

MISSIONARY EXERCISES.

(FIRST PAPER.)

Mission Work in the Islands of the Pacific Ocean.

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THIS year you are to learn something of mission work in the lovely islands of the South Pacific Ocean. You know that in your geographies these islands are called one of the grand divisions of the earth, Oceanica, and are divided into three parts viz: Polynesia, Australasia and Malaysia; but with the exception of Australia, New Zealand and a few others they look so small on the maps, and we are told so very little of them in lesson books, that we are apt to think they are scarcely worthy of notice. This, however, is far from being the case, as they are over one thousand in number, many of them large, very fertile and exceedingly beautiful. The larger ones seem to have been thrown up from the bed of the ocean by volcanic action and are mountainous. The smaller ones are the work of a tiny creature, scarcely larger than a pin's head, called, though improperly, for it is not an insect, the coral insect. It looks like a tiny jelly-like speck, and has the power of taking from the sea water the lime it contains, and building up islands and reefs or rings of coral round the large islands. As soon as these little creatures reach the surface they stop working, but the storms and waves gradually deposit sand, mud and sea-weed so that in course of time a soil is formed, and cocoanuts and other seeds are driven by the waves or dropped by birds on the new-made soil, until the ocean rock becomes a lovely island fit to be inhabited. This process is still going on and new islands are being formed. These islands of the Pacific are inhabited by two races quite different both in appearance and language, the Malay Polynesian and the Papuan. The Malays are of Asiatic origin and are descended from Shem. They are tall, well formed, their skin a light yellow, their hair black, smooth and glossy. Their language, of which there are at least seven different dialects, is soft and musical, but so different from ours that it is almost impossible for them to pronounce English. The Papuans are descended from Ham, their skin is dark, though