

## Mission Field.

### MASHONALAND.

There or four years ago, who had heard of Mashonaland? It was no disgrace to any educated man to confess that it was to him entirely unknown. About that time Dr. Knight-Bruce, the Bishop of Bloemfontein, looking beyond the limits of his own diocese, which was in good working order, saw these regions lying untilled, uncared for, unknown. With the cordial assistance of the Society, in 1888 he made a journey of exploration, after the fashion of Livingstone, into this country. A full account—indeed, his complete journal—was given in successive numbers of *Mission Field* for 1889, and in the Annual Report for that year will be found a map in which his Lordship's journey to Zumbo, on the Zambesi, and back is traced. The Bishop was allowed by the Matabele chief to enter his country. He was the first missionary, and in some places the first white man, the inhabitants had ever seen. Five months he gave to this work of exploration, in which he obtained promises from the chiefs to receive teachers when he could send them.

Subsequently, from political events all was changed. The British South African Company was formed, and this introduced at once a number of white settlers, who will rapidly increase, and thus the task of the Church was not limited to the evangelisation of the natives, but embraced also the care of the Europeans. In 1890 the pioneer force went into the country, and our friend, Canon Balfour, whose interesting report appeared in our last number (page 5), accompanied them as chaplain. At the South African Provincial Synod, held in January and February, 1891, Mashonaland was formed into a diocese, and Bishop Knight-Bruce was asked to take charge of it. Accepting the responsibility, the Bishop started with seven Mission agents, of whom three were Mozambique Christians. A clergyman joined him from the Cape; three trained nurses from Kimberley followed him. The Bishop walked about 1,300 miles, visiting forty five towns or villages. Few chiefs have refused to accept the Church as their teacher in spiritual things, huts are built for the catechists wherever they are placed, and the greater part of this hitherto unknown region, stretching up to the Zambesi, is open, and more than open, to the Church of England.

The Society, foreseeing the importance of this opening, made in 1890 a grant of £1,000 a year, for seven years, for Mission work in these regions. Who would be the agent chosen for the evangelisation of this country was then quite unthought of. The Society was allowed to perceive the promise and the opening way and to make some provision for the work. It is now more than a Mission field. It is akin to a British colony, and for the twofold work that must be carried on among several races more provision must be made.

Turning aside for a moment from its spiritual future to its mysterious

past, it is clear that this strange country cannot always have been isolated and separate. There are signs and tokens of a period when it had vigorous social life and means of traffic, noise, and work: ruins of old buildings, shafts into old mines still remain, witnesses of a past with which only conjecture can deal. Why did all this work and traffic cease? and when? The Portuguese seem to have skirted round the borders of this country, where the several tribes, all grouped under the common name of Mashonas, grew and prospered, planting their fields and digging, not for gold, but for the more precious iron, and smelting and fashioning it. Then there arose the great fighting tribe of the Matabele, who devastated the more industrious Mashonas, who were driven further and further eastward, until a strip of barren country separated the two nations. It was the chief of these Matabele who in 1888 gave to Bishop Knight-Bruce the necessary permission to visit the land.

The Bishop is now in England for a few months, and it will be the pleasure as well as the duty of all the Society's friends to strengthen his hands so that he may return to his wilderness-diocese prepared to carry on the crusade.—S. P. G. *Mission Field*.

### ADDRESS OF A BENGALI CLERGYMAN.

The Rev. Roger Dutt, a Bengali Clergyman from Cawnpore, recently addressed the members of the committee of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, being about to sail the next day for India, after his first visit to England. Mr. Dutt spoke of his having been glad of the opportunity of seeing England, and observing the effects of centuries of Christianity. He said that he had been asked whether the missions in India were failures, and that he answered that they were certainly not. There is an impatience about missions. People appear to think that the Gospel has only to be preached, and that then the place where it is preached will straightway be won: but when Christian people are themselves so long in their contest with their besetting sins, Mr. Dutt urged that it should not be expected that those sunk in sin in India should immediately arise. The conversion of England occupied centuries. India is twenty-seven times as large as England, and contains 280,000,000 as against perhaps 28,000,000 in England in the days of St. Augustine. Even now only a few towns and a few chief centres in India are occupied by missions. Mr. Dutt reminded the meeting of Bishop Lightfoot's observation that the rate of progress in missions varies. When Christianity is confronted with a higher civilization its progress is necessarily slower though not less sure. He quoted some very striking figures from the census returns, showing how rapid the growth of Christianity had been in recent years. In 1851 there were 91,000 Christians in India: in 1861 there were 138,000: an increase of fifty-three per-cent. In 1871 there were 224,000 an increase of sixty-one per-cent: in 1881 there were 417,000 an increase of eighty-

six per-cent. This year the Christians are reckoned to be 2,000,000 in number.

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