

FORMOSA

Is the prospect of an early occupation of this "Isle of Beauty" by our Mission, our readers will be glad to get all the information they can as to its past history, its present condition, and its capabilities as a mission field. Its occupation was determined on in consequence of a short visit paid to it in 1860 By Messrs. Douglas and Mackenzie, an account of which will be found in the MEDDENGK for January, 1861.

We are indebted for the following information chiefly to the Chinese Repository, long since extinct as a periodical, but still an excellent authority on all Chinese matters. We have also before us a late number of the "Proceedings" of the Royal Geographical Society referring to a paper on Formosa, read by Mr. Swinhoe, her Majesty's Vice-Consul there, which drew forth some interesting remarks from Admiral Collinson and Sir Harry Parkes.

The island is about 200 miles long by 80 in the broadest part, or about Half the size of Ireland, and is within a day's sail of Amoy in favourable Weather. Our missionaries, however, were three days crossing in 1860, and Twenty-seven hours in returning. The island is a district of the province of Fokien, and the Chinese inhabitants are chiefly emigrants from the country surrounding Amoy, speaking exactly the same dialect ; in proof of which Messrs. Douglas and Mackenzie were enabled to preach daily to the people during the ten days they were on the island, and they met with many who had heard the Gospel on the mainland. A chain of mountains running north and south divides the island into two parts, the side facing China being occupied by Chinese, and well cultivated, whilst the further side is covered chiefly with forests, and is occupied by aboriginal tribes apparently of Malayan origin. These, however, are gradually receding before the comparatively civilized Chinese colonists. The whole population of the island is estimated at about three millions. The highest mountain in the chain is upwards of 10,000 feet, and has received the name of Mount Morrison, one which should endear it to the Christian missionary and act as a refreshing stimulus when his eye rests upon its peak as he pursues his arduous labour among the debased heathen at its foot. These mountains are sometimes covered with snow.

Owing to the inaccessible character of the east coast there is no communication with the aborigines from that side. It appears, however, that a

portion of these tribes have acknowledged the Chinese authority, have come

more or less under the influence of Chinese civilization, and had even received some instruction in Christianity from the Dutch pastors about 200 years ago. Nearly a century afterwards Du Halde, a Jesuit writer, stated that although all traces of Christianity seemed to have perished, the people had no idolatrous worship, and that many fragments of pious Dutch books had been found among them. Another portion consists of independent tribes, with no written language, and governed by petty chiefs. They are very primitive in all their habits, and are usually harmless, except when outraged, and then they are excessively revengeful.

The Chinese side of the range of mountains is cleared of the forest and terraced for the cultivation of the tea plant, whilst on the plains rice and