



VIEW FROM LADDER STEPS, ST. HELENA.

ST. HELENA.

FROM THE "MISSION FIELD," (S. P. G.)

ST. HELENA is the smallest of colonial dioceses. The island itself contains but forty-seven square miles, but the diocese includes also the distant Tristan d'Acunha, and Ascension. The island was discovered by the Portuguese in 1501, but it was uninhabited until the Dutch became possessors of it. From them it passed—two hundred years ago—into the hands of the East India Company. The population is between five and six thousand. It consists of a few English families, with a mixture of natives of India, China and Africa. Many of these owe their presence there to the slave trade; for the island was a depot for slaves liberated by the British West Coast Squadron from slave-ships. St. Helena has somewhat of a romantic interest from its being the scene of the captivity and death of the first Napoleon. It had at one time other reasons for being well-known. It is situated in the heart of the South Atlantic trade wind, blowing from the south-east for an average of 327 days in the year, and in the direct track of vessels homeward bound from the East round the Cape of Good Hope. It was therefore a port of call for a vast quantity of shipping and passengers to and from India, and the other parts of the East, and, in consequence of its importance in connection with the Eastern trade, large civil and military establishments were maintained. The opening of the Suez Canal, of course, destroyed the greater part of this prosperity.

The diocese was formed out of that of Capetown in 1859. There is a band of six clergymen, of

whom four are the Missionaries of the Society. One of them, the Rev. S. S. Ellis, is stationed at Jamestown, the pretty little capital of the colony, which is situated on the north-west side of the island. The town contains about 3,000 people, three-quarters of whom are members of the Church.

The Rev. J. C. Hands is stationed at Longwood, near Napoleon's old residence. Mr. Hands describes the decadence of the colony in its bearing on Church work:—

"In looking back to the beginning of the year things have not proved so bad as they then appeared. Still poverty is again our 'war-cry.' In maintaining the spiritual conflict obstacles almost in every shape meet us.

"The country houses, reared and inhabited by well-to-do folks in the more opulent times, are now fast falling into decay and becoming ruinous, and quite beyond the means of repair by the present occupiers. The continual decrease in the number of ships annually calling here, and the irregularity of the mail steamers under the new contract, prove also very detrimental to the prosperity of the island, and in consequence the very small means received from the revenue makes it utterly impossible for our present administrator to render any aid, and the still more limited income of our venerable Bishop, nearly an octogenarian (which is now little more than many an English curate would receive), makes it most difficult to meet the many demands daily presenting themselves, for the religious, educational, and, in fact, all that goes to make up the moral, social and commercial machinery of a community suffering from want of means, and totally unable to help themselves out of their