

## The Children's Record.

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### AN OLD STORY FROM THE NEW HEBRIDES.

Some of you have heard the name of Geddie, the first Foreign Missionary of our Church, who went to the New Hebrides about forty years ago. You have read, too, of the island of Aneityum where he labored, and where the natives long since gave up heathenism, where in almost every home they have now family worship.

But many of you do not know what the people were like when he went there, nor how great the change that has come over them.

Let me tell you of one custom,

#### THE STRANGLING OF WOMEN.

When a woman was married a string was tied around her neck and it was never taken off. What do you think it was for? To strangle her with if her husband died before she did, so that, as they thought, her spirit could go to wait upon him in another world. The strangling was done by the nearest friends. So soon as the husband was dead, the parties who were to do the deed, who were in waiting as death seemed drawing near, would seize the woman. Some of them would take hold of either end of the string that was around her neck and pull it until they choked her to death.

Here is a part of one of Dr. Geddie's old letters telling how he saved a woman from such a death. He says:

"The horrid practice of strangling is still carried on to a fearful extent. There was an elderly woman whose husband had been ill for a long time. One day I heard

that he was dying and I went at once to the place.

When I reached there the man was in the agonies of death and the stranglers were there smeared with charcoal. They knew what I came for and looked very savage. The native who went with me whispered to me not to speak as these men were very angry with me.

I told him I must speak for there was a poor woman's life at stake and we must try to save her. So I sat down opposite to them and began to talk to them as kindly as possible of their sin.

The most of them seemed unmoved, but by and by one man confessed that it was wrong, and said he would try to stop it. Then several others gathered round and our hopes began to brighten. After remaining for some hours I went home, leaving strict orders with our friendly natives not to leave till my return.

I had scarcely reached my own house when I heard the sound of the death wail and I hastened back again.

An interesting scene had occurred in my absence. When the bloody deed of strangling was about to be committed, one man bolder than the others said to the heathen party, 'If you do that you will do it at the risk of your lives.' They got faint hearted when they heard this and dared not touch her.

When I reached the spot I found the woman in the house, the door of which was guarded by one of our natives. She was calling on Mose to come and strangle her, and begged if they would not do it to be allowed to go to the bush and strangle herself.

The native who guarded the door tried to quiet her as well as possible. The body of the dead man was taken and buried in the sea according to their custom.

I then arranged with the friendly natives who had been so forward in saving the woman, to remain and guard her through the night, feeling assured that if she were spared to the light of another day there would be no danger. It would then be too late, as they think, for her spirit to