

Mission Field.

(From Church Bells.)

A scheme for establishing a new See in Australia, which has been for some time in the air, is just now taking a definite shape. The Northern territory of South Australia is nominally under the charge of the Bishop of Adelaide. Between Adelaide in the South and Port Darwin in the North there is the entire width of the Continent, presenting an impassable barrier so far as a land journey is concerned. To reach it by voyaging round would take nearly a month. There is, however, in that Northern territory a considerable population of British, both at the Port and in the interior, in addition to a large Chinese population, for whom missionary efforts should be made. Port Darwin is itself an important commercial centre of considerable trade with China and the East. In this Northern territory the need of permanent episcopal supervision has long been much felt. In addition to that territory there is the whole of British New Guinea, also requiring similar oversight and spiritual agencies adapted to its special conditions, and having as a missionary field exceptional claims on our Church, for it has been divided into sections for religious purposes, and a certain area has been assigned exclusively to the Church mission. Other missions are at work on either side of the Church area, so that, apart from higher considerations, motives of respect for the Church alone urge church people to strengthen the mission. In such an honorable contest they cannot allow themselves to be vanquished, and there is a peculiar need of a Bishop to develop the work of the Church and to arouse a deeper interest in the mission.

THURSDAY ISLAND, which lies midway between the Northern territory of Australia and New Guinea, offers many advantages which mark it out as the most suitable spot for the headquarters of a Bishop for the two places. It is a shipping port of some importance, of itself offers a sphere of considerable missionary importance, is healthy, and would permit a Bishop easily to reach any part of such a diocese as we have indicated. The Roman Catholics, with their usual enterprise, long since recognised the advantages of having a Bishop located there. The Bishops of the Church in Australia have now resolved that a missionary bishopric for the Northern territory of New Guinea shall be constituted, and that Thursday Island shall be its centre. It is proposed, and the suggestion has a certain graceful appropriateness which will recommend it strongly to those having a knowledge of the history of the Australian continent, that the endowment of such a See should be a memorial of Samuel Marsden, who arrived in Sydney just a century ago. We shall be glad if so good an idea commends itself to church people at home, and they do their part in realising it.

There are now fourteen dioceses in Australia, and the Church on that continent is trying hard to keep pace with the advancing population; but the task is a great one, and to perform it efficiently Australian church people have to look for some help from their brethren in England. Besides this, the project ought to have their sympathy and help because it is a scheme of Church extension—a fresh lengthening of cords and strengthening of stakes.

We fancy we hear some of our readers asking, 'Who was this Samuel Marsden? and why should the centenary of his arrival in Australia be a reason for establishing a bishopric as a memorial of him?' The questions are very natural, for singularly little is yet generally known of the early history of the Australian continent. Briefly, Samuel Marsden was the second clergyman who went out to the colony, containing some 800 convicts, who were sent from our shores to Botany Bay to commence the colonisation of Australia. It was characteristic of the habit of thought prevailing at that time that it was apparently thought quite unnecessary to send out with those unfortunate creatures a clergyman to care for their spiritual welfare, a schoolmaster to instruct them, or any one else to speak words of hope and encouragement. Mr. Marsden, sent out by the Government, worked with Mr. Johnson for six years, who then returned to England. Mr. Marsden, for more than seven years, was then solitary chaplain at that terrible place, trying to perform his duties in the face of all sorts of discouragements and difficulties.

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