

New Hebridean Sketches.

No. XI.

A NATIVE MARRIAGE.

First—*Getting an Introduction.*—This varies according to circumstances. We may be able to state several of the plans adopted by the young suitor and his friends, but we will commence with the most natural and sensible, and if space permit perhaps others may be given.

A fine young man, athletic and handsome, chances to see a pretty maiden sitting with a group of young girls and old women under the cool shade of some great palm or cocoa tree in front of their village, as he passes on to his own village, and that night his sleep is banished with golden dreams of future happiness. He awakes as darkness merges into day, and discovers that it is but a dream. But he cannot forget it; and as he allows his mind to go back to the happy party he saw last evening at the village, he almost sees the mild face of his gentle friend. He thinks of the fair one, and cannot get her out of his thoughts. His state of suspense he can endure no longer, and he goes to some particular friend and tells him he is "aiyu," sweet in his heart towards this young lady, and asks him to assist him. His friend undertakes to go to the young lady and tell her how his young friend is bound up in her, and he also tells her what a fine fellow he is—so handsome, so young, so kind, how every person likes him, and how all the belles of his own village are so in love with him that they are *fading away into a premature grave!*

All this time she is either sitting with her head resting in her hands, or standing a short distance off with her face turned away from the speaker, and confusedly fingering the folds of her dress or picking the loose pieces of bark off some tree. After he has given the last touch to the picture of her happiness, if she will but accede to the proposal of his young friend, he pauses to ask her what her "inliin-mop-om" (heart or mind) is. If she is quite willing to cast in her lot with her young friend, she will reply that she is *sweet in her heart towards him*; but if only out of respect to her friend and sympathy with him in his trouble, she will simply say, "et upene" (it is good.) The old man returns to tell of his success to his young friend, who on hearing it suddenly springs to his feet and bounds into the air, and then in a stooping position he runs forward clapping his hands for joy, and exclaiming, "hiboha! cheh! naaurinaig ak etmak mun ti intas unyak, kis idim acaig ainyak! 'tum tau upene irak! Mun atime alupas ainyak!" (Good! never! My compassion on you my father! language fails. Did I not say so? How it suits me! I am

henceforward a great chief!) But I must hasten on or my letter will be finished before I've got the happy pair married.

II.—COURTSHIP.

The young man now begins to make presents to the parents of the young lady, and also to herself, and sees but little of the family, but knows it is all right. But now a storm threatens to sweep over the island; all the young men are mad with jealousy and rage, for they all want her now, and they cannot brook the idea of a stripling from another part of the island coming and carrying off one of their village maidens, when there are many better and older men in her own village who have no wives, and one of them has had his mind quite made up to pop the question to her himself so soon as his pigs are fattened and his yams ripe. But her lover has no idea of giving her up, and his friends work hard for him; but as many of the disappointed youth's friends are using their vile tongues to injure the only one he loves, or ever did love. The old and young women of the girl's town are up in arms against the successful suitor, and they meet as a committee of the *Gazette Club* to devise plans to ruin the young man's character, and herald it to all his and her friends. This they do not to injure him of course, but because they are so pure at heart themselves and therefore grieved at anything and everything that is ignoble in others. They are led on by some old dame of the town, a regular encyclopædia, who trumps up a great mountain of untold sins and slanders against the young lady's lover, and hastens (out of the very essence of sympathy of course) to tell the poor deceived girl, and as a true friend implores her, as she values her own happiness, to have nothing to do with him. Before she leaves the girl the *Evening Gazette* comes in, and she corroborates all her mate told; and by the way of supplementing the facts just mentioned by her friend, she states that the young man who has so shamefully treated her is engaged to not fewer than five or six other young ladies, and it is quite true, for she saw him with her own eyes speaking to a young lady, and a friend of hers saw him smiling as he passed another the other evening. And next, the young man who intended to ask the girl so soon as his pigs were fat and his yams ripe is mentioned to the girl as a most suitable husband for her, and as a proof of his sincere attachment she mentions that he has threatened to destroy his rival's plantation, spear his pigs, and demand from the villagers where his rival belongs an old militia musket which his great grandfather gave them in exchange for a hog which has been eaten years gone by. If this does not change the young lady's mind she is further told that