

flourishes so well in the sands of Tinnovelly—why it flourishes best where the soil is loosest and sandiest,—and why in the hottest season of the year it pours forth from its head such a constant supply of cool, sweet moisture. What a remarkable illustration is this of the wisdom with which Divine Providence makes the peculiarities of every part of the world minister, in some way or another, to the support and advantage of mankind!

Most of the Christian converts in Tinnovelly being Shânars, and either owners or cultivators of the palmyra, at the commencement of the climbing season I was accustomed to assemble our people in church for a special service,—including prayers that the tree might yield its fruit, and that the climber's "foot might not slide;" and on such occasions I have sometimes reminded the people of an appropriate expression in our Tamil version of the psalms—*Nitiwân panai-pôl sorippai*, "the righteous shall flourish like the palmyra," (the Tamil rendering of Ps. xcii. 11, "the righteous shall flourish like the palm tree,")—the palmyra being adopted as the representative of palms in general: and I have then reminded my Shânar hearers, that "the righteous," for this reason amongst others, may be said to "flourish like the palmyra," because he, too, strikes his roots deep down beneath the surface—the root of faith shoots deep down into the love of God, and "the supply of the Spirit of Jesus;" and hence the righteous "flourishes like the palmyra" in a dry and thirsty land—flourishes most not in the richest soil, but in the poorest, in afflictions and persecutions, and is continually bringing forth fruit for the refreshment of mankind.

Thus in Tinnovelly as everywhere else in the world, there are "sermons" in trees and stones, "and good in everything."

Brief Report of the Recent Operations of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts.

The Society has now been engaged for one hundred and fifty-six years in endeavoring to plant the Church of Christ among our countrymen abroad and among the Heathen. From North America (1701) its operations have been gradually extended to the West Indies (1710), Australia (1795), India (1818), South Africa (1820), New Zealand (1839), Ceylon (1840), and Borneo (1849).

When the Society was first founded, there were probably not 20 clergymen of the Church of England in these lands. There were now congregations under the pastoral care of 2,965 clergymen, of whom 450, stationed generally in the most destitute places, are assisted by the Society. There have been established in the British Colonies 17 Colleges, in which clergymen are educated: 14 of these the Society lends aid.

The British possessions abroad extend over a surface of nearly 9,000,000 square miles, and are the seat of 52 bishoprics. In 1856 the Society's income was £104,470. The demand on its resources increase year by year.

The Society invites every member of the Church to join in thanksgiving to God for the success which He has graciously vouchsafed to its labors during so many years, and to add their prayers for a continuance of God's blessing, and an OFFERING in aid of the Society's efforts for the further extension of Christ's kingdom.

With devout thankfulness to the Giver of all good, the Society is enabled to look back upon a year of increased financial prosperity. The total income in the year ending December 31, 1856, was £104,470. This amount includes the General Fund, £69,574, Memorial Church at Constantinople, £13,257, Special Contributions for particular Dioceses, &c., £16,659. These sums do not include the balance from last year, or the contributions raised and spent in the several Colonial Dioceses.

The recent operations have been marked; first by a gradual but systematic withdrawal of the Society's assistance from places which are increasing in wealth, and consequently in ability to afford a maintenance to clergymen from local sources; and, secondly, by steps which have been taken towards the establishment of new missions among people who are more or less removed from the influence of the Gospel of peace.

BRITISH NORTH AMERICA.

The extent of spiritual help afforded to our fellow-objects who have settled in British North America is represented by the fact that 284 clergymen in that country are partly maintained by the Society. In the course of this year 100 of them will cease to derive any portion of their support from the Society, and will be maintained entirely from local funds. After contributing for seventy years to supply the spiritual destitution of West Canada, the Society retires from that portion of the British Dominions, leaving a well organized Church, which maintains, without extraneous aid, 155 clergymen and 1 bishop, and a Theological College;

and which is already prepared to relieve its present venerable diocesan by electing and supporting two additional bishops.

In East Canada, comprising the dioceses of Quebec and Montreal, also, the Society's expenditure has already undergone some retrenchment. The presence of an overwhelming majority of Romanists, and the continual influx of poor emigrants from England, will prevent the Society from withdrawing rapidly from this province. But it will proceed steadily in its course of gradual reduction, with the hope of leaving in Eastern Canada also a self-sustaining Church.

In New Brunswick, or the diocese of Fredericton, the Society has scarcely effected as yet any reduction of its expenditure. This same may be said of Nova Scotia. And in Newfoundland, although the Society has begun in one instance to leave to the wealthy city of St. John's the maintenance of its own clergy, yet the condition of the settlements of poor and ignorant fishermen which stretch along its coasts will certainly not allow the Society to withdraw at present any considerable portion of its aid, or to forfeit its claim to such honorable acknowledgment as it has recently received from the Governor of Newfoundland, who writes from Newfoundland to the Secretary of State:—"In this colony all the clergy, save three, are missionaries of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel—a Society to which, it is superfluous to observe here, the inhabitants of the British Colonies and the cause of Protestant Christianity throughout the world have been long and largely indebted." In all these dioceses the Society's missionaries have been carrying on their ordinary labors during the past year.

Before proceeding to speak of another country, it is right to mention that the Society has just resolved to commence a mission in a part of North America which has been untrodden hitherto by the evangelist. In Vancouver's Island is a population estimated at about 20,000 native Indians, who are without Christian instruction. A grant of money has been made, and preliminary steps have been taken for the commencement of a mission; but a well-qualified missionary is yet to be found.

WEST INDIES AND GUIANA.

The Society has recently, without, as it trusts, any injury to the interests of the region, withdrawn its support from four places in the dioceses of Jamaica and Antigua. At other places, four dioceses, 27 of the Society's missionaries continue their labors. A sad and unexpected incident in the history of the past year is the visitation of famine and sickness among the native Indians of Guiana. The Society's missionary, the Rev. J. W. Wadell, who lives among them, has barely escaped with his life.

SOUTH AFRICA.

The following passage from an address recently delivered by Bishop Gray, at Capetown, will serve in stead of a more specific account of the Society's missionaries in his diocese:—

"Look at the present position of the Church in South Africa, and compare it with what it was eight years ago. Along each great road that pierced into the interior there then was, for more than five hundred miles, but one clergyman. In this whole diocese, beyond the immediate district of the Cape, there was no church, and but one minister. Our people were, over a great portion of the country, as sheep without a shepherd. In all South Africa there were but nine churches and fifteen clergy. In the colony of Natal not one. Beyond the Cape district there was but one Church school. There was no mission work, except that which some of the clergy carried on through night schools. Now, through the goodness of God, there are three dioceses, and a fourth already needed. There are 80 clergy, and many catechists; schools and churches have been built, and extensive missions founded, and so many centres from whence may be made further aggressions upon the kingdom of darkness. For this God's holy name be praised. Much, very much indeed, still remains to be done. Many districts are still unprovided with the ministrations of the Church. Myriads of souls around us are still in heathen darkness, or in Mahomedan superstition. The work of education is very incomplete. The Church, however, has taken root in the land. She is laboring everywhere, in the main faithfully and zealously,—extending the Redeemer's kingdom amongst us from day to day, winning unto Christ souls overclouded with the night of heathen darkness, lengthening her cords, and strengthening her stake, and breaking forth on the right hand and on the left."

* Colonial Blue Book.—Presented to both Houses of Parliament, by command of Her Majesty, 27th March, 1857, page 29.

In the diocese of Grahamstown the Society's Missions to the Kafirs have been prosecuted with little or no interruption. The Missions, under the Rev. H. B. Smith, to the Fingoes; under the Rev. W. Greenstock, to Unhalla's tribe; under the Rev. T. Waters, to Krelli's tribe, are fully described in the Visitation Journal of the Bishop of Capetown, (*Missions to the Heathen*, No. 39). The second Bishop of Graham's town left England in March, and was preceded and accompanied by several missionaries. The Society has renewed a large additional grant for their support, and expects very shortly to hear of the Bishop's arrival, and of the employment of these new laborers in the Mission field.

In Natal, two new Missions at Umhazi and the Klip River have been commenced in the past year. At Ekukanyeni, the principal station, the work is proceeding most favorably. Accounts of these Missions were published last April in the *Quarterly Paper* No. 100. The Society has already pledged itself to a large additional outlay for the purpose of increasing the number of Missions in this diocese. There are quite 100,000 Zulus in Natal; and the desolation consequent on the recent sanguinary civil war between King Panda's sons, has opened a vast missionary field beyond the bounds of the colony, which Dr. Colenso, in the true spirit of a missionary Bishop, desires to enter upon.

* To be concluded next week.

News Department.

Extracts from latest English Papers.

THE COMET.

What is the comet? A question this, which one would have supposed ought to have presented itself earlier. But not so. Had it occurred sooner, we should have lost our interest in the coming one, and by reserving it till thus late we shall have the advantage of finding that our "philosophy in jest" yields us "science in earnest." A comet then, is a mass of nebulous vapour, moving in space; either performing a true orbital motion about the sun, or drawn for a time out of its course by that great luminary, and after its temporary deflection, passing away never again to be seen by mortal eye. Of the extreme tenuity of the vapour of which comets are composed, imagination can furnish us with no adequate conception. The lightest haze that rises in autumnal evenings, the fleeciest clouds that streak the vault of heaven, are dense and ponderous compared with it. So ethereal is its substance, that it is only when near the sun that sufficient light is reflected by it to make it luminous. Although a comet sometimes extends through millions of miles in space, yet the actual amount of matter it contains is believed to be so small, that we fear to state. A large comet, if brought to the earth, would probably sink into a size no bigger than a walnut, and weigh in a balance but a few ounces. It is this seems incredible, let us give an illustration that will make it probable. If a quantity of air, which at the earth's surface occupies the volume of a globe only one inch in diameter, were elevated above the earth to a height equal to the earth's radius, to what size does the reader suppose it would expand? Let it should be imagined that we are trifling in the reply we shall be compelled to give, we must state that the computation was made by Newton, and the data and details will be found in the third book of the *Principia*. Let us guess that it would become a sphere a mile in diameter, or a hundred or a thousand; surely it would not become as big as the world itself. Nay, stop guessing. Fancy lags far behind the reality. It would expand into a sphere that would fill the orbit of Saturn! It would be incomparably larger than all the planets put together, yet if suddenly brought to the surface of the earth, would sink again into the size of a plum.

And comets are of this extreme attenuation.—Through the densest part of them, small stars can be seen; stars, which a few inches of fog or steam would wholly obscure. We have not only this evidence, but we have every evidence which under the circumstances is possible, that they have this extreme delicacy of structure. When they approach so near a planet as to be affected by its presence, the disturbances in their motions accords with their extreme lightness. One of them, crossing the path of Jupiter, got entangled among his satellites. Alas! it was very near never getting away again; but after a sad pulling about, which affected it for a long time, it at length escaped. But although so disturbed itself, not the slightest appreciable effect was produced either upon the planet or his satellites, the motion of neither was disturbed in the