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I.—Literary.

AMERICA AT THE SUMMIT OF THE CENTURY.

The last century should always be the best, and its closing decade the greatest. This is pre-eminently true of the century fast drawing to a close.

God is not writing books now. The canon of scripture was complete when the aged St. John penned the last line of his gospel. God is not working miracles now. There is no longer any need for the display of the supernatural. But God is just as busy as ever. His name does not appear, but his presence is everywhere. His hand is unseen, but omnipotent, shaping the destiny of the world and fore-ordaining still whatsoever comes to pass. "The world is not made, but making," some one says. God is as alert as he was in the days of the old theophanies. Was he in the world in the days of Abraham, and Moses, and Elijah, and Paul? God is not less gloriously and triumphantly in the world in the last years of this imperial nineteenth century.

It has been a century of unsurpassed industrial improve-

III.—Missionary Department.

THE ARMENIAN CHURCH.

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Natural and artificial calamities are impressive teachers of ethnology and geography. The black smoke and the consuming fire of the wrath of the diabolic Turk in which the Armenians have suffered and are now suffering indescribable agonies, has been the signal of attracting the attention of the whole civilized world to that people for the last three years of time. Everywhere the people have asked with renewed interest, "Where is Armenia?" "Who are the Armenians?" "What is the Armenian Church?" and "What are the causes of these awful crimes?"

Armenia proper is the immense plateau bounded on the North by the Black Sea, on the East by Persia, on the West by Asia Minor, and on the South by Arabia. It is situated about 7,000 feet above the sea level and its area is, roughly, about 600,000 square miles. The country is of romantic scenery, of luxuriant pastures and much natural fertility in the sheltered valleys, but extremely backward in development from the centuries of neglect entailed by misfortune and misgovernment.

The Armenians are one of the oldest civilized nations of the world. They trace their origin to Haik, said to have been the earliest King of Armenia. The race belongs to the finest variety of the Indo-Germanic family of nations. *Physically* they are strong, inured to hardships, with striking dark-hued features. In *character* they are indus-

trial. The men pious, the women chaste, patriotic like their German relatives. Their *intellectual capacity* is remarkable, as is shown both in their literature and in their singular skill in business. This remarkable people has been a distinct race through all the ages, but since the sixteenth century when the whole country was laid waste by the Persian invaders there has been no Armenian nation. Since that time they have gone like the Wandering Jew, in great numbers wherever commerce and trade invited them. They number about four millions, of which two millions were under the Turkish Empire, previous to the massacres. But as the Christian world is principally interested in them as Christians, it would be well for us to study them as a Christian Church and a religious people.

ARMENIAN CHURCH.

Before the Christian era, the Armenian religion had for its basis the Zoroastrian doctrines of dualism (Ormizd and Ahraman) with a curious intermixture of Greek Mythology and of ideas peculiar to the country. But they offered their sacrifices of animals chiefly to Ormizd, of the Persians, and to Venus, of the Greeks. But to-day as a people they are Christians; the popular belief to their original conversion to Christianity is speculative and unreliable. The tradition says that at the time of Christ, Abgar, the Armenian King, whom Tacitus calls the King of the Arabs, was sick; and on hearing of the fame of Christ, who went about healing and raising the dead, he sent his servant with a letter, requesting Christ to come and heal him. Christ being unable to go, promised to send to him two of his disciples.

After the death of Christ, Thaddeus, one of the seventy, went to King Abgar and cured him of his sickness; as the result thus the King and all his subjects were baptized into the Christian faith. Leaving tradition, the first reliable history of them as Christians we find to begin at 300 A. D., at the time of Durtad II, under Bishop Gregory, (The Illuminator). Hence it is called "The Gregorian Church." The Bible was translated into Armenian about the year 500.

CHURCH DOCTRINE.

Since the year 451 A. D. the Armenian Church, through

some misunderstanding, separated itself from the then existing Catholic Church.

The following are some of the fundamental doctrines in their Church :

1. They hold the Monophysite doctrines of the nature and person of Christ.

2. Their creed is the first formula of the Nicene Council, holding that the Spirit proceeds from the Father only.

3. They accept seven sacraments, although Baptism, Confirmation and Unction are intermingled in practice.

4. The mode of Baptism is either by immersion or sprinkling, or rather both. The recipient must not be over eight days old, is three times sprinkled, once dipped and then offered the Lord's Supper.

They believe that Baptism is essential to Salvation, but that there is no need of regeneration, as Baptism removes the original sin, and penance the actual sin.

5. As to the Lord's Supper : It must be celebrated with pure wine and leavened bread, the latter being dipped in the former before being handed round.

The Lord's Supper is celebrated twice a week by the priests, but the people partake of it only twice a year.

They accept transsubstantiation, and worship the elements as God.

6. They worship saints immediately after death and the Virgin Mary, believing in her perpetual virginity and mediatorship.

While they reject the image worship of the Romanists, they accept pictures in their churches.

8. They practice auricular confession to the priest, who imposes penance and grants absolution, but gives no indulgences.

CHURCH POLITY AND WORSHIP.

The Church Government of the Armenian Church is very similar to that of the other Eastern churches. They have nine degrees of ordination :

1, Catholicos ; 2, Bishop ; 3, Priest ; 4, Deacon ; 5, Sub-Deacon ; 6, Candle Lighter ; 7, Exorcist ; 8, Reader ; 9, Sexton.

Originally the church was under one Catholicos, who resided at Sevos, but now there are but three who hold

this office. One resides at Echmiadzin, in Russia; one upon an island in Lake Van, and the other at Sis, in ancient Cilicia. Besides these nine ordinances there are two ranks that are temporary, one that of preaching monks, (Evangelists). The other Patriarchs, are appointed by the Sultan of Turkey. The latter are political heads as well as religious.

The Bishops are never allowed to marry, the Priests marry but once; any Priest can be a Bishop after the death of his wife. The services in the churches are held twice every day, at sunrise and at sunset. They have an order of service for every day, taken from the "Fathers." But the services are all read in ancient Armenian, so that the people cannot understand them. (Owing to urgent demand of late years, the Bishops preach sometimes, and their sermons are evangelical in tone, full of good advice, which, however, they are not careful to put in practice themselves).

SUPERSTITION.

The Armenian Church has been given over to superstition for many centuries. It is astonishing how even the most educated kiss the bones supposed to be those of the donkey upon which Christ rode, and of the martyrs and saints.

At their approach to the graveyard they solemnly offer prayers as though it was the most hallowed ground.

Their churches are decorated with all kinds of pictures and scenes in connection with the life of Christ and the Apostles.

The favorite is the painting of the Judgment Day. (A male angel with black hair holds a pair of balances. The one scale is filled with light, the other with darkness, which is weighted, though the devil and a group of imps are pulling with all their might on the side of darkness.

On the side of light are groups sitting peaceably in Paradise; on the other is hell's gate, and behind it souls in misery).

The ancient churches are considered sources of healing. Processions of women come to them daily and bring their sick babies to be healed of all manner of diseases. Echmiadzin, the famous monastery of the Catholicos are

primate, is the great shrine of the Armenian people. It is situated about twelve miles from Eravan, Russia. It was founded in the fourth century to commemorate an appearance of our Lord to Gregory, the Illuminator.

This place is supposed to be the centre and strength of the Armenian Church, where hundreds of students assemble every year, to be taught by the monks, and under the influence of the Catholicos. It is here that the Catholicos consecrates the Bishops. Among the treasures of the monastery are the reputed hand and arm of Gregory, now encased in gold. During the consecration services this golden case, containing, it is said, the dead man's hand, is placed on the head of the newly elected Bishop, who thus is validly and visibly ingrafted into the true Apostolical succession, but the superstition is at its height when once in every seven years, at this monastery, the Catholicos prepares the "Murran" or holy oil, used in the Armenian Church for baptismal and other purposes. It is for that occasion that thousands of Armenians come from the ends of the world, in order to witness the sacred ceremony. The services begin on the Saturday which is supposed to be second Sabbath. Long before the services begin the curious multitude begin to rush into the building, where they listen to the solemn services. On the next day the "Holy Oil" is prepared by a very simple process. In the middle of the area of the church a large silver vase is placed, into which the Catholicos pours a variety of perfumed oils at different parts of the service, stirring the mass with the golden arm of Gregory, and subsequently with a spear whose lance-head is said to have been the actual weapon with which the Centurion pierced our Lord's side. The greatest ambition of every person during this service is to get as near as possible to the vase, or touch the spear-head. The popular legend says that when this oil is being mixed it boils up of itself, and eventually it breaks forth into a flame, this being the divine token that has been properly prepared. Thus we find the Armenian Church heretical in doctrine, formal and superstitious in worship, and with no spirit of propagation or missionary enterprise, being purely national in its interests, motives and spirit, having merely a name to live, yet being dead.

MISSIONS.

It is among this people that the noblest men and women from England, Scotland and America have exhausted their energies for more than three quarters of a century, in transforming them and teaching the Gospel in its purity. Since the year 1820 about 550 missionaries have sailed from America alone to the Ottoman Empire, whose work has been mainly among the Armenians. The result has been the reformation of the evangelical spirit among the nation, the ingathering of an army of communicants into the churches, the publication and circulation of the Scripture among the masses, the teaching of hosts of students in day schools and Sabbath schools, so that to-day the ancient Armenian Church has been revived and regenerated to a great extent.

THE PERSECUTIONS OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH.

The world has not yet forgotten the story of the Armenian horrors, the recital of which sent a shiver to the very marrow of Christendom. It was in January, 1895, when the black clouds that for years had gathered over Armenia burst out with such a fury that *sixteen thousand* men, women and children, fell in what is known as the massacre of the Sassoun district, and from that awful day on, for the two successive years, the Turks swept through the length and breadth of that doomed land with fire and sword, leaving the wounded to writhe and the dead to fester by hundreds of thousands in the streets, while the shattered remnant wandered for food and clothing among the nations of the earth like shameful beggars. It were easy, indeed, to fill a volume with what Turkish monarchy has done during the past few years to the Armenian nation. The task of composing such a work, however, would require a peculiar mental and moral constitution in the writer. If he would do justice to his subject he must undertake to recite the story of all social, religious, political and individual crimes, brutal murders, robberies and unjust imprisonments committed at midday and midnight of every month and year. He would have to recite graphically the story of all the heart-piercing sorrows of those whose fathers and brothers and kinsmen—yea, whose sisters,

sweethearts and wives are sleeping the sleep of unnatural and untimely death. Moreover, he would have to describe all the horrid dagger scars on the heads and breasts of innocent victims; yea, more than that, he would have to go into homes violated and ransacked by the assault of brutal soldiers and tax-gatherers, and listen quietly to every heart-beat and pulse-throb of an exiled nation. What a stupendous task! I tell you, my Christian friends, that that man after writing amen to his volume was not converted into a beast I would consider it as a miracle of modern history.

The question has been asked in every loyal mind, what is the crime of the Armenian people that they should be treated so brutally? Their crime is simply this: They love the Bible and Jesus Christ and would not submit to the dictates of the Koran and Mohammet.

THE ATTITUDE OF CHRISTIAN EUROPE.

The attitude of the Europeans toward the "Great Assassin" has not only been that of sympathetic spectators but when opportunity was offered they rendered their valuable assistance to the "butcher" of the century. The accursed concert of Europe, under whose shadow these horrible butcheries were committed, is responsible for it all. Great Britain is a party to it; Great Britain let it be done, she with all the principal Powers of Europe had agreed beforehand that it might be done, and since they have proved it by their actions and attitude toward their beloved brother, Abdul Hammid. While some were satisfied by sending their congratulations from their capitals, the Emperor William II had to go in person and shake the hands stained in the blood of Christian martyrs. Turkey and Europe may think with pleasure that the Armenian question is doomed forever to disturb the peace of the world, but we believe that the day of the just vengeance of God will speed its coming, when the soil baptized more than once in the blood of innocent Christians shall become the chess-board upon which the game for the dominion of justice shall be played.