

training, and may become injurious members of society.

THE PRESS.

The printing press on this island has now been silent for more than four years. We are preparing it for work, and I hope to see it in successful operation in a few weeks. It will be under the charge of a native who formerly printed for us, but who is in delicate health at present. He will have two boys to assist him, and I trust he may be able, with their help, to do some work for the mission. Some printing has been done in Australia for the mission, but it is very expensive there. The subject of sending home for a printer has been under consideration at our last general meeting, but nothing was decided about it. There are so many different dialects spoken in this group of islands that the printing will be a formidable work in a few years. We are just about to print a book in the Futuna language, prepared by the Rev. J. Copeland, consisting of three parts—the first an elementary school book—the second a catechism—and the third a few native hymns.

FREE-WILL OFFERINGS.

You are aware that the natives of this island have been accustomed for some years to make an annual contribution for missionary purposes. They have not money to give, but they prepare a quantity of arrow-root every year, which is sent to Australia and sold for the benefit of the mission. The amount collected at any station this year amounts to over 1300 lbs., and ought to realise £35 sterling, which will be remitted to the British and Foreign Bible Society as part payment of the book of Psalms. The annual contributions of the natives have hitherto been given to that Society also, to pay for the New Testament in this language, which cost £360 sterling, and they have been about sufficient for this purpose. The Bible Society has always been ready to help us without any stipulation about recompence, and this generosity make us all the more desirous to relieve their funds.

NATIVE CHARACTER.

It has occurred to me that some information about the christian character of native converts might interest you. It is difficult for persons unacquainted with them to form a correct judgment about them, for some rate their piety too high, and others rate it too low. There is certainly a warmth, and at the same time a feebleness about it, which makes it differ in some respects from the enlightened and matured piety of christians in our own favoured land. I find by an examination of our roll of church members that more than 400 members have been admitted into the church at my station, since it was first formed in 1851, and the cases of discipline have been as one to ten of the entire

number. You will be prepared to say that this reveals an unfavorable state of things. In judging, however, of converts from heathenism, you must not make refined christian communities at home the standard of comparison; but rather the primitive churches. We know from scripture that many members of the Church of Corinth, for example, had dishonoured their christian profession by party divisions, neglect of discipline, abuse of the Lord's supper, want of brotherly love, immortality in various forms, &c., yet Paul, amidst all this eruption, which he severely censures, saw much that was good, and upon a few of the whole church declares that they "came behind in no gift." Such is the general character of churches in modern times in heathen lands. They present in some cases a strange combination of good and evil: and while we see much of them to admire, there is much also to condemn. It must be confessed that native christians as a whole are inferior in knowledge, and in the exhibition of christian character to professors of religion at home; but the wonder is that they are not more so.

The christianity of our land is not the product of one age, but the growth of many generations, and of numerous external influences; as well as the converting grace of God. When a man in our own favoured land is brought under the saving influence of the truth, however depraved he was before conversion, still he has thoughts and feelings of a christian nature, and it is comparatively easy for him to assume the forms and consistencies of a christian life. It is not so with these islanders who have grown up among the thick darkness and abominations of heathenism. In their case the tendency of all surrounding influences has been to corrupt, pollute, degrade and deaden every moral feeling of the soul. The voice of conscience is either silent; or so feeble as scarcely to be heard; and for this reason the heathen can regard with indifference sins which appear revolting to us. Now, when such an one is brought out of a state of nature into a state of grace, is it wonderful that he often betrays infirmities which throw a deep and painful shade over his character, and almost lead us to conclude that he is still "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." The sanctification of the soul is a gradual process, and in the case of heathen converts a slow and difficult one.—In their best state they are babes in knowledge and babes in grace, and their spiritual growth will be much affected by the treatment which they receive from those who watch for their souls. The missionary who presides over such a flock needs much wisdom, much patience, much tenderness, and above all much of God's grace. But while there is much in the character of heathen converts to awaken our sympathies, excite our fears, and stimulate our prayers in their behalf, there