

tract the finger nails, that the dead may not scratch his way out of the grave.

The North American Indians buried with the corpse a kettle of provisions, bows and arrows, and moccasins, with piece of deerskin and sinews of deer for the purpose of patching the moccasins.

The Chinese scatter paper counterfeit of money on the way to the grave, that the evil spirit following the corpse may by delaying to gather them remain in ignorance of the locality of the grave. They also scatter in the wind, above the grave, paper images of the sedan bearers and other servants, that they may overtake the soul and act in its service.

The Greeks sometimes buried and sometimes burned their dead.

In the Roman Empire the body was invariably burned.—*Exchange*.

A HEATHEN ATONEMENT.

AN old Tongaman came into my study a few days ago, and explained to me a curious custom which they had before they were Christians. When he told me all about it, I thought—Well now, of what use is this to me? It will, perhaps, please our young friends at home yonder if I send it to them, and let them know how foolish the people here were formerly, and how different they are now. So here it is as my friend Joseph told me.

Suppose a woman, whom we will call Mele, is sick. She has a brother called Mea, who wishes her to get better.

Mea thinks that she is sick because the spirit of some dead chief is angry with their family. The question is, how can he find out the angry spirit? He will try by casting lots, thus. There is a long, narrow, coarse mat, made of the plaited leaf of the cocoa-nut palm-tree. This is spread on the ground, with one end eastward, and here, at the west end of it, a native takes his seat in silence. Before him is a nut, called *niu ui*, which he has put very carefully in the middle of the mat. At his back are Mea and another man; and all three have their faces towards the rising sun. There must never be more than three in the house while they cast lots. The man on the mat spins the nut, but must not speak a word. The two men behind him now call to mind what chiefs have died, and may be angry with Mea's family. One of them calls out, "Strike the nut of such a chief," giving his name. The spinner spins the nut round with one hand. It stops with its eye, or spot, towards the north. This means nothing. The eye must look directly eastward, and then the angry spirit is discovered. Mea calls again as before, only naming another dead chief. Presently the nut stops spinning, looking eastward. The last-named chief, then, is the author of Mele's sickness. The spinner next takes up the nut, reverently touches his forehead with it, and then folds it up in the mat, and puts it away in the end of the house, where it is left to rot.

The atonement is then made to appease the anger of the spirit. Here is a little boy belonging to Mele's family. He is taken, and the first joint of his little finger is cut off. The poor child is then besmeared, over his hand and arm, with his own blood, and given

over to a *feao*, another member of the family, and, together with the rest of the family and their friends, all go to the grave of the chief whose anger has been made known by the spinning nut.

The *feao* and bleeding boy sit nearest to the grave. Then the man with bent head, holds up the child's hand, all covered with blood, as a propitiation for their evil conduct to the chief. The whole company sit in silence, until one, who appears as an advocate for the family, usually a high chief, addresses the spirit in the following prayer:

"Finautailoa (the dead chief's name), here we are, (Here the names of the chiefs present are given.) If you are angry about anything, have mercy upon us, through Tubou (the highest chief of the land), and his elders here present."

Meanwhile, the bleeding hand of the child is held up until the priest returns an answer, in the name of the angry spirit. And I am sure you could not guess what old Joseph said was usually the answer.

"Yes," said the spirit, "I am angry. You have taken the big pig from your *abi*, and given it to your friend. You have given me no *kava* (the native grog) lately. But you go and live."

When Joseph told me this, I laughed and he laughed, and perhaps you will laugh also. It seems so funny that sensible men could be deceived in that way; but they were quite serious. The family soon found another pig, and plenty of *kava*, and the priest got a good feast by it. If the sick woman recovered also, of course the deception was complete.

But the delusion has now vanished. The Tongan now goes to God in his affliction, and, except among the Papists, no longer prays to the dead. He trusts not in the blood of an innocent child, but in the precious blood of Jesus Christ alone for life—for eternal life.

Let me ask, do you also trust therein?—*Juvenile Offering*.

ENCOURAGEMENT IN THE TRANSVAAL. — The Wesleyan missionary, Rev. George Lowe, writes that there is a great change taking place in the Transvaal in regard to spiritual things. He affirms that the kingdom of Christ is making advances with a rapidity that astonishes all who look on. Men come from distant kraals to see the missionary and to tell him of the work which God is carrying forward. He affirms that native Christians are preaching and teaching without pay or reward, simply from love to the Master and from personal conviction of the truth and power of the Gospel. He writes that a few weeks ago one came to him who had been preaching and holding a Methodist class-meeting for about twenty years, during which time he had not seen a missionary.

EARL CAIRNS, in a recent address in London, stated that of the 37,000 native population of Sierra Leone, 32,000 are professing Christians; and of the 44,000 Maoris in New Zealand, 25,000 are professing Christians. If New Zealand, in addition to its British population, counts a majority of even the natives on the side of Christ, may it not be called a Christian country as truly as England or the United States?