

PLEASANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK

ENLARGED SERIES.—VOL. VIII.]

TORONTO, SEPTEMBER 29, 1888.

[No. 20.

WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE DONE IN THAT CASE?

BY THE REV. E. A. RAND.

Not to-day, but years ago.

Let us imagine ourselves afloat in the Pacific Ocean. We are in a southerly corner of this vast sea, and ahead of us are islands of varying and picturesque form. They show traces of volcanic origin. It would seem as if some immense mountain one day, having "fired up" with unusual energy and raised all possible steam, had closed every vent-hole and then exploded to right and to left. These fragments, covered with verdure shaded by palms, have finally become the fascinating clusters of headland and valley that we contemplate.

On examination we shall find that these islands are in a division of Polynesia that has been marked "Volcanic Ridge" in a South-sea map. Here are islands that lift spire-like peaks or thrust up a cone whose head has been cut off. Sometimes the ground seems to have a fever-and-ague fit; that may be varied by a spout from a volcano. This section of Polynesia once was, and still is, partially the land of Vulcan, that stalwart smith with forges deep in the earth.

Look now at the island just ahead. We need fear no volcanic action in this generation. Would you like to go on shore? Be careful! We will come to the reason by-and-by. Just now we will view the natives from the water, the long, steady swell of the Pacific gently rocking the boat in which we have put off from the ship.

We will talk about the trees. They are of a tropical character, and among them are the graceful, useful palms. This is the land of the coconut. If a man own a grove of such growth, he can build a house out of its wood, find here the materials for various kinds of furniture, and it will give him something to eat as well as a bowl to eat it out of. Bread-fruit, plantains and bananas also abound. You see no grain-fields, and what is the need of them? From various roots (think of one that is eight feet long and a hundred pounds in weight), from the banana, bread-fruit and other esculent



SCENES IN FIJI ISLANDS.

growths, the natives obtain materials that they ferment without yeast in an original way. They bury the mass, allowing it to remain until fermented and otherwise prepared; and when it is dug up, dough for the cook is all ready. The animals are few. The rat is there, the bat also, and you will hear a dog bark and a pig squeal.

But there are human forms prowling under the palms along the shore, perhaps diving into the water, and they may be coming off in a canoe to interview us. We will, unless the stronger party, keep plenty of salt water between us and those

canoes. Their occupants would like to have us come closer and—eat us! "Horrible cannibals" are words that I find applied to them. We are not surprised to find other brutal customs among them. Did a man die who owned a slave? The slave must be put to death. Was the master a husband? His widow was strangled. Perhaps the man himself was put to death, for these people have an interesting custom of killing off the sick and the aged; they thought this was doing a kind thing. Killing was a favourite amusement. Was a canoe manufactured or a house built, or did an ambassador come from another tribe? Somebody must be killed. When they made killing a business and went to war, a native decked and ornamented for the occasion, surrounded with his weapons, was an object ugly enough by day, but peculiarly so at night, seen, for instance, by any one aroused out of a profound sleep. Of course these people were heathen. Their home was the country of the Fiji Islanders.

One October day about fifty years ago there appeared off Lakemba, a member of the Fiji Island group, two white men who wished to conquer and to change this cannibal race. Without fighting a battle, without lifting a weapon, they proposed to destroy their bloody customs, make them peaceable, loving, honest, temperate, pure. What would you have done in that case if you had been one of those would-be conquerors? They were Wesleyan missionaries, and

they purposed to attempt that great work by preaching and living the gospel of Jesus. Wonderful as any of the old miracles in the Word of God is the subjugation of a hard, rebellious, wicked, heathenish will to the rule of the cross. What shall be said of the miracle multiplied, of the subduing of a people? Those two heralds were missionaries from England—the Rev. Messrs Cross and Cargill. They came to a small island the population of which did not exceed a thousand souls. The chief was favourable to this extent: he gave the missionaries a piece of land and built a