

Moral and Religious Miscellany.

From the Free Church Record.

SOUTHERN AFRICA.

Process of Forming Christian Villages.—Sabbath Services.—The missionary, we shall suppose, arrives in a certain district. He examines its capabilities for a missionary settlement: has it good water? is its soil fertile? is its air salubrious? what is the general populousness of the district? and having satisfied himself on these points, he proceeds to lay the foundation of what is hereafter to be a Christian community. He puts the question to the natives whether they are willing to have a missionary. They consent. He next selects an unoccupied spot, say half a mile's distance at least from any village or habitation, and there he builds his house. While building, he commences to visit from village to village. In visiting the different villages, he assembles the population of each under a large tree. Most commonly, such a tree is found in the centre of the village, and is the place of public concourse. If there be no such tree, the missionary meets the villagers at the side of one of their largest huts, say that of the patriarch of the village. He first questions them on some of the simple truths of natural and revealed theology; then he gives them a short address, and thereafter he answers any questions that may be put to him. On leaving for the next village, the missionary announces that such a day is the Sabbath, and invites them to come and hear him preach.—Our missionaries, we may state, have practised this mode of itinerating in the surrounding districts three days a week, from the time they first entered the country to the present day, besides their yearly preaching tours, of from two to four weeks duration, in those parts of the country where there are no stations. The same plan is pursued by their native assistants or catechists,—some of whom itinerate four days in the week.

The Sabbath morning finds them in considerable numbers around the missionary; they listen respectfully, and when his address is ended, they disperse to their respective villages. Weeks, months, and, it may be, years, pass away without any results. There are no signs of the heart or conscience being touched, or of a wish to forsake the savage rites of their countrymen, and the society of those by whom these rites are practised. But in process of time the missionary's words take effect. One or two of the natives apply for more special instruction in the things that belong to their peace, and for this end they come and live with him. They build their cottage beside the missionary's, and in doing so receive their first lessons in the useful arts. Another comes and builds his cottage in like manner. Thus the village grows, and in process of time a little town rises, where formerly the solitary dwelling of the missionary stood. The community is a Christian one, for no one is admitted into it unless he casts off his old religion, and conforms to Christianity. The laws by which the village is ruled are those of the Bible. Its king as well as priest is the missionary; for it is a rule in Caffraria, that the person who builds a village is responsible for all that is done in it. The missionary is thus the patriarch of the village, the ruler of the station, in fact, and responsible only to the chief of the country. That chief has given every facility for the spread of the gospel. He is often an attentive listener in the chapels of the missionaries, and an interested visitor in their schools. Lovedale, which

in 1826 consisted of but two families, has now a population of more than three hundred persons.

The accounts we have received of the order prevailing in that community are admirable, and such as put to shame many a Christian village in our own country. We have been told that in all its households family worship is observed, and that where it happens that the husband is absent, or no one is present to conduct the service, a neighbor comes and leads worship in the family. It is sweet even in a Christian land, to hear the voice of melody in the dwellings of the righteous; how much more so in Caffraria, where so lately there brooded the death-silence of heathenism, broken only by the wild cry of savage battle! There is, moreover, in these villages a service of a more public kind, conducted in the church every morning and evening, at which the people generally attend. It is a kind of station or village family worship. At the morning meeting, the missionary, or, in his absence, the native assistant, addresses them on some four or five verses of Scripture. At the evening meeting, or service, they are asked by the missionary to repeat these verses; they are examined on them, and on the address delivered in the morning, and are invited to state whatever may have occurred to them in their meditations on them throughout the day, while employed at their usual occupations. In an hour or half-hour after the morning service, the missionary rings his school bell, when the whole population assembles. After service, which is conducted as at home, some time is devoted to instruction, the basis of which is the Assembly's Shorter Catechism, which has been translated into the Kafir language.

In the morning diet, on Sabbath days, the natives are examined, old and young, on the Ten Commandments, and on a Catechism published by one of the missionaries. During the day there are two diets, at one of which a lecture, and at the other a sermon is delivered. At these services the natives from the surrounding villages attend, jointly with those of the station. In the evening, the missionary again rings his bell, for the last time on the day of rest. It being now late, only the station people attend, who are again examined on what they have heard throughout the day, and are again invited to state what has occurred to them in connection therewith.

From the Church Missionary Record.

PACIFIC OCEAN.

NEW ZEALAND MISSION.

These islands have witnessed a wondrous transformation. Twenty years ago heathenism of a peculiarly dark and repulsive character overspread a great portion of the land. A few from amongst the natives had felt the subduing power of the gospel, and little congregations had been formed in the Bay-of-Island's district; but the main body of the nation remained unchanged. About the year 1839, a spirit of inquiry began to extend itself with unexampled rapidity throughout the island. Hard hearts became softened, and hoary-headed chiefs were willing to be taught; and New Zealand has now become a professedly Christian land. So far, a great conquest has been gained. It has been shown that the gospel of Christ has lost nothing of its power; and that that divine truth which was mighty through God to overthrow the sanguinary rites of the Druids, has been equally efficacious, some 1800 years after, to prevail over the sanguinary superstitions of the Maories.

We must not conclude, however, that the god of this world will withdraw himself from the field where