

NEW SOUTH WALES.

"The following account of the present state of religion in this colony is from a work recently published by Mr. Justice Burton.

The number of Protestants at any one time attending Divine Service, at the commencement of 1839, cannot, it is feared, be estimated at more than 11,000. Of these, the number attending the ministrations of the Church of England was about 7000, the number attending the ministration of the Clergy of the Presbyterian Church, about 2000, the number attached to the Wesleyan connection 1450, those attending the Independent Congregation 300, the Baptist 300, and the Quakers about fifty.

This estimate is formed with respect to the number attending divine worship in 1839; at that time the general population of the island had increased from 77,096 (the number in 1836) to about 102,000, the number of Protestants at the former period being 54,621; what proportion of the additional population was of the same denomination there are at present no means of ascertaining.

The number of Roman Catholics attending divine worship in 1836, was not estimated at more than 2,450; the Roman Catholic portion of the community being at the same time 21,898. The number of persons of that profession, and of their congregations in 1839, is unknown.

There were also ten counties, for which there was no minister of religion of any denomination; and these counties contained at that time 6667 Protestants, and 2867 Roman Catholics, total 9534; three of these have since obtained the benefit of a Presbyterian clergyman, but none of them have yet either one of the Church of England, or of the Church of Rome.

Thus it will appear, that in the year 1836, when the whole population amounted only to 77,096, so large a proportion as 22,177 were in situations in which it was impossible for them to attend the ordinary ministrations of religion, exclusive of that additional number, who, being at large, were yet unable to attend them from their distance.

The Church room in the country districts in 1836 could only accommodate 3000 persons, the number of Protestants in those districts being 40,000."

This statement gives a deplorable view of the religious destitution of the Colony, but the stimulus of necessity has called into activity a spirit which will do much to remedy the evil. In 1839, Mr. Burton says "there were thirty-two places at which private subscriptions had been entered into in the colony for the erection of churches, to be consecrated according to the rites of the Church of England, amounting to upwards of £11,000; and ten other places where churches were in progress of erection, and undertaken at an estimated cost of £20,000."

Mr. Justice Burton visited this island in the year 1834, and found 130 prisoners in confinement on the charge of attempting to disarm or even murder their guard of 120 privates, and then to effect their own escape. The plot had well nigh succeeded.

"For their share in this offence, as principals and accessories before the fact, fifty-five prisoners were selected for trial by the crown officers, as being considered ringleaders, and against whom also, evidence confirmatory of that of some of the accomplices, who were admitted as witnesses, could be obtained.

"In the course of these trials, which occupied ten days eighty-seven different witnesses were examined on the part of the prosecution and for the prisoners; many of the principal witnesses five or six times over, during which they underwent a course and mode of cross examination by the prisoners, such as no advocate in the world could conduct; and revealed to the court a picture of depravity, which it may be asserted, no human judge ever had revealed to him before. This will be fully understood, when it is explained that some of the principal witnesses against the conspirators, were prisoners who had been concerned in the affair as deeply as themselves; that almost all of them were their fellow-prisoners; that they had passed days and nights together in confinement, so many as 120 in a single ward; that they had been intimately associated in the commission of other crimes of deeper stain; that their occupation, and they had none of a holier kind, during the hours

of respite from labour and those which should be given to repose, was the relation of crime in which they had been engaged, or to which they were privy, no conspirator, could desire a better knowledge of the character of his companions than was thus obtained; they proved indeed by their searching questions on cross-examination, and abundantly proved to the mind of the hearer, by the faint and downcast denial of the witness, that they were intimately acquainted with each other's thoughts, and words, and each particular of these was appalling. But beyond all this, the unhappy prisoners themselves, when brought up, as they were in the order of their conviction, (and of the number tried, thirty were capitally convicted and received sentence of death), completed the abominable revelation by communicating to the judge, in earnest, deep, but calm expostulation, the crimes committed there, upon which, to be now particular, would not be meet; and he can therefore no otherwise describe the state of the island than figuratively, a mode of expression, however, which he does not believe to exceed the reality, when he says, that the picture presented of that place to his mind upon that occasion, was, of a cage full of unclean birds, full of crimes against God and man, murders and blasphemies, and all uncleanness.

"One of them, a man who displayed singular ability, and uncommon calmness and self-possession under circumstances so appalling to ordinary minds, represented it to be a 'hell upon earth,' and such assuredly it was, as far as the torment of that region is made up of the company of evil spirits glorying in evil deeds; 'Let a man's heart,' he said, 'be what it will when he comes here, his man's heart is taken from him, and there is given to him the heart of a beast.'

"He represented, and others followed him in the same course, that the crimes which had brought them there, were not of a kind which should condemn them to such a state:—that many of them had been decent men, possessed of means of support, and had wives and families in the world; and they were condemned to the same place of helplessness and despair; with those whose crimes were of the deepest kind; banished for life or fourteen years to a spot where the face of woman is never seen—doomed to daily toil, fed upon the most common diet, salt beef, and maize, and water, 'subject to the lash, if a man looked (to use his own expression) at an overseer or a constable, or neglected his work, or committed any offence at all.' One of them said, 'Sentence has been passed on us before, and we thought we should have been executed then. It was no mercy to send us to this place; I do not ask life, I do not want to be spared upon condition of remaining here; life is not worth having on such terms.' 'I pleaded guilty,' said another, 'to the charge against me, because I knew I was guilty, and as the only expiation I could make for my offence, and I have been upbraided by my fellow-prisoners for doing so, because they say that my pleading guilty has been the cause of their being convicted. I was transported from Ireland for an offence of which I was not guilty, that of cattle-stealing; and I was again unjustly convicted before your Honour of a like offence, and I was innocent of that, and I committed the present offence to get clear of this accursed place.'

"Another took ingenious advantage of some discrepancy in the evidence, to make a powerful appeal to the judge, founded upon his assertion of his own innocence, and that his person was mistaken. And finding that appeal ineffectual, and that he was sentenced to die, he broke out in the most moving and passionate exclamation and intreaties that he might

"It is right to state here, that the Judge on his return to Sydney referred again anxiously to his notes of this man's trial before him, and others also, who interested themselves in his favour, did the same, and examined the Depositions at the Police Office, when he was committed for trial, and there appeared no reason upon the evidence to doubt his guilt in that transaction, for which he was transported to Norfolk Island. It appears he calculated upon the bad character of the principal witness against him, who after he was convicted of cattle-stealing, was convicted of perjury, not in that case, but was committed in some other."

"This man's case was also again anxiously investigated by the Judge, and no doubt of his guilt entertained."

not die without the benefit of Confession. 'Oh, your Honour,' he said, 'as you hoped to be saved yourself, do not let me die without seeing my priest. I have been a very wicked man indeed, I have committed many other crimes for which I ought to die, but do not send me out of the world without seeing my priest.' Poor soul! he was a Roman Catholic; and after this, he was taken away to his cell, and in miserable agony, employed his time embracing and heating himself upon a rudely constructed figure of the cross, which a fellow-prisoner of the same persuasion made for him of wood, and incoherently and madly pronounced incessantly those brief exclamations for mercy, which such an one could teach him.

"Others spoke in moving terms of the hopelessness of their lot, and their despair, and another spoke also of what rendered the state they were in one of utter hopelessness; and the statement which he made was perfectly true; he said, 'What is done, your Honour, to make us better? once a week we are drawn up in the square opposite the Military Barrack, and the military are drawn up in front of us with loaded muskets and fixed bayonets, and a young officer then comes to the fence, and reads part of the prayers, and that takes, may be, about a quarter of an hour, and that is all the religion we see.'

PERSONAL EFFORT.

The following facts, stated by Rev. Dr. Matheson of England, in a communication in the New York Evangelist, furnish encouragement for faith and effort, in reference to cases apparently hopeless. A poor man, who was a slave to strong drink, came home one Sabbath evening, intoxicated, and found his youngest child dead. Notwithstanding his degraded condition, he was not wholly lost to the feelings of nature, and the event deeply affected him. After some time, his wife persuaded him to go and order a coffin. On his way, passing a place of worship, he was attracted by the music, and thought he would just go in and hear the singing, promising to himself that he would stay no longer, lest he should hear something that would make him feel worse. But, after the singing was over, he thought he would hear the text. This was, "Prepare to meet thy God!" He was alarmed at the very sound and left the house, as he was turning the corner of the street, a young man handed him a small paper, saying, as it was very short, it would not take him long to read it, and it might do him good. But what was his astonishment, to find at the head of the paper, the very same words which had just before created so much alarm: "Prepare to meet thy God!" This very much increased the impression upon his mind, and that night he began to pray. For some time, he was on the borders of despair, till at length, he called on one of the secretaries of the society which published the tract, and received such directions as, by the blessing of God, led him to the Saviour; and he is now an humble follower of Jesus, and a consistent member of the Church.

The other case was that of a fashionable lady who was on a visit to a watering place, in company with an elderly female. They took a walk on Sabbath morning, and were met by a young man who presented them with a little tract. The elderly lady was highly offended; but the younger one read the tract, and was so much affected that she went afterwards to the place where it was published, in London, and purchased a number more; and the truths which she read in them were blessed to the conversion of her soul. She has since been a zealous distributor of tracts, which have been instrumental in the conversion of a number of others; while her walk and conversation is such as eminently to adorn the doctrine of the gospel, in the circle in which she moves.

We mention these facts particularly at this time, because now every effort of this kind seems to be attended with unwonted power; and they encourage us to hope for the conversion of those whom we have been accustomed to regard as beyond the reach of hope, or out of the way of religious influences.—*Epis. Rec.*