

but we value the contribution as it is a first step in the right direction, and will be continued yearly. In the mean time we must still depend on friends at home for help in the shape of clothing and other useful articles.

POPULATION—THE TIDE TURNING.

You will be glad to learn that our statistics for the past year exhibit a more favorable state of things than at any former time. This is the first time since the commencement of the mission that I can report a positive increase of population. The whole number of births on the island has been 60, and the whole number of deaths 50; leaving a balance of 10 on the right side. This small increase is a hopeful symptom, and we cherish a hope that under the benign and healthy influence of Christianity it will continue. The decrease of population on these islands is not surprising to those who know the previous habits of the natives, and the evil influences to which their contact with white men have exposed them. If the gospel had preceded rather than followed commerce on these islands the results might have been different. Christianity instead of being the harbinger of disease and death among these barbarous tribes, has just come in time to save them from extermination. We know from Scripture and observation that godliness has the promise of this life as well as of that which is to come. On many of the Pacific Isles where Christianity has been fairly established the population which was formerly on the decline, is now on the increase. It has ended war, infanticide, the strangulation of widows, gross immorality in various forms on this island, and offered a salutary check to many evils and destructive influences; and were it not for the gospel, it is highly probable that there would be very few natives living on this island to-day. Many of the people appear to be sensible of this; and they value the Christian religion as a great earthly boon, as well as on account of the spiritual blessings which it confers.

CIVILIZATION.

The civilization of the islanders has not kept pace with their Christian progress. I have sometimes been disappointed at this, but reflection convinces me that my expectations have been unreasonably high. Time is an element in every great, permanent, and healthy change among any people. The whole history of nations shows that civilization is a very progressive work. To rescue any people from the lowest depths of human degradation, and raise them to the same elevation as ourselves is not the work of a few years, but of many generations. No man who has not lived

for years among a people like this is competent to form a correct estimate of their progress. To judge fairly on this subject, we must go down to the point whence their advancement commences, and this is far beneath what any person born and brought up in a Christian country can possibly conceive. It is very difficult to fathom the intellectual, social, and moral degradation of these islanders in their heathen state; and quite impossible fully to describe it. If we contrast the present state of the Aneitumese with their condition twenty-years ago, there is no ground for discouragement: the wonder is not that their progress has been so small, but that it has been so great. Christianity found them naked, painted and repulsive savages, they are now more or less clothed, and not a few of them sit at the feet of Jesus in their right minds: Christianity found them without a written language, living in all the darkness of heathenism, and little elevated above the brute creation; they now possess a Christian literature, and the majority of the people are able to read the wonderful works of God in their own tongue; Christianity found them killing and devouring each other, and practising the most revolting crimes; they now live in comparative security, and human life and property are perhaps as safe here as in any part of the world: Christianity found them indolent, wretched, and destitute of almost every comfort of life; the people are now improving in their habits, raise abundance of food, and some of them have comfortable houses. But while we thank God for the change which we have seen, it must be acknowledged that a great work still remains to be done, and we long to see these islanders rise far above their present position. The chief hinderances to their rapid progress in civilization are that weakness and instability of character so common to barbarous tribes, and the absence of external favourable influences, for the majority of our countrymen who visit these islands are a disgrace to civilization, and their general influence is employed to degrade, not to elevate the natives. Our primary work as Christian Missionaries is the evangelization of the natives; but we must aim at their civilization also, for an enlightened and vigorous Christianity cannot exist without it.

(To be continued.)

Voyage and Settlement of Mr. Gordon on Espiritu Santo.

BY REV. J. G. FATON.

June 7th.—Weighed anchor and sailed for Santo with a fair wind; came in sight of it next evening, and on the 9th, soon