

## THE STRANGE LAND.

BY A RETURNED MISSIONARY.

We had been at sea nine weeks;—nine long, weary weeks, had we been confined on board a barque of three hundred tons burden. We had been a very happy company, and a shade of sadness accompanied the thought of separation as we came in sight of the mountain tops of the tropic island in which we were so soon to enter upon our new life in the service of the Redeemer. Our voyage had not been marked by any special incidents. We had been terribly tossed about in the Downs; had suffered very rough weather in the Bay of Biscay; had been delighted and refreshed by a run on shore at Madeira; and then, getting within the trade winds, had learned to enjoy our sea life except when tantalised by calms, which are quite as disagreeable, though not so dangerous as storms. We had watched the gambolling of porpoises, the flights of flying fish, and admired the beautiful forms and hues of the dolphins, which often congregated in large shoals about the vessel's bows, and which we found were not at all like the dolphins of which we had seen pictures in books: we had watched with no very amiable feelings the huge sharks which occasionally followed us, waiting, the sailors said, for some one to die, or for the chance of picking up any one who might fall overboard; but obstinately refusing to be caught with the bait of a huge piece of salt pork which was hung by a line and hook in the wake of the vessel; we had seen whales "spouting" in the distance, and the bright-hued, flower-shaped nautilus floating past us, and at night had stood on deck in the bright moonlight watching the phosphorescent waves breaking, as with flame, against our vessel's bows. I well remember how body and mind were braced and exhilarated by that long sea-voyage. It was all new to me, and with a profounder awe, and a more loving trust, I thought of Him, the wonders of whose power I now saw for the first time in the great waters.

It was, on the whole, a very happy voyage—the captain and first mate were kind, quiet, gentlemanly men, and the crew efficient and orderly sailors. We

had family worship every day in the cabin, and Divine service on deck every Sunday, weather permitting. By the exercise of Christian forbearance, unbroken harmony and much of really pleasant and profitable intercourse was maintained throughout the voyage; and now that the last day of our companionship had come we anticipated our separation with regret.

Those of us who composed the missionary party landed sooner than we expected to do. We were sailing smoothly down the north side of Jamaica, admiring the panorama of mountains piercing the clouds at an elevation of seven thousand feet, the dark patches of woodland, and the bright green cane fields, with the white buildings glowing in the sunlight, when we observed a sailing boat making towards us. There were in it three negroes and a white man, who was standing up in the middle of the boat, and making signals that he wished to speak to us. In a few minutes the boat was within hail, and we were informed by its white occupant that he had come off to take the missionaries ashore at the harbour opposite, as the missionary at the port for which we were bound had been compelled by illness to leave home, and there would consequently be no one there to receive us. The ship was "hove to," and without delay we and our wives, in the undress in which we had been lounging about on ship-board since we had entered the tropics, were lowered into the boat and were "standing in shore," the ship which had for weeks been our happy home pursuing her way to the more distant port, taking on our baggage "to be left till called for." We were soon landed at the wharf in the harbour of F— in the parish of T—. The sun poured down on us his burning rays, the sands into which our feet sunk at every step were glowing hot, and from every object about us came gleaming heat and blinding glare. This was the land of which we often thought by day and dreamed by night, and not without some emotion did we realize the fact that we were at length treading on the "strange land." We were conducted to the centre of the town, and received a hearty welcome at the Mission House, where several members of the "mission family" had assembled to greet us, some