

MISSION FIELD.

THE SOUTH SEA ISLANDERS.

BY COMMANDER DAWSON, R.N.

The recent return of H.M.S. *Espergle* from the South Seas reminds us of the great encouragement and aid rendered to the missions in the Pacific Islands by some of her officers and crew during the four years' cruise. As the ship passed from island to island, these sailors associated themselves with the missionaries, both European and native, addressing meetings, helping in the Sunday-schools, advocating Temperance, visiting the day-schools, and identifying themselves thoroughly with all the Christian work going on ashore. In this way the man-of-war's men got to know what the lives of the missionaries and native catechists were like, the difficulties they have to encounter far away from Christian brethren elsewhere, and the methods they have to employ to train up their converts in civilized as well as in Christian usages. The sailors speak in rapturous terms of the wonderful change wrought upon the islanders, who, in the present generation, were depraved cannibals and guilty of great atrocities towards one another. The Fijians and the Tonga Islanders, who were thirty years ago about the most brutal in their barbarities, are described as being now a fine race of men, morally and physically. When they were converted to Christ, they had to be taught the ordinary decencies of life. But with the motive-power of love to God in Christ in their hearts, they set about willingly learning to build houses, plant gardens, and make roads, &c., whilst the schools found attentive scholars, who can now read and write better than most English people of the last generation. Young men in the Tonga Islands, whose parents were savages, are actually studying the differential and integral calculus in a Missionary College at Tonga. This statement of the sailors appears hardly credible, but they assert that it is even so; and speak in high terms of the Tonga Islanders, physically and morally. The one drawback to the picture the sailors draw of those South Sea Islands to which the missionaries have gained access, is the presence of degraded Europeans. Amongst these latter, the officers and men of the *Espergle* exercised a holy and beneficial influence. At some of the Fiji Islands they gave musical entertainments, to which they invited the Europeans to bring their drunken friends, as they intended to interlard the songs with Temperance addresses. The response was more ready than the sailors had expected and they had a decidedly rough and rowdy evening, but the sailors were strong and took a fair number of pledges of Total Abstinence, organized a local Temperance Association, and set it firmly agoing before their ship sailed. What a pity the crews of British ships do not more frequently emulate the example of the seamen of the *Es-*

pergle, and bring strong, robust, Christ-like characters to bear both on the degraded whites and on the recent converts from heathenism, whom they all come so commonly in contact with during their voyages. We should then have fewer complaints that whilst England sends out her single-handed Gospel missionaries to convert the heathen, she sends her thousands of British sailors to debase and to debauch them. It is well to know that this is not always so, but that there are some British seamen worthy of their Christian name and calling.

SANTA CRUZ.

The following, which we clip from the current number of a New Zealand Church paper, may be regarded as the latest missionary intelligence from that part of the Pacific where Bishop Patteson and his young followers lost their lives. We are sure our readers will be interested to learn what the Church is now doing in a region thus consecrated by "the blood of the martyrs":—

Santa Cruz (about 11° S. lat., 166° E. long.) is an island about twenty miles long, and twelve to fifteen broad. It lies about two hundred miles due east from San Christoval, and contains several good harbors. After the attack made on Bishop Patteson's boat's crew in 1864, the island was not visited by the Missionaries until 1880, when Bishop Selwyn landed, near the place where Commodore Goodenough was shot. There is a double range of hills running from east to west nearly the whole length of the island, from the summit of which is obtained a good view of the Reef Islands and Nukapu, the scene of Bishop Patteson's death. Last year, on arriving at Santa Cruz, I found all going on satisfactorily, and the attendance at school good. On departing I left word with the chief that we ought to have a new school-house, as the old one would hardly hold our increasing numbers. I was much pleased this year to find that this had been built, also that a new and larger dwelling-house had been put up for me. Although I was only able to remain at Santa Cruz for five weeks this time, I was able to visit almost round the island, and call at the different villages where I am known. At one place I heard a very interesting story, which was this:—From twenty-five to thirty years ago, a boat, containing one white man called Tommy, three black men, and a boy, was blown away from Tonga. After being about forty days on the sea, they arrived at Vera Cruz (about 1,200 miles) and landed. There they lived for many years, and were well cared for. The only one of these now remaining is the boy, now a man of about thirty-five years of age. He is married to a Santa Cruz woman, has his own land, and is in all respects, except outward appearance, a native of the island. I have had applications for teachers from no less than six villages, but as yet am unable to supply them. In the earlier

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days of the Mission, Santa Cruz men got such a very bad name for ferocity that boys from other islands seem afraid or unwilling to go to them; doubtless in a few years more this feeling will be overcome. Samuel Russell Gede, however, a native of San Christoval, has now been two years with me at Santa Cruz, and intends to live there. Natei, our chief man in Santa Cruz, shortly before I left, gave a feast in honor of their "spirits." It was held in a large house called "ma duka," or spirit house, in the centre of which are six carved upright posts let into the ground. They are about five feet in height. These are hung all over with native money and colored leaves. The ceremonies commenced by some twenty men dancing round and round the carved uprights, at the same time clapping their hands and shouting, keeping the most perfect time. This went on from two to three hours, according to the staying powers of the dancers. When they could dance no longer, they all sat down in a circle, and large bowls of food were brought in and presented to the carved posts in the centre. After the bowls had stood about half a minute before these, one of the dancers said, "Why don't they eat it?" Another said, "They must be sick, so we will eat it ourselves." They then turned to, and in a few moments ate it all up. A repetition of this went on for three whole days; as one set of dancers tired, another came on to replace them. As far as I can make out, they have no fear of these spirits; and the whole ceremony seemed to me to be gone through chiefly with a view to the dancing and feasting. I was very fortunate in being able to see this, as it only takes place once in four or five years. There are now fourteen Santa Cruz boys at Norfolk Island, all of whom are most promising and doing well. Five of them are now baptized.

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