

6d. or 8d. per pound, and the proceeds will be forwarded to our agent in Sydney. It is but little that our natives are able to do for the support and extension of the gospel, but they seem willing to do what they can. All that is contributed for the cause of God appears to be cheerfully given, and will be accepted by Him who requires of a man according to what he hath, and not according to what he hath not. I hope that in a few years this island will not be much of a burden on the churches which support the mission on it.

GREAT MORTALITY.

The mortality on this island during the past year has been unusually great, and the deaths have been more numerous than the births. I may remark, however, that the disproportion has been confined to Mr. Copeland's district, and the births and deaths on my side of the island have been equal. The difference between the mortality on the two sides of the island must be traced to local causes. The fearful hurricane which occurred while the measles and dysentery raged on the island will to some extent account for it. It was far more severely felt on the side of the island where the mortality was greatest, than on the side which I occupy. There was scarcely a house left standing near the shore for a space of ten miles, and the sick being exposed to the weather, contracted diseases from which they never recovered. The wonder is that the mortality has not been much greater, and that so many recovered their health after such exposure. Add to all this the great destruction of food which compelled the natives to live on unwholesome roots &c., when they most needed good and nourishing fare. It would be premature to conclude from the past that the natives of this island are destined to share the fate of many aboriginal races, and pass into oblivion. My mind at least shrinks from the thought, and as God has been pleased to make them the first depositories of his word in these islands, let us pray and hope that they may be preserved as a people, and honoured to take an important part in diffusing the knowledge of Christ to the dark regions beyond.

CIVIL GOVERNMENT.

During the past year something has been done to improve the civil government of the island. In the days of heathenism the island was divided into seven districts, governed by as many high chiefs, whose power was supreme. They were the high priests as well as civil rulers of the island. During life their persons were sacred, and after death they were regarded with religious veneration. When a high chief died his body was not thrown into the sea, as in the case of common people, but was laid on the ground,

and every part covered except the head, which was left exposed to view, and the people were accustomed to present offerings to it. Now in the days of heathenism the objects of worship were called *nat-mas*, which is a compound word, and signifies a dead man; and leads to the supposition that the gods of the island were deified spirits of the high chiefs. When heathenism was overthrown the civil and sacred offices of the high chiefs were so blended that their influence was overthrown also. No class of persons suffered so much as they did, by the introduction of christianity, and for some years they stood on a level with the common chiefs of the island. But the system did not work well. The people treated them with a deference which was not accorded to the others, who possessed very little influence. During the prevalence of the late sickness several of the chiefs died, and when successors came to be appointed, it seemed a favorable time to review the whole subject of the chieftainship. It was the universal wish of the people that the high chiefs should retain their former position as far as consistent with the new order of things and that the inferior chiefs should be regarded as village magistrates under them. The present high chiefs of the island are Lathella, Karaheth, Nohoan-pakau, Matan-ahileth, Nasivi, Nimiv-ero and Nungni-nethom. These chiefs make all laws, appoint to all offices, and hold courts to decide all cases of importance. The Bible is regarded as the statute book of the island, and all laws are based on it. The matters more commonly before the chiefs relate to disputes about land and fruit trees, personal and village quarrels, adultery, and there have been cases of husbands beating their wives and children ill-treating parents, but these are rare. The punishments usually inflicted are fines, labour on plantations or roads, tying, and there have been instances of whipping. The present system of things works well, and there are few spots of the earth where open crime is so rare. I dare say that you and others may be ready to ask, Do the missionaries interfere in the civil affairs of the island? I have no hesitation in saying that we do interfere, so far as to instruct the natives how they may govern themselves. The peculiar circumstances of the people makes this a necessary duty. We found them cruel, degraded and miserable savages. All matters were settled by the club and spear; and might was right, in the days of old. How could such a people form themselves into a Christian government without instruction and advice? The chiefs come to us and say, "We are children and know nothing, tell us what we ought to do." We go to the Bible and tell them what that says on the subjects they wish to be informed about, and also the practice of Christian governments, in so far