

JAMAICA.

REV. ADAM THOMSON, MISSIONARY AT MONTEGO BAY.

The amiable and devoted missionary, whose name stands at the head of this article, was obliged to leave the sphere of his labours for the benefit of his health. He visited Toronto in the early part of last month, and we had the privilege of enjoying some very pleasant intercourse with him, and of receiving information regarding the moral and religious condition of that beautiful island. Mr. Thomson is in connection with the United Secession Church, and occupies the Free Church at Montego Bay, in which the Rev. Mr. Denniston formerly officiated with so much acceptance. Mr. Thomson is of excellent spirit—possesses ministerial gifts quite above mediocrity, and is, from his mild and conciliatory manner, well fitted to unite and harmonize those among whom he labours. We are happy to state that he returns to his post in renovated health.

On the 8th Dec., Mr. Thomson delivered an address in the United Secession Church, in this city. From the abstract published in the *Presbyterian Magazine*, we make the following extracts:—

“Mr. Thomson said he would begin his remarks by giving some account of his own church, which was situated in Montego Bay, the largest town on the north side of the island. It contained a population of about 6000. He was inducted into his pastoral charge there in June, 1850. The membership of his church amounted to nearly 100—the greater part of whom were brown people, but there were among them between twenty and thirty white persons, and a few negroes. No distinction, however, was made in the church in respect of color, and on communion occasions, there might be seen sitting in the same pews persons who once were slaveholders, and those who once were slaves. The average attendance of adults on public worship, on the Lord's day, was about 200. There was a Sabbath School in connection with the church. One of the elders, a Scotchman, was superintendent, and there were seventeen or eighteen teachers, male and female, all of whom were members of the church. The average attendance of children in the Sabbath School was about ninety. The teachers met monthly for prayer and for consultation; regarding the state of the school, and the best means to be employed for improving and enlarging it. It was some time ago suggested that a week-day juvenile school should, if possible, be established, for the instruction of those in the Sabbath School who could not read; and, when he left Jamaica, nearly £100 had been subscribed for this most important and desirable object. He had no fear that this proposed school would, ere long, be in full and successful operation. There were two excellent libraries in connection with the church—one for the Sabbath School children, and the other for the congregation at large. A prayer meeting was held weekly in the chapel, and the average attendance on that occasion was about sixty. He had also two classes for religious instruction—one for males and the other for females. These also met weekly, on separate evenings. The average attendance on each of these classes was about twenty. There was in connection with the church a Christian Instruction Society, consisting of about twenty members, all of whom, with the exception of himself, were ladies. The members of the Society visited careless and ignorant persons throughout the town—read the scriptures to them—circulated religious tracts among them, and urged on their attention the importance of divine things. The Society met

monthly, at which written reports of their visits were given in and read. He anticipated much good, under the Divine blessing, from the operations of this Society. He was happy that he could speak in favorable terms regarding the financial affairs of the church. It was self-supporting, and he had reason to hope would continue to be so. Besides the contributions obtained for the maintenance of Divine ordinances, about £30 were subscribed yearly for affording relief to the destitute sick in connection with the church and congregation. These were the principal matters having reference to his own church, which it occurred to him to mention. Perhaps they might think the church was small, and so it was; but when it was considered that it was the most recently formed of any in the town—in which there were two Episcopalian, two Baptist, and one Methodist Chapels, and a Jewish Synagogue, with a population of only 6,000—the comparative smallness of its size, in respect of numbers, would not be wondered at.

In Montego Bay there was an Academy, maintained by the Mission Board of the United Presbyterian Church in Scotland. It was established some years ago for the purpose of training young men as teachers. Seven or eight lads who were educated in that academy, were now employed in teaching schools throughout the island. He had been present at the examination of some of these schools, and was delighted to witness the efficient manner in which, in almost every instance, they were conducted. He did not say that they were equal to the schools in Scotland or America. It would be unreasonable to expect this; but still, taking all circumstances into account, they were very respectable, and, in the natural course of things, might be expected to improve. When he left Jamaica there were in the academy in Montego Bay, twelve missionary students, and thirty-two public scholars. All of the missionary students were either black or brown, and most of the public scholars were white boys—the sons of the most genteel families in the town. Indeed the fees of the academy had been hitherto so high, that few others were able to avail themselves of it—it being, and having been intended to be, regarded as an Institution of a somewhat advanced and superior description. The scholars competed with each other, in the several classes, without respect to color; and at the semi-annual examinations, the black scholars carried off at least an equal number of prizes with their white competitors. Indeed, he had again and again questioned the Rector of the academy regarding the comparative abilities of the white and black scholars, and the decided opinion of that gentleman was, that there was little or no disparity between them, in so far, at any rate, as the studies pursued in the academy are concerned. He had now been upwards of eleven years in the island, and as he had been engaged as a teacher during the whole of that period, he had possessed the most ample opportunities of forming a deliberate and enlightened opinion on this point. Mr. Thomson added, that since he himself went to Jamaica, he had been more or less connected with the academy in Montego Bay, and he felt bound to say, that his own opinion entirely coincided with that of the Rector. Probably it would be found that the blacks were inferior to the whites in the higher branches of learning, and were deficient in that grasp of intellect and acuteness of mind, which were the results of a well-educated and polished state of society. But this was only what might naturally have been expected, and ought not to produce a too unfavourable impression regarding the susceptibilities of the negro, for indefinite improvement in all the arts and sciences of civilized life.

Mr. Thomson stated that there were in Jamaica 19 regular Churches—exclusive of out-stations—connected with the Presbyterian Mission. Some of those, however, were at present without a pastor. The number of members, in full communion with these Churches, was very nearly

4000. About three-fourths of these might be negroes. The remaining one-third were either brown or white, but principally brown people. There were Sabbath-schools and week-day prayer meetings in connection with all the Churches; and these were in general pretty well attended. In one instance there were no fewer than 10 week-day prayer meetings connected with one of the mission stations, and at many of these meetings the services were conducted by people of colour. There were besides, upwards of forty week-day schools, and about fifty teachers—male and female—in connection with the mission. The teachers' salaries were paid partly by the Mission Board in Scotland, and partly from the school fees. He was sorry to say, however, the schools were neither so numerous, nor so regularly attended as they might, and as they ought to be. This was owing principally, perhaps, to the ignorance of the parents. Not having been educated themselves, they did not appreciate the value of education, and hence it was often extremely difficult to prevail upon them to send their children to school, instead of employing them in their provision grounds, or in some other remunerative way. But there was reason to hope that this serious obstacle to success would be gradually overcome. One of the greatest impediments to the progress of the gospel in Jamaica, was unquestionably the ignorance of the negroes. Multitudes of the adult population were unable to read; their intellectual faculties had never been brought under training, and in many instances it was next to impossible to convey correct ideas to their minds, or to produce any impressions of a lasting and influential nature. Better days, however, were in prospect, and if the missionaries and others could only succeed in their efforts to educate the young, he had no fear for ultimate prosperity. He rejoiced to say that public attention had recently been directed to this subject; and since he came to America he had obtained such information regarding the public schools both in Canada and in the United States, as, he hoped, might be rendered useful after his return to the scene of his labours.

He had often been asked, since his arrival in America, as to the results of the abolition of slavery in Jamaica; and information on this point had frequently been sought in such a manner as to indicate that the impression was prevalent, in some quarters at least, that the act of Emancipation had been a failure. He hesitated not to say that there could not possibly be a greater mistake. He was not in Jamaica during the prevalence of slavery; but no candid and unbiased person could be long in the island without being convinced, from the state of things around him, that the people were improving, and that the greatest hindrances to their more rapid improvement, were to be found in the baneful results of that accursed system under which the island had so long groaned. This much he could, with confidence, say, that although he had met and conversed with many influential parties in Jamaica, who, in the days of slavery were its warmest advocates and abettors, there was not one among them who did not now rejoice in its abolition.”

IMPROVEMENT OF PSALMODY.

We are anxious to call the attention of our congregations, both in town and country, to this important subject; and we are happy to observe the growing attention which is paid to it in Scotland. At Glasgow an important meeting of different denominations was lately held, at which a most valuable and truly eloquent speech was made by the Rev. Mr. Kerr of the United Presbyterian Church, Campbell Street, a report of which appears in the *Scottish Guardian* of Nov. 18th. We have extracted the leading parts of