

V.—THE MONTHLY CONCERT OF MISSIONS.

MEXICO,* CENTRAL AMERICA, WEST INDIES, CITY EVANGELIZATION.†

The West Indian Islands and the Mosquito Coast.

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It is certainly most appropriate in this year of the Columbian Exposition to turn our attention to that portion of this New World which was first discovered by Christopher Columbus, and note what has been accomplished there for the upbuilding of Christ's kingdom in those fair lands during these four centuries. Strictly speaking, it is only some of the West Indian islands that are known to us four full centuries, and the very name of the archipelago testifies to the first erroneous ideas of the original discoverers.

This string of islands stretches in an S-shaped line from the peninsula of Florida to the northeastern coast of Venezuela, the somewhat deformed S lying on its side, and measuring, roughly speaking, 1500 to 2000 miles in length. The islands on the north and east, with the peninsula of Yucatan, Central and South America on the west and south, enclose the Caribbean Sea, which takes its name from the aboriginal inhabitants of these islands. The whole archipelago lies between the 10th and 25th parallels of north latitude, and all, except a few of the Bahama Islands, south of the Tropic of Cancer. Situated thus in the most favorable portion of the tropical zone, the islands naturally present a most luxuriant vegetation, and are said to produce a greater variety and more magnificent palms than any other part of the globe. Oranges, bananas, coconuts, yams grow in great abundance, while the sugar-cane and coffee plantations have been the chief source of their commercial importance. These islands were veritable little paradises in the western sea, but for more

than three centuries after their discovery of them could be sung, better than of almost any other part of this sinful earth,

"Where every prospect pleases,
And only man is vile."

And the saddest part was, that the native men were not so much the heathen, bowing down to wood and stone, as the Christian (God save the mark!) Europeans.

Already in the early years of the Spanish domination the aborigines were almost totally exterminated. The absolutely fiendish cruelty practised upon them by their Spanish conquerors, and often in the name of religion, resulted in their annihilation. It is said that 2,000,000 of these mild Indians were found on the island of Hayti, and after thirty years not one was left. No trace of the Caribs is now to be found anywhere in the islands.

These islands became the great bone of contention between conflicting European nations and changed ownership very frequently; but, no matter what flag waved over their unfortunate shores, the planters, having exterminated the native-born laborers, were always clamoring for men to work their huge plantations. Hence in these wretched islands African slavery was first introduced into the New World, and for nearly three centuries the West Coast of Africa was depopulated to supply the awful West Indian demand. For many years the poor blacks were deported thither at the rate of 100,000 a year. Catholic Spaniards, Lutheran Danes, Reformed Dutchmen, Episcopalian Englishmen imported, bought, sold, branded, whipped, mutilated, used for fiendish and lustful purposes these miserable sons and daughters of Africa's sunny plains. Whatever may have been the character of slavery elsewhere, here its barbarity beggars description, and the distinct race of mulat-

* Pp. 153 (Feb.), 180, 201 (this issue).

† Pp. 113 (Feb.), 161, 218 (this issue).