have occupied the important centres of population and influence and have done much of the preparatory work of translation and study, though such still remains even in these lines. All this is the result not of special plans and consultation but has come about by the guidance of Providence. On the other hand one cannot but regret the wastefulness of indiscriminate giving to irresponsible native missionaries in the region of Urumia. Without reflecting in the least on the high motives and earnest desire to do good on the part of some, it is safe to say that no one should receive help unless vouched for by a reliable person intimately acquainted with the field.

Here as everywhere in the world we are met by the fact of a divided Christendom and the question arises as to the proper course to follow. Protestant missions have been in general pioneers and if there is a right of priority it belongs to them. But the differences are not those between Protestant denominations but those that divide the great Churches of Christendom. Peace and good-feeling are of course desirable and for the most part exist between these missions.



PERSIAN LEPERS.

Least of all can we expect any regard for the services of Protestant missions on the part of the Roman and Greek Churches. On our side we can afford to be grateful for the good that may come from the labors of others. In at least one case a Roman bishop was a help in time of need to a brother groping his way to the light of Christianity. But can we be hopeful that they will be able to evangelize this dark land? In the first place this evangelistic aim is not clearly before them. Their aims are predominantly ecclesiastical and not evangelistic. Moreover history indicates the weakness of Catholics, or perhaps better priestly, Christianity to conquer in the contest with Islam. We are apt to depreciate the long and valiant struggle carried on by the Oriental Churches, and especially the Nestorian, with the rival Faith; but the fact remains that they lost the battle. Roman Catholicism has been active in Moslem lands for several centuries, but with very little success so far as making an impression on Moslems is concerned. Nor has Christianity made much progress among the Moslem subjects of the Russian Empire. These failures past and present are a call to us to make known the Gospel as we find it in

the Word of God, and this not only to those who are not believers but also to the Christians of the Eastern Churches whom God has placed in the very midst of the battle.

A New Station in Persia.

Kazvin was occupied as an out-station of Teheran in January of the present year. Dr. Jessie C. Wilson, Khanum Gregorian, a lady teacher of the Teheran Girls' School, and Rev. J. L. Potter made the journey to Kazvin in a rude wagon without springs. The second day out, a snow storm overtook the party. They escaped without harm.

Kazvin had, on former occasions, been occupied by missionaries for a longer or shorter period. The missionaries therefore found some friends and a warm welcome on their arrival. Mr. Potter called on the chief ruler of the place and on friends whose names had been given by former missionaries. The governor received Mr. Potter with marked respect, as did the other dignitaries of the Moslem religion whom he visited. The missionaries improved all these opportunities for presenting the Gospel of Christ. At one time there seemed a bright prospect of reaching the Babis, but the expectation was not realized.

When the rigor of winter was somewhat abated, visits were made to the Kurdish villages near Kazvin. In this way they visited twelve villages situated to the north, west and south of Kazvin, leaving those on the east to a future time, as the weather became too hot for traversing the plains on donkeys. In this village work excellent opportunities were afforded for reaching the people. One of the most interesting tours was made to Karaghan, a mountain district three days' journey to the southwest of Kazvin. A number of Armenians as well as several Turkish villages in this district were visited, the Scriptures read, and Christ preached publicly in the street or at the gate-way of the village. Both in Kazvin and the new villages the women were readily reached through the medical missionary, Dr. Jessie C. Wilson. In several villages, friends secured through the medical work, opened the way for the preaching of the truth. No opposition was encoun-