

MISSION FIELD.

THE CHURCH IN HAITI.

By the Bishop of Rochester.

Haiti, or St. Domingo as it is sometimes called, for it includes two republics of unequal size, and severally so described, is quite the most beautiful and assuredly the most melancholy island in the Caribbean Sea. It is about the size of Ireland, with a magnificent coastline, rich both in valuable minerals and all kinds of vegetable produce, immense forests, and a multitude of excellent harbours. But its past history is stained with infamous bloodshed, and for Haiti, at least, there seems but a hopeless future, so rapidly is it degenerating, in the opinion of competent observers, into a condition of African barbarism. Of Haiti, which only I had the opportunity of visiting, the population is 800,000; and of the two principal towns at which the mail-steamers called, Jaenel and Port au Prince, the latter is the metropolis, with a population of 22,000. From this place unhappy Toussaint l'Ouverture sailed to be the victim of Napoleon's perfidy. Already much injured by earthquakes, it received a crushing blow in the Civil War of '68 and '69, when all the public buildings were destroyed; and if I must give a candid description of it as it appeared to me when I landed there on a sultry Saturday afternoon in February, I am compelled to call it a squalid collection of dirty shanties, redoomed here and there by the churches of the place, which at least help you to look upwards, and by a background of fine mountains as green as emerald after the rain. One solitary peak quite reminded me of Corcovado.

The dominant religion here is Roman; there are three churches belonging to that community in the place. Protestant religious bodies are also represented in a variety which considerably interferes with their influence on the community, and presents only a very broken front to the massive solidarity of Rome. Bishop Holly was sent here by the Protestant Episcopal Church of America, to fill the See created in 1872. Originally a minister of a coloured congregation at New Haven, he was consecrated in Grace Church, New York, in that year, and came out to Haiti at once with a great part of his congregation. In four months' time half of them succumbed to disease, among them the Bishop's own wife and son. It has been a very uphill work, partly from want of material resources, partly from the enormous difficulties which have had to be confronted, partly I may add (on the strength of information given me, though not from the Bishop), from the lack of very hearty support from the white residents. (They may have not quite liked the presence of an African bishop.)

As can readily be supposed, there is a great amount of heathenism among the natives, and at Port au Prince the moral tone is very

low. The drunkenness there is said to be great. But the darkest feature of all is the Vaudoux worship—a kind of Obeahism—indisputably connected with human sacrifices, and it is to be feared with the practice of cannibalism. Sir Spencer St. John, now our minister at Mexico, and for several years Consul-General here, has given a graphic circumstantial account of it in his book called *The Black Republic*. The account Bishop Holly gave me of his work was simple and cheerful, and the last official report of the American Board of Mission quite corroborates it. There are in all twenty-one places in which divine worship is held. About 1176 persons are presumably reached by the services. The average attendance at each of the English services is forty-four; at twenty-one French services, 450. During the last year there were two adult baptisms, eighty-nine infant baptisms, thirteen marriages, 432 communicants, 245 scholars in the day schools, 187 in the Sunday school. In the same year seventeen persons were confirmed and one person admitted to the priesthood. Eight presbyters are at work in the island and three deacons, and there is one candidate for holy orders, a native, being now trained at Codrington College, Barbadoes. Two fresh mission chapels are on the point of completion, and two more are being pushed on as rapidly as possible.

The Bishop seemed more hopeful about his country mission-work than about that at the capital. He has eleven mission stations, and the clergy go about from place to place visiting the people, and preaching to them. One circumstance had cheered him greatly. One of the Vaudoux people, who had been punished for taking part in the services, expressed his repentance, and not only gave the Bishop a site on which to erect a mission building, but at his own expense erected it. On Christmas Day there was a service held there; then 150 people attended, and ten were baptized. The Bishop's great need is a sum of 1000*l.* for erecting buildings for a Normal and Industrial School, in which to train natives for Christian and educational work. He has been asking for this for three years, and in vain; Haiti can never give it him. It is plain that, until he can convert his raw material into skilled and competent work men, the work is at an immense disadvantage. To borrow the language of the Report of the American Board of Missions, 'Considering the very limited resources at any time at the command of the Bishop, it must be conceded that there has been a good degree of success to reward the efforts of himself and his clergy.' So say all who know anything of the work from personal observation. So, diffidently but stoutly, said I. The good Bishop asked me to go on shore with him, and gladly I did so, for my own advantage and instruction, also to evince my personal respect for him. We called on the Minister of Worship and Public Instruction, who showed me the

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House of Assembly. Then we adjourned to the Bishop's private residence, where I was introduced to his family, and, among the rest, to two dear, very brown little children, to whom I quite lost my heart. Then we robed, and went into the humble but commodious church close by, where a compact congregation of seven adults and five children were assembled, to whom, after singing Psalm 107, the *Te Deum*, the saying of a few Collects, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer, on the invitation of the Bishop I gave what the new-papers would have called a 'neat' address of five minutes, with the exhilarating conviction that of the twelve persons present not more than three had any distinct notion of what I was wishing to say. But I came away resolving to myself that, should I ever be tempted to take discouragement at home difficulties, I would think of brave, cheerful Bishop Holly, and take shame to myself, saying to them in my heart and from it, 'Fear not, little flock; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.'

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