

# THE WESLEYAN.

"HOLD FAST THE FORM OF SOUND WORDS."

Scripture.

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## HISTORICAL.

### A TAHITIAN SABBATH.

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The first Missionaries to the Georgian Islands, having made the voyage from England by the Cape of Good Hope, without an allowance for the gain of time in sailing eastward, were on their arrival at Tahiti a half a day and more in advance of visitors, coming to the islands by Cape Horn. This difference still continues; and consequently to-day, though only Saturday, the 22d., in the record on board the *Vincennes*, is Sunday, the 23d., on shore.

A number of the officers and crew attended the services of Mr. Wilson's chapel, both in the morning and afternoon. The exercises on each occasion were so similar, that I shall speak only of those of the morning worship, which I witnessed, in company with Captain Finch and a party from the ward-room and steeple.

We landed at nine o'clock, previously to which we had seen the people, in large numbers, going to, and returning from, a prayer meeting at sun-rise. Hearing the sound of recitations in the school-house, a neat and comfortable building between the cottage of Mr. Wilson and the chapel, we directed our course to it. A Sabbath school, consisting of about one hundred and fifty boys and girls from the ages of three and four years to fifteen and seventeen, was here assembled, in which several respectable, middle aged men acted as teachers and superintendants, while others of the same age and character walked along the passages at the sides and centre of the building, holding long, slender rods of the light hibiscus, with which to touch any of the younger scholars, when disposed to be mischievous and troublesome. Many of the parents and friends were also present as spectators. When we entered the whole school was repeating the answers of a catechism simultaneously, with great promptitude and earnestness. This was followed by a recitation from the Bible, in which one scholar would rehearse a section of a chapter, and another that succeeding, thus alternating from individual to individual, and from class to class with the greatest readiness; and manifesting, by the unhesitating manner in which they continued to exercise from verse to verse and from chapter to chapter, no ordinary tenacity and strength of memory. A hymn was then sung, in which all joined; when the school was closed with an appropriate prayer by the superintendant. Mrs. Wilson and her daughters were present as teachers and managers of the female scholars; and in the whole aspect of the school, there was

a cleanliness and propriety of dress, and personal appearance, and an intelligence and order equal to those found in any of the kind in our own country.

While at prayer,

"The sound of the church-going bell"

with its sweet and elevating associations in the pious mind, began to reach us from a neighbouring grove; and shortly after, the boys led by a native superintendant, and the girls by Mrs. Wilson and her daughters quietly made their way to the temple of God, founded within the last fifteen years, on the ruins of altars which for time unknown had been steeped in blood. Crowds of islanders, of every grade, were seen gathering, by well made gravel walks, leading in various directions, beneath the thick shade of the trees covering the point, to the same spot, all clad in neat and modest apparel, principally white, of their own or foreign manufacture; and exhibiting in their whole aspect, a dignity and respectability of character becoming a Christian people. Almost every individual had in his hand a copy of the portions of scripture, translated into the language of the group, and a book of hymns. The chapel is a large and neat building, one hundred and ten feet long, and forty broad; lofty, airy, and well furnished in all its parts, and wholly of native workmanship. The number of worshippers amounted to about four hundred, the usual congregation at this place, including almost entirely the population of the vicinity. The whole appearance of the people, their attention and seeming devotion, during the exercises of reading the scriptures, singing, prayer, and preaching, was as markedly decorous as would be expected or seen, in America or England, and such as to make a deep impression on my mind. A single glance around, was sufficient to convince the most sceptical observer of the success and benefit of missions to the heathen; for it could not be made without meeting the plainest demonstration, that such can be rescued from all the rudeness and wildness of their original condition, can be brought to a state of cleanliness and modesty in their personal appearance, can be taught to read and write—for many, besides the intelligent and familiar use of the scriptures and their hymn-books, took notes in pencil of the sermon delivered—in a word, can be transformed into all that civilization and christianity vouchsafes to man.

After worship we perceived a large portion of the middle aged and elderly men, and many of the younger to remain in the chapel, while an equal proportion of the females repaired to the school-house. On enquiring the object of this, we learned that it was customary for the members of the church, and persons seriously disposed, to spend a half hour or more after