

A Story of Fiji.

It was a royal court. Not such a sight as we might see in England when our Queen assembles her lords and ministers round her in her spacious apartments. This was under the banana trees in one of the far-off Fiji islands, and both king and courtiers had darker skins and had less of clothing than is familiar to our northern eyes.

They had all once worshipped idols or evil spirits; they had all but lately been cannibals; not long since every man amongst them would have delighted in bloodshed. If they had to launch a boat they would have rolled it over living human bodies; if a chief had died, his wives and his slaves would have been burnt or cut in pieces that they might follow him. But now all this was over. What a change! How had it come about?

The missionaries had come with their lives in their hands, and the love of Christ in their hearts; they had sown the good seed in faith and prayer, in tears and discouragements, and at last God gave the harvest. The king himself began to listen, and became anxious to learn to read; but it was hard work to him. Even here grown-up people cannot learn as easily as you do, and Thakombau, though he was a king, was, as you may suppose, very ignorant.

The king's little son of seven years was very apt and soon learnt. Then he began to teach his father; but I suppose his majesty needed a good deal of patience, as we are told the little teacher often went to sleep in the middle of the lesson.

By degrees the Gospel took possession of the king's heart, and he began to show it in his life. He resolved to confess Christ, and then it was that he called his people and his attendants together to a grand assembly. Thakombau had a commanding presence, and he looked every inch a king, though one with a dark skin, as he stood up before them. What a gathering it was! There were husbands whose wives he had taken, women whose husbands he had killed, friends whose relatives he had eaten: but he did not shrink from his confession.

"I have been a bad man," he said; "I have disturbed the country; I have done every wickedness. The missionaries came and wanted me to be a Christian; but I said, 'No, I will continue to fight.' But now I desire to acknowledge the Lord as the one true and only God."

Was he not a brave man thus openly to tell everybody what he had done, and what he meant to do?—and his whole life after was in accordance. He put away all his wives but one, whom he married in a Christian way, and they were both baptized; and so consistent and exemplary was his conduct that he became a marvellous example of what the grace of God can do. It would have been hard for any one to believe that he spent the greater part of his life in heathen darkness, an idolater and a cannibal.



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Once the chief of one of the neighbouring islands sent an insulting message wishing to go to war, and saying he would never make peace till he had killed and eaten the king of Bau. But Thakombau's fiery spirit was subdued now: he had come to love peace, not war, and instead of being roused to revenge, he only sent some quiet answer back.

In the year 1874, of his own free

will, this once heathen, now Christian king, ceded his crown to Great Britain. This is what he said: "Give my love to Queen Victoria, and tell her I give her, with my kingdom, the only thing that may interest her, and that is my favourite war-club, which has been my companion through life, and which has been till lately the only law known in Fiji."

I dare say the Queen was much in-

terested in the sight of the war-club; but as, happily, nobody would want to use such a thing in England, she ordered it to be placed in the British Museum.

Then the good Thakombau gave himself up to work for God in the Fiji islands, till at last, in 1878, he was called by Him to an inheritance above. His last words were, "Hold me, Lord Jesus, hold me, my faith in Thee is firm."