

could go to their towns and speak to the people same as we spoke to him they might agree to give up the practice. Ah, how true the Holy Scripture saith, that the dark places of the earth are full of cruelty. How true the words of our Lord, "The devil is a murderer from the beginning."

Estimate of the progress that has been made.—Having thus stated how matters have proceeded, and now stand, at Calabar, and shown both the bright and dark sides of the picture, I must add a few reflections. Though as yet no converts have been made, in the sense of persons being baptised and members added to the Church, I must state my conviction that a conversion has begun from darkness to light, from sin to holiness, from Satan to God, and is advancing in many minds. But it exists in various degrees of progress in different persons. The word and work of God is heard and seen, and felt there, and the effect is apparent in many different ways. It is impossible to convey precisely in words the impressions made on my own mind, and not made only, by various means, indications, and small but frequently-recurring circumstances, manifesting the influence of the word of God on the conscience and conduct of men, but I hope to have some credit attached to what I say, when I state my convictions as I have done.—*U. P. Mss. Record.*

JAMAICA.

OBEAH SUPERSTITIONS AND PRACTICES.

The following communication from Rev. John Sampson, Port-Maria, shows the many difficulties with which the Gospel has to contend in subverting the negro mind to its sway:—

I go on with a few more notices of the Obeah and Mval superstitions. "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." Exod. xxii. 18. Josephus in his paraphrase on this passage, interprets it of a dealer in poisons, and thus appears to have been the practice here alluded to, from the word used in the Septuagint, though not the exact import of the original term, which is that of a sorceress merely. Obeah people all make use both of mineral and vegetable poisons, some of which do the work of death at once, and others by slow degrees. Obeahing in Jamaica was a capital offence, especially when poison was ascertained to be used. Mohammedans give no quarter to such characters, as I was told by one of our members, a Mandingo; but shoot them as soon as they know them to be practisers of the art. It was not necessary to use poisons at all times, as the dread of the Obeah-man was itself sufficient to entail misery and death on his victim. They were well aware of the power they exerted by the force of imaginary terrors.

Catching the Shadow.—I alluded in my first letter to a case in which the shadow was supposed to have been decoyed from its place. This would probably be the doing of an Obeah-man. A common name they went by was shadow-catchers. They pretended to hold the spirit of the person who was placed at their mercy, caught and bound by them, as a magic spell. And to make it obvious to all that they had such a power, they carried about little wooden images by which they pretended to evoke, with a small piece of looking-glass stuck in the breast, which all must beware of coming too near. Besides this, they used little coffins with the surface smooth and shining, and pretended that they had the spirit of the individual who was Obeahed confined in the coffin or shadow-box as it was called, and completely under their power. Over a superstitious mind, the mere belief that the Obeah-man held the spirit thus bound as within a magic circle, was sufficient, by the terror with which it operated on the imagination, to cause the most dismal and even fatal results. The idea haunted the poor victim night and day; he would refuse food, medicines would be of no avail, he would, in a multitude of cases, pine away till he lost his senses or died. The wooden image might suggest some demoniac power by which the Obeah-man wrought. I believe it was simply a representative of the deceased father or grandfather of the Obeah-man, or in general of his family, dead.

The Power of the Dead.—The people are strong believers in the power of the dead. In a rebellion which had broken out in a neighboring parish in 1823 or 1824, and was supposed to be extending to this parish, several were apprehended as ringleaders, and eight were executed. The most of them were supposed to be quite innocent; it was alleged that the principal witness told lies against them, to gratify the white people, who wished to make an example of some to frighten the others. The following season there was an uncommon drought, by which the Port Maria rivers were almost dried up. This was interpreted as retribution taken by these people for being unjustly put to death. During the cholera, the superstitions of the people about the dead, came to light in several instances. Thus, an African man had a quarrel with another in our neighbourhood. He was one of those engaged in the perilous work of digging graves. In the course of the quarrel he threatened that if he died of the cholera, he would give the other man no rest till he brought him away too. The poor man died, and was soon followed by the other, who had a strong impression made on his mind that it would be as the other had said. He came up from the town, was seized in the night and buried before morning. In another case, a father was overheard saying to his daughter, who died, and it was after the breath was gone, "Daughter, if you get the power, send for me in a week's time, and I will come." He followed her to the grave the week after. His wife died also; she had taken the daughter's clothes to the river to wash, and was seized immediately on reaching home. It was a common occurrence some years ago, and may be still, for survivors to speak in this way to the corpse of their dead. A faithful servant standing to take farewell of a

mistress to whom she was attached, would say, "My mistress, send for me whenever you want me, I will come." A woman near us died rather suddenly before the cholera. Her husband died some years before; she was sick and often complaining. She had an impression that her husband wanted her. He was always, as she thought, coming to her, and was inclined to resist to attribute her ailments to him. Their idea is, that when the dead want them, they send sickness after sickness upon them. When she died, the people said it was the doing of her husband. The remark was made at the funeral, that nobody knows what these Coromantee people can do. The frame of her death was all put upon her husband. The grandfather was sick some time after. It was worn; but it was put in the child's head that it was the grandfather or grandmother that was come for her too. She saw the old man coming to her every night. He was like her. She saw him sitting on the roadside ready to take her. She was brought up to the house, got some medicine, and recovered.

Means of Propitiating the Dead.—Methods are used to prevent the dead from troubling them. They burn horn and brimstone all round the house. Some places are supposed to be favourite resorts of spirits (or duppies). If they wish a place cleared of these intruders, they make burnings of bush, brimstone, &c. Thus they call Racing-Duppy. They make use of garlic to defend themselves from their assaults. One of the school children died of cholera. Another was afterwards taken ill. It was interpreted to be the doing of his schoolmate, now gone into the world of shadows, who wished to get him to come after him. He was observed to have something tied up in a piece of ribbon about his neck, when he came to school. It was garlic, and had been the means of protecting him when he was sick, and he continued to wear it for a while after he recovered. The dead may be propitiated to spare them and not take them away. There was a ceremony observed before the lid of the coffin was put on, of passing the children over the corpse. The parents beat them hard to make them cry. This was to propitiate the dead on their behalf, that they might not take them away. If a grave sinks, the family will interpret it to mean that the dead wants one to be buried beside him, and that they must make a feast for the dead, else some one will fall sick and die, or the dead may think the living are neglecting them, and make one of the family take sick as a punishment. Such feasts used to be frequent formerly. Friends were invited to a supper, the best of the stock was killed for the occasion, part of what was used was carried to the grave as an offering to the dead, and a libation was made of porter, rum, or other beverage. If the family were large, the same ceremonies might be going on at several houses at the same time. The pretext for the supper might be simply that the dead wished to be remembered, yea, that the dead wished a merry-making. The gumbay and the fiddle would be in requisition; all night would be spent in feasting, music, and dancing. There are certain tunes which are played suitable for the dead to dance to, for the dead are supposed to take part in the dance as well as the feast. Some can see spirits. This is a gift which is peculiar to them. These will describe how the dead look, they will address them, complimenting them on their looking so well, and for their handsome movements in the dance. A plate is set, perhaps, at the table, with a mess of what is going, for the spirit to partake of, and a glass filled with strong rum, this glass is touched by the guest sitting by, who, in taking his glass, strikes it against the other as he lifts it to drink, in token of fellowship with the dead. This is when it is for a brother or some particular relation. They also carry out what is on the table to the graves of their dead.

The Negro's Imaginary World of Spirits.—The dead are supposed to know all things that are occurring to the living, and to have power either to hurt or help. In short, there is in the negro mind an imaginary world of spirits, or rather shades, which is as much a subject of his belief as the world of real life, which we know by the report of our senses, and our daily consciousness. "Nobody will make the negro believe," is the remark of one who has known them long, "that the dead are not always walking the earth. If a dog barks in the night, the ready reason assigned for it is that the dead people are walking all about, and it is as them the dog barks." Bruce has noticed, in the case of the Abyssinians, this strong propensity of the blacks to believe in spirits. "They are afraid," he remarks, "of travelling, but especially of fighting, in the dark. They imagine that the world is entirely given up to spirits, who are put out of honour by the motions of men or any other terrestrial creatures. In the night-time an Abyssinian dares not throw a little water out of a basin, lest it should fall upon some spirit, and provoke it to vengeance." According to the notions that prevail here, there are two sorts of spirits, good and bad—the good dead and bad dead. From the one, help is as confidently relied on, as they may apprehend evil from the other.

Help in which the Good Dead render.—In regard to the help they receive from the dead, it is to be understood of their own family dead, who, of course, are supposed to be those immediately interested in their welfare. In sickness, the members of the family that are dead are supposed to be as much about them as those who are nursing them. The sick in their reveries will be heard holding discourse with them. In child-bearing, it is by the help of a good deceased mother or grandmother that they are brought through. "Mother or grandmother," (one will be heard saying to the corpse at the last farewell), "you are leaving me with all these children; mind you must help me to take care of them." Were a young person to be thrown from a horse, and to have narrowly escaped being killed, it would appear nothing strange for him to be told, "Child, had it not been for your dead-mamma, that was taking care of you, you would have been killed." Or, if they acknowledge a Providence, as they