

THE LUSITANIAN CHURCH—ELECTION OF A BISHOP.

SIR—Time passes quickly and we know that several Archbishops, Bishops, and many sympathising friends are expecting to see some news in *The Guardian* as to how we are getting on in Portugal. The political and financial state of Portugal is distressing; we are still on the brink of a precipice, and the constant revolutions and changes of Government do not help to make things better. When the Republic was proclaimed, the privileges of the Church of Rome were taken away, her properties confiscated, evening services prohibited, and ministers of religion inhibited from taking any part in the management of Church affairs. These disabilities were, to a great extent, removed when Sidonie Paes became President of the Republic, and now the Churches have more liberty, but the majority of the members of all the late Governments and the greater part of the civil and military authorities are professed infidels and set the fashion of professing Atheism. It is true that the remnants of the aristocracy and the peasants in some of the country districts continue Roman Catholics, yet the greater part of the population in the towns inclines to infidelity, and scoffs at religion, and this indifference is far more prejudicial to true religion than any amount of superstition.

We are thankful to be on very friendly terms with our Roman Catholic neighbours, including the priests, who know that we never waste time in attacking other branches of the Catholic Church, and never endeavour to make proselytes from other Communion which was condemned by our Saviour, although we cannot refuse the help and privileges we are able to give to those who voluntarily seek to join this congregation. Sincere Roman Catholics prefer sending their children to our schools because in the Government schools no religious teaching is given. Roman Catholics from the country, away from their own parish churches, have several times asked to be allowed to receive the Holy Eucharist and we cannot deny them this privilege.

During the last half-year forty new members joined this congregation, and after deducting nineteen losses by death, emigration or removal, we have 471 members without counting any children who are not communicants. The members of the two congregations at Gaia under my care gave or collected the last half-year for the Poor Fund for Foreign Missions

in China, Africa, &c., for church expenses, and for the support of schools attended by 426 scholars, a sum which at a normal exchange, would be £1,784 4s.; now it is only worth one-fifth of that. But even so, it is a large sum to be contributed by two congregations consisting principally of working-men and commercial clerks, and it is less than half of what we expect to receive this year, as many contributors only give their offerings during the second half of the year. I am unable to give statistics of four other congregations, two Missions in the North and four congregations and two Missions in the South of Portugal.

On June 22nd the Synod of the Lusitanian Church met at Gaia, and I am glad to say that Rev. Joaquin dos Santos Figueiredo, President of the Synod, ex-Roman Catholic priest, and a good scholar, was elected Bishop. This was a step in the right direction, and we earnestly hope that all difficulties may be removed and that he may be consecrated, as without a native-born Bishop with a truly Catholic spirit, free from Rome or any other foreign jurisdiction, as clearly stated in our formulas, it is impossible for the Lusitanian Church to spread and extend her influence.

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