

and sinful act. And to make a hero and a martyr of a suicide, is not simply an act of egregious folly, it is a crime. Even the young man Clark, whose death has called forth these remarks, maunders some sentimental stuff about his "darling" whom he so much regretted to leave behind, and with whom he had spent two happy weeks. The pain and sorrow that would fall upon her were, he said, the only things that made him regret taking his life. But why then did he take it? If she brought him happiness, why did he not live and continue that happiness?

The truth is, there is, and can be, no defence of so cowardly and so criminal an act as self-murder.

PRESBYTERIANISM IN BRITISH GUIANA.

BY REV. JAMES MILLAR.

British Guiana is on the Atlantic coast of South America, a few degrees north of the equator. Under the name Demerara—the name of its chief county—it used to be more familiar in Canada, to readers of foreign mission reports than it now is; the interest of the Canadian Church in that field ceased after the death of Rev. J. Gibson. But British Guiana is not a new land, and is far from being uncivilized. Its exhibits at the world's Fair have awakened a new commercial interest in it, and Presbyterians are asking after its spiritual condition.

It was an old Dutch settlement, captured by the British at the close of last century, and finally ceded to Great Britain in 1815. Its principal industries have been the cultivation of coffee, cotton and sugar. The labour for these industries was, prior to Emancipation (which event West Indians always write with a capital), slave labour. Since 1838 labourers have had to be imported to meet the growing requirements of the colony, because the descendants of the liberated slaves have not taken to sugar cane cultivation. At the present time the population may be taken roughly at 300,000, of whom 38 per cent are coolies, imported from East India; about 52 per cent are what the world generally would call negroes, but which the West Indian has to differentiate into Blacks, Africans, and Coloured people; the remaining 10 per cent being made up of Portuguese, Chinese, Europeans other than Portuguese, and native Indians.

The area of the colony is estimated at about 700,000 square miles; but of this only a fringe along the coast, making about 100,000 acres, is under cultivation.

It is within this narrow strip of land that nine-tenths of the population dwell. Gold has been found in considerable quantities back from this strip, and several thousands of the black labourers find employment in the various diggings.

Confining ourselves to the religious aspect of the subject, it thus appears that there are distinctly a home and a foreign mission territory in the colony. The black people speak English, and are as professedly Christian as any white community in the North. The Chinese are also Christian; the Portuguese are Roman Catholics; and the other white people are Christians of various denominations. The foreign mission or heathen element is made up of the coolies from Calcutta and other parts of the Indian Empire, about 110,000 in number, and employed on almost every sugar estate in the colony; and the aborigines, estimated at 10,000, and only to be found in the forests and along the banks of the rivers and creeks at a distance from the cultivated territory.

The Churches that are at work in the colony are, in order of numbers, Church of England, Church of Scotland, Methodist, Congregational, and Roman Catholic. Presbyterianism is the lineal descendant of the old Dutch Reformed Church which was set up by the settlers from Holland. Since the cession of the colony to Great Britain the Church of Scotland has been asked to supply the ministers for this section of the religious community, and the

State, that is, the colony, has provided the stipends. In 1825 the colony was divided into 18 parishes, of which nine—each alternate one—were allocated to the Church of Scotland, and the alternate nine to the Church of England. And this system of concurrent endowment still obtains.

There are at present eleven ordained Presbyterian ministers in the colony, one of whom is supported by the proprietors of the estates in which he labours. Except in the capital, Georgetown, it may be said that the Church is a black people's Church. The ordinary country congregation may not count up a dozen "white" members in a population of as many thousands. The ministers are far removed from each other, seeing that the people are spread along the one public road that runs parallel with the ocean, in villages or groups of dwellings, in almost unbroken continuity. And a faithful oversight of his long-drawn-out parish involves an immense amount of travelling on the part of the minister, which has to be done in a temperature never less than 80 degrees in the shade, and anything up to 130 in the sun. Twenty miles in a carriage, and four services, besides marriages, funeral and "extras" at each preaching station, may be looked upon as an average Sunday's work.

Education is national-ecclesiastical; the Churches conduct the schools and the State supplies the largest portion of the money. The ministers are the managers of the schools and are responsible to Government for all things connected with them. Outside the city the school is also a place of worship, and the teacher is usually a catechist, or assistant to the minister under whom he is working. Almost every village has its school-church, with its regular Sunday services and school, with week-night meetings, as if the minister could devote all his time to it and to the worshippers who meet there. Where the native school teacher does not care to act as local assistant, or where the minister does not care to have him, as such, the only other assistants to be obtained are the coloured office-bearers, the regularly ordained elders and duly appointed deacons. But the great objection to them is that they are in almost every case men whose education is of the most meagre sort. Christian black men are all preachers, or would be if they were permitted; and many of them preach much better than they can read the Scriptures. But there is a wide-spread objection amongst the black people to preachers of their own colour. The minister has, therefore, to spread himself out far, even if he has to spread himself out thin, every Sunday, and to personally visit and preach at as many of these stations as possible every week. He may have from three to eight schools in different parts of his parish, and a congregation may be meeting at every one of them twice every Sunday, and each one may regard itself as equal in importance to any other. Many a minister has sighed over the imperfect manner in which he has to do some portions of his Sunday work, and wished that one section of his flock could arrange to respect Thursday, or some day in the middle of the week, as their Sabbath. These school-churches are poor places to worship in, according to northern ideas of church worship. They are usually furnished in the most primitive fashion with bare benches and simple, rude desks; while the lighting in the evenings seems only sufficient to make the darkness visible. The heat is often trying to Europeans, not to speak of the smells from the toilet of his congregation. Insects abound in the air and on the building. But with all the discomforts, many pleasant hours of sweet, spiritual blessing are spent in these nurseries of the Church. The people are a religious people, and they attend ordinances fairly well. They are also a musical people, and many of their choirs would bear favourable comparison with some in the North, where the members have had the benefit of a musical education (which these southerners have not had).

It has to be admitted that while the form of church government is Presbyterian its real character is often a good deal removed from it. Where elders are intelligent and capable, all the details of presbytery can be worked fairly well. But where the reverse is the case the ministers have to exercise all the offices of a bishop in his own parish, but to do so while seeming to allow the session their full prerogatives. Of course this calls for great wisdom on his part; and if ever there was a sphere in which that virtue was required it is with a flock of coloured Christians.

The ordinary church services vary nothing from those of Presbyterians elsewhere. There is none of that emotionalism that is associated with the negroes of the Southern States of America. There are no plantation melodies, such as the Jubilee Singers have made familiar in the North. Everything is plain, simple, and the hymns and music are decidedly of a present-day character; and an air of seriousness, a not sincerity, pervades all their meetings. There is, as might be expected, a tendency to magnify the efficacy of the sacraments and to regard them as saving and indispensable ordinances; but perhaps the Roman and Anglican Churches are as much to blame for this, by their direct teaching, as are the natural superstition and ignorance of the people.

The people are poor, and have been but little in touch with the big world outside them, and know almost nothing of that world. Scotland they have heard of through their pastors. Africa they know of in a vague way. India they also hear of through the coolies, who have come from it. They have not been made to feel that the burden of evangelizing the heathen element around them is to be laid upon them; and even if they did feel it, it would be altogether too heavy for them to bear. These cast Indians have the same habits, modes of living, religious practices and social customs that they had in their own land. To reach them, and to influence them to accept Christ, is a work that calls for more power than the black people possess. In 1891 the Coolie Mission of the Canadian Church in Trinidad, where the coolie population is not three-fourths what it is in British Guiana, cost over \$44,000, and of that amount nearly \$37,000 came from Canada, or from the Government of Trinidad. The Coolie missions in British Guiana are in the main supported by the offerings of the blacks out of their poverty. But with so many "first charges" upon them for the maintenance of buildings, in a climate that is excessively severe upon buildings, for the maintenance of ordinances among their brethren in the bush, at the gold diggings, and for the ever-growing wants of the home fields in the numerous villages, even the little that they have done is worthy of much commendation. But the immigrant population grows faster than the Christian community, and it must be a burning question before very long with the Churches "at home" how they will act so as to keep the ground they have, if nothing more. The Church of Scotland has its own troubles to deal with to-day, but this one cannot long be laid aside. And then will arise those other complications which have been seen elsewhere, and in other days when different races that would not assimilate, but had so much upon which they disagreed, found one common meeting point in the sanctuary, and one common object in praising the Saviour who came to save the world and the God who made of one blood all nations of men. In the meantime it is gratifying to know that the Presbyterian Church there is not unfaithful to its commission though the difficulties of almost every kind are great. The minimum of effort thus far put forth in this foreign field has been productive of more good than one had a right to expect.

Bossuet: You can best remind others of the good deeds you have done by repeating them as often as opportunity affords.

Christian Endeavor.

TESTIMONY MEETING. HOW CHRIST HAS HELPED ME.

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Sept. 24.—I Peter 3: 15-16; Pa. 94: 17-19.

This is to be a testimony meeting. It is not customary to hold such meetings in the Presbyterian Church, but we might be better Presbyterians, more devoted Christians and more efficient workers if we held more of them (Mal. 3: 16; I. Cor. 14: 23-26). Let us assume then that the meeting takes the form indicated by the Topic, and let us suppose that all present are willing to speak about their hope. What may we expect the testimony to be?

I. Probably some would have to confess that they have no hopes. Is it not sad to think that there are so many who live in a Christian land, who have the Bible in their hands, who have heard the message of salvation times without number, who have heard of God's everlasting love, who have read the story of Christ's atoning death, and who have perhaps experienced something of the Spirit's melting influence—is it not sad to think that many have enjoyed all these privileges and are still without God and without hope? (Eph. 2: 12). Among the saddest words in our language are these, "No hope." How the physician dislikes to utter them to anxious friends as he leaves the sick chamber. Every man instinctively suppresses them when he can. And yet, in this testimony meeting, there may be some who, if they unbosomed themselves, would have to confess that they have no hope. Can we not pray for such? Can we not once again point them to Christ, the sinner's only hope?

II. There may be others present who cherish a hope, but they are not certain whether it is well founded or not. If they are asked on what it is based they would probably reply that they have always been kind, honest, and truthful; that they have always striven to do what they believed to be right; that they have regularly attended Gospel ordinances, and that they have contributed cheerfully towards their support. Now, if men were saved by their merits, or their good works, it would be safe to trust in such a hope, but as it is, it is only a delusion. It is not by works of righteousness that we are saved (Titus 3: 5).

"No hope can on the law be built of justifying grace; The law, which shows the sinner's guilt, condemns him to his face."

He who indulges a hope based upon his merits or his own good works, is in as dangerous a position as was Joab when he sought to save himself by laying hold upon the horns of the altar (I. Kings 2: 28).

III. Some can testify that they have a good hope through grace (II. Thes. 2: 16). They can say:

"My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness; I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name."

Not only do they cherish this hope but they are able to give a reason for it. That reason they have learned, not from works or apologetics, but from personal experience. If the active members will adopt the suggestion given in the Topic and tell how Christ has helped them, the meeting may be made an exceedingly profitable one.

Let us look at a few personal testimonies, as recorded in the Word of God, and perhaps they will help us to understand the nature of the testimony that may be borne by us. Here are some from David: Ps. 18: 16; 34: 6; 40: 1-4; 116: 6. Here are some from Paul: Rom. 8: 16; II. Cor. 1: 22; II. Tim. 1: 12. Here is one from Peter: I. Pet. 1: 3-5. Here is another from John: I. John 2: 3.

In giving a reason for the hope that is in us we should do so with meekness and fear (Rom. 15: 10; Gal. 2: 20).