

SAMUEL D. FERGUSON,

BISHOP OF CAPE PALMAS AND PARTS ADJACENT.

By REV. A. G. L. TREW, M.A., DEAN OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA.

THE deadly fevers of the tropical African coast have gained for Sierra Leone the baleful title of "The White Man's Grave." A similar deadliness has stamped the mission of Cape Palmas, somewhat further north, where the rank growth of tropical vegetation covers the sleeping bodies of many who have gone from the American Church to carry the Light of the Truth to the Dark Continent. A few months, in many cases, a few years at most in any case, have been the limit of service, and then the fever-smitten missionary has either "fallen asleep," or has barely escaped with disabled constitution to drag out a weakened life elsewhere. Hoffman, and Minor and Auer, are names which will readily recur to the memories of those who know anything of the Liberian mission.

A happier course was inaugurated when the House of Bishops of the American Church, in special session in Grace Church, New York, on April 22nd, 1884, elected the Rev. Samuel D. Ferguson to the missionary bishopric of Cape Palmas, which Bishop Penick had resigned in broken health, after holding it for barely six years. The wisdom

of their choice lies in these facts: 1st, That Bishop Ferguson is of the same race as the members of his church and the heathen surrounding them, to whom he is chief missionary; and 2nd, That, having lived in all but the years of his infancy in the field, his constitution is impervious to the malarial poison of the African coast.

The Rt. Rev. Samuel D. Ferguson was born in Charleston, S. C., in 1843. When he was six years of age his parents emigrated to Liberia. There he was educated in the mission schools under Bishop Payne. In 1862, when just nineteen, his progress had been so thorough, and his character so well established, that he was appointed one of the teachers—a position which he held until he

was ordained deacon on Holy Innocents' Day, 1865. His first ministerial duties were those of assistant to the Rev. J. W. C. Duerr, in St. Mark's parish, Harper. On March 15th, 1868, he was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Payne, and was at once appointed to the rectorship of the same parish, and remained in the same charge until his consecration to the bishopric. For a number of years he was president of the standing committee of the diocese, and for two or three years preceding his elevation to the episcopate he acted as business agent for the mission, at the same time discharging the duties of superintendent of the Cape Palmas Female Orphan Asylum and Girl's School.

On Bishop Penick's resignation, broken down by the mephitic climate, the House of Bishops—on whom by constitutional authority rested the selection of his successor—gave proof of wise discernment in calling Mr. Ferguson to the vacant bishopric. His varied experience in all the branches and details of missionary work in that peculiar field; his thorough and practical familiarity with all the administrative requirements of the missionary; his life-long inurement to the physical influences of the country and climate;—all these were recommendations which marked out the African priest as the best man for the place, provided he were possessed of those higher and spiritual qualifications which are essen-

tial. And that these higher characteristics of religious elevation, depth of character and mental ability, were not lacking, had been shown abundantly in his discharge of the various offices in which he had served the Church.

On June 24, 1885, (St John Baptist's Day), he was consecrated as the fourth Missionary Bishop of Cape Palmas and parts adjacent, in Grace Church, New York, the Rt. Rev. Alfred Lee, Bishop of Delaware, the present presiding bishop of the American Church, acting as consecrator, assisted by Bishops Stevens and Littlejohn, of Pennsylvania and Long Island. The Bishop-elect was attended by the Rev. Alex. Crummell, D.D., Rector of St. Luke's Church, Washington, D. C.,



RT. REV. SAMUEL D. FERGUSON.