

Miscellaneous.

NORFOLK ISLAND AND ITS PEOPLE.

A LETTER FROM THE REV. GEORGE NOBBS.

A letter lately received from Mr. Nobbs, their excellent pastor, gives a full description of this interesting community at the present time. The quaintness of the language is accounted for by his having so few opportunities of conversing in English excepting with his own people. The letter is dated Norfolk Island, January 29th, 1866.

"As respects the influence of removal from Pitcairn's Island, it is now nearly ten years since that memorable exodus, and it is only now that frequent visits to New Zealand have commenced, in consequence of the necessity of exporting our produce to Auckland. Very unremunerative prices only can be obtained for it, the fratricidal American war having abolished our former commerce with their whale-ships. What may be the effect of the extension of our relations with the great world is at present uncertain, but I humbly trust 'my little children' will remember the way in which they have been wondrously led, the blessings so munificently accorded them, and the infinite love which has so undeviatingly brought them thus far Zionward. I rejoice in these opening prospects, but it is nevertheless with fear and trembling. Still, I suppose they must pass the ordeal; and my constant prayer is, that Hagar's confidence and St. Paul's faith may be theirs. It is probable that the Bishop of Melanesia will establish a college at this place for the reception of pupils from the isles of darkness around us. He will obtain the assistance of several of our young people. Two have already laid down their lives, faithful unto death. One of these martyrs was a son of mine whom I had fondly thought I should have welcomed as my successor; but it is not so to be. The other, Fisher Young, was a most devoted servant of his Lord and Master. They literally died praying for their murderers. Another of my sons has just gone with Bishop Patteson, and I trust he may become to that worthy man what his lordship denominated the dear departed one—'a beloved brother.'

"Your request to know something of Norfolk Island may be complied with, in a few words. The former reputation was such as to induce the Home Government to break up the penal establishment, which was a compound of horror and atrocity. The island is very fertile, and our removal hither is most beneficial to the community. Cattle are abundant, potatoes and Indian corn thrive well, and the produce of butter in the winter, and cheese in the summer, is more than sufficient for our use. Then we have horses; and boys and girls are good equestrians. On Saturdays, and other holiday occasions, they ride out to the farm allotments; no one at present residing there permanently, by reason that we have such commodious dwellings in the principal hamlet, called Kingston. Some casualties have occurred, though they are less frequent of late years. But do not suppose there is naught else but amusement: every one has to work, and frequently the labour is severe; nevertheless, willing hearts, ready hands, and contented minds make these necessary exertions very endurable, and even pleasant. Could a market be obtained for our vegetable and dairy produce, the difficulty of providing other domestic requirements for the comfort and well-being of our generally large families would be entirely obviated. Still, as it is, we have much to be grateful for. 'The lines have fallen to us in goodly places; yea we have a goodly heritage.'

"Horses, horned cattle (sheep the property of the Home Government), and swine, are the principal animals, and thrive well. An island, four miles off, swarms with rabbits—not eaten by our people generally—and the sea supplies us with a goodly amount of fish. The fruits are figs, guavas, peaches, and melons; grapes at present are not abundant, nor are oranges. There is not a venomous animal, reptile, or insect, save a very few mosquitoes near the sea-shore; but extensive colonies of rats and mice are kept from the dwelling-houses by that guardian genius, the cat. On the