

sire to carry a pure gospel to that priest-ridden island.

Arriving at his own home, with eager enthusiasm he at once began to tell father, mother, brothers, and sisters of his new-found Saviour. But alas! when they learned that he had become a Protestant—a heretic—they were grief-stricken, and refused to listen to him.

Bitter indeed was his sorrow and disappointment. But remembering that others might listen, though his own home circle might not, Diaz sought his friends in the city. These were more tolerant, and agreed to meet him on the following Sunday, in the parlor of the Paseje Hotel.

As he preached to them Jesus the only Saviour, many were deeply impressed. Sunday after Sunday, the meeting continued growing in numbers and interest until the place became too small. It was decided to rent a hall in which to hold services.

God's blessing was upon the young physician, who, like Paul, supported himself by his profession, in order that he might give the gospel to others without cost. In a short time the converts numbered more than one hundred.

Such work could not go on without arousing bitter opposition from the priests. At their instigation Dr. Diaz was arrested for preaching to a little company that had gathered around him on the seacoast. Being an American citizen, he appealed to the United States, and was speedily released. From that time street preaching was out of the question.

Determined to break up this Protestant movement, the priests next interfered with his practice of medicine, warning the people not to employ the heretic physician. Finding himself without means of support, he sailed for New York, hoping to make some arrangement by which to continue his work. Hearing that the Ladies' Bible Society of Philadelphia wished to employ a colporteur in Cuba, he applied for the position, and was accepted. Joyfully he returned to his little flock, able now to give his whole time to missionary effort.

For more than a year he continued to work in this way. Large numbers professed conversion, among them the beloved members of his own family. So great was his success that it was thought best for him to receive ordination as a Baptist minister, and in December, 1835, he was formally set apart for the preaching of the gospel. In January, 1836, a Baptist church was organized in Havana—the first Protestant church in Cuba, and the care of the work was assumed by the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention.

The growth of this church was phenomenal. Dr. A. T. Pierson says: "Considering the time and the means expended in its prosecution, this work in Cuba has never been surpassed in modern missions."

In 1837 the parent church had three hundred and one members, and two colonies. In 1895 it had 1,700 members and four colonies—organized churches under the care of Cuban pastors. Three of these are in Havana, and one at San Meguel, ten miles away. The whole number of converts baptized aggregates about 2,700.

The requirements for church membership are very high. When first Dr. Diaz returned to Cuba as a United States citizen, and it became known that he was establishing a new church, many Cubans who were hungering for freedom wished to join it, thinking that baptism would make them American citizens. Learning that this was not the case, many turned away.

Converts are admitted to the church only after strict examination. They must give satisfactory evidence of a thorough understanding of regeneration, and renounce all harmful and doubtful practices. Should they return to these, they would be at once excluded from the church. To their credit be it told, that such disciplining has never been found necessary.

What has been the secret of the remarkable growth of the mission? Listen to Dr. Diaz: "There are now 1,700 members in my church, and they are spreading their influence all over the island. They visit a certain number of houses every week, and do missionary work among them. This is the secret of so large a church."

Though religious toleration has been granted by the Spanish Government, it is hedged about with many restrictions. Since Spanish law forbids a public place of Protestant worship, all services must be held with closed doors in a building that has no-

thing about it to suggest a church. Notices of services cannot be given, and a pastor would be arrested for announcing the location of his church.

With such restrictions Protestant mission work must be carried on very quietly, and personal work on the part of individual members of the churches is an absolute necessity.

Many and severe have been the trials to which the Cuban converts have been subjected, but 'facing pestilence, enduring mob violence and priestly persecution,' pastors and people have braved every danger in order to preach the gospel and win souls.

REJOICING IN PERSECUTIONS.

Dr. Diaz says: "We do not mind persecution, because every time our church is persecuted the membership increases, and the old members are more fully consecrated to the Lord. . . . I myself have been in jail six times for preaching the gospel, but I am ready to go twenty times more for the same



DIAZ, THE MISSIONARY.

reason. I must tell my people all about the Lord Jesus as it is in the bible."

In 1838 a terrible scourge of small-pox visited Havana. Though themselves heavily afflicted, — the church losing at least one hundred and fifty members—these brave Cuban converts went everywhere regardless of danger to themselves. True angels of mercy were they, ministering to the sick and dying, burying the dead, and pointing the living to the way of salvation through Christ.

During this terrible time the church, in spite of its losses, grew in membership from three hundred and fifty to seven hundred. This was largely the result of the personal conversations with the people in their homes. Two women missionaries alone reported 1,600 such conversations during a period of three months, resulting in forty-four additions to the church.

When the rebellion broke out in 1895, the members of Dr. Diaz's church consulted him as to their duty in the matter. They said to him, "You have been preaching to us about our liberty and freedom in Christ Jesus, and these men are fighting for civil liberty, and we who have been so persecuted feel that we must fight for religious liberty."

Many of these earnest and consecrated Christian men enlisted in the rebel army, and side by side, all in the same regiment, they are fighting for freedom.

The war has, of course, greatly interfered with the mission work. Early in 1896 Dr. Tichenor, secretary of the Home Mission

Board, visited Havana, to consult with the missionaries as to the best course to pursue. Instructing the pastors to leave the island as soon as their safety demanded it, the whole matter was left in the hands of Dr. Diaz, with full power to act.

DIAZ IN JAIL.

On April 16, 1896, a short but startling telegram reached the rooms of the Home Mission Board in Atlanta. It simply read, 'Diaz in jail.' Knowing that either immediate death or long torture in a Spanish prison awaited him, the board at once took vigorous measures for his release. The State Department at Washington was notified, and through their prompt and decisive action he was saved.

Intensely interesting is the story of his imprisonment and release. The danger growing daily more and more threatening, Dr. Diaz had sent his fellow-pastors to a place of safety in Florida, he himself remaining a few days longer to care for the valuable property of the Board.

Before daybreak, on the morning of April 16, the police went to his house in Havana, and demanded his papers and sermons. After spending seven hours in examining them, they put Diaz and his brother under arrest, ordering them to the jail. Diaz refused to go until he had had his breakfast, and invited the officers to become his guests. They made no objection, and partook of the meal with the family.

While his brother engaged them in conversation, Dr. Diaz hastily wrote a telegram, and slipped it under his plate unobserved. This telegram saved his life. After they had gone his wife found the message and sent it to Atlanta.

For eight days the two brothers were kept in the jail, forbidden to read, write or talk with any one. Then they were tried and sentenced to immediate death.

Everything was in readiness for their execution on the morrow. A death watch, which was changed every two hours, was kept in their cells. "I knelt down," says Dr. Diaz, "and prayed, 'Lord, send me an angel, and save me if you will.'" In the middle of the night the angel came. It was one of my church members, who was sent to keep watch. He asked me what he could do for me. I wrote several letters and telegrams and he sent them for me. The telegrams were sent to the United States. The next day the jail was opened and my brother and I said farewell."

Strangely like the twelfth chapter of Acts reads the story. Like Peter of old, Dr. Diaz went at once to his people who were assembled in the church. "They were very much surprised," says he, "The papers had announced that we were to be executed that day, but I said to my people: 'Don't be afraid, the Lord Jesus, who opened the jail for Paul and Silas and Peter, is the same Lord Jesus who opened the jail for us,' and we had a revival lasting until half-past one in the morning."

Next day an order came from General Weyler compelling Dr. Diaz and his family to leave Cuba at once. After spending some little time in this country, he was sent to Mexico, where he is now in charge of the chapel car of the American Baptist Publication Society.

The other Cuban pastors are now at work among the refugees in Key West and Tampa, Fla. The property of the Home Mission Board is under the care of Dr. Belot, a prominent member of Dr. Diaz's church, and up to April 13, none of it had been molested.

The mission work has for some time been carried on by the women, the brave, noble Protestant Cuban women. With the help of a few laymen, they have not only kept open the day school and the Sunday-school, but they have conducted prayer-meetings and other services on the Sabbath. So faithful and efficient has been their work that many have professed Christ, and are waiting for baptism.

In a letter received by Dr. Tichenor from Miss Clotilde Diaz, a sister of the great preacher, dated April 4, she says: "The Lord blesses our work, especially among the children. Pray for us; we need it very much."

Our hearts go out in loving sympathy to these Cuban Christians, especially to these faithful women who, in the midst of anxiety and danger, are bravely preaching Christ to perishing souls.

What the future has in store for them, our Father alone knows. Let us pray for them, for surely they do 'need it very much.'