

## MISSION NOTES.

THE Fiji Islands form one of the many island groups which stud the South Pacific, and within the past few years have passed entirely into the hands of Britain. The islands number about 250, of which some 80 are inhabited. Their area is about 7,400 square miles, which is equal to the acreage of Wales. The native population is somewhat over 100,000, with about 5,000 foreigners. Two islands are specially prominent in comparative size, one being 80 by 55 miles in extent, the other about 100 by 25. These are maximum measurements. The islands are volcanic chiefly in origin, have still hot springs, and are subject to earthquakes; there are also coral reefs and debris, with indications of some geologically old land. The vegetation is tropical; cocoa-nut, banana and bread fruit trees abound; the yam is a staple product and occupies an important part in the domestic economy of the natives, the times of its culture and ripening giving names to several months of the year. The natives are, as a people, distinctly marked; of a negro type; are strong, cleanly, open-hearted, among the most comely of the Polynesian races, and more moral in their customs. Their religion had some well-defined beliefs—e.g., two classes of Gods, the immortals, who troubled themselves little with the affairs of earth; the deified heroes, whose spirits interfered considerably with the affairs of their race. The family was the unit of society, then came the tribes, then the nation. Tribal wars were frequent, and thus the worst passions became inflamed; neither age nor sex were spared. Especially were the Fijians dreaded on account of cannibalism. From whatever reason cannibalism may have arisen, whether from motives of religion, hatred or veneration, it was avowedly continued as an appetite. Not only were enemies slain, prisoners fattened for the slaughter, and ships' crews esteemed dainty bits, but strife would be encouraged that the appetite might be satisfied. No man or woman was safe if a powerful neighbour or chief lusted after his flesh. Polygamy prevailed, and on the death of a chief his strangled widows would provide meats for the funeral banquet. When a chief's house was to be built, some victim must stand in the hole made for the post, and as he clasped the same the earth was heaped upon him; when a canoe was to be launched, human rollers were used to enable it to find its native element; the sick were treated by being buried alive, perhaps to be afterwards dug up and cooked as puddings. Horrid details, strange monstrosities, to be endured and practised among a people otherwise intelligent, and above the average savage life! What they might have been, had their intercourse with white men been with the common adventurers, we can scarcely imagine. A very pandemonium the Fiji Archipelago must have become, or a waste and desolation; but in the good providence of God some Wesleyan missionaries landed there in 1835 and planted the standard of the Cross. Let the mind rest for a moment upon this scene. Two men, strong in the faith of God, without those pioneers of Western civilization, the revolver and the bowie knife, entering alone upon these islands, hearing a language they had to learn, and witnessing such scenes as we have already hinted at. Think of the horror, the loneliness, the yearning for the grasp of a friendly hand these men must have experienced through long months of privation and toil; what wrestling in prayer lest faith should fail! what yearning of soul as they beheld the abomination. How long, O Lord, how long! What glimpses, may we not also say, of coming dawn tipping the far-off mountain peaks, harbingers of that day when the Sun of Righteousness should rise with healing in his wings.

And now the natives are Christian, and give! Let us hear the account of an eye-witness:—

"The first meeting of this sort at which I was present was held at the junction of two heads of the great Bawa river, the Wai Numboco and the Wai Nimala. On the first day the people of seventeen towns (or villages) assembled, and the crowd must have numbered fully 2,000. On the following day about ten more towns arrived, and, with slight variations, the programme was repeated. We sat under trees on the river-bank, facing the village green, and each town came up in turn in procession, all quaintly dressed up as if for a fancy ball, and marched slowly past us, every one carrying his offering in his mouth for greater security—a purse at once novel and self-acting; for, as both hands were often busy with spear and fan, it was a saving of trouble, and by no means

disrespectful, just to spit out the coin on the mat spread to receive offerings. Some had quite a mouthful to give—three or four shillings. The latter was a sum much aimed at, as the donors of such large contributions had the pride of knowing that their names would appear in a printed list!—an honour not wholly without attraction even in Fiji."

At another place the offering took place in the open air:—

"After lunch came what I may call the offertory, as every one brought according to his ability for the furtherance and support of Christian work. We now found our places set on the other side of the village green, lest it might seem as if the offerings now to be made were to the chief instead of the mission. First 1,000 women advanced single file, each bringing a mat, or a bunch of live crabs, or dried fish, or a basket of yams—one brought a ludicrous roast parrot; then as many men came up, bringing six or eight large turtle, seven or eight live pigs, fowls, yams, palm-leaf, etc. One tiny child brought a large cock in his arms. He was such a jolly little chap—well oiled, with scarlet *sulu* (kilt) of turkey-red, and white native cloth, and quaint, partially shaven head—they shave in such odd patterns, leaving little tufts and curls. Then followed all the usual very graceful dances, which I have so often described, and some new ones, in which every dancer carried a dried fish, let into a piece of a split cocoa-palm leaf, and waved it fan-like, just to mark them as fishers. Everywhere we note the same wonderful flexibility and marvellous time kept in most intricate ballet-figures. But coarse sticks take the place of the old carved clubs, and some ungraceful traces of British trade appear. Here one man was dressed in a large union-jack pocket-handkerchief! and a woman wore the foot and stalk of a broken wine-glass as an ear-ring! The people appear to be very poor, and less tasteful in making their necklace-garlands and kilts. At sunset there was a pause, and then Mr. Langham gave the multitude what seemed to be a most impressive little address, and a few minutes later the whole 3,000 were kneeling prostrate on the grass. It was a very striking scene, remembering that these people are only just emerging from heathenism; but they are so very cordial to the mission, and so anxious to be taught, it seems hard that there should be such difficulty in getting native teachers trained, and this is greatly owing to the lack of white missionaries."

Another extract and we close:—

"To me one of the strangest things here is the unaccountable jealousy of the missionaries, and their marvellous influence with the people, which pervades all classes of white men, old residents and new-comers alike. To understand the position you must recollect that, forty years ago, two missionaries landed on these isles, to find them peopled by cannibals of the most vicious type. Every form of crime that the human mind can conceive reigned and ran riot; and the few white settlers here were the worst type of reprobates, who could find no other hiding-place; for the earliest founders of this colony were a number of convicts who, about 1804, escaped from New South Wales, and managed to reach Fiji, where, by free use of firearms, they made themselves dreaded, and the chiefs courted them as useful allies in war. So these desperadoes gained a footing in the isles, and amazed the Fijians themselves by the atrocity of their lives. One man, known as Paddy Connor, left fifty sons and daughters to inherit his virtues!

"Such men as these had certainly not done much to smooth the way for Christian teachers; yet in the forty years which had elapsed since the Wesleyan missionaries landed here, they have won over a population of upwards of a hundred thousand ferocious cannibals. They have trained an immense body of native teachers—established schools in every village. The people themselves have built churches all over the isles, each of which has a crowded congregation; and there is scarcely a house which has not daily morning and evening family prayer—a sound never heard in the white men's houses; and of course the old vile customs are dropped, and Christian manners take their place. Such is the system of supervision by the teachers, that any breach of right living must be at once known, and visited by the moral displeasure of those whom the people most respect.

"Thus (and the fact that besides feeding and clothing the native teachers, each village once a year contributes to the general support of the mission) is the ground which white men take as an excuse for decrying the excellent missionaries. You hear of 'their inordinate love of power,' and 'greediness'; 'their excellent moral influence is simply 'priestcraft';' and though the speakers are invariably compelled to acknowledge the good work they have hitherto done, I have actually heard men in high position (who have never been beyond Levuka, nor set foot in a native church) speak as if that work was now finished, and it was high time the contributions of the people should be diverted from the support of the mission to the Government treasury; in fact, as if every shilling paid to their teachers was so much of which Government is being defrauded. It is the old story of kicking over the ladder by which you have climbed. For,

most certainly, but for the missionaries and their work here, England would have had small share in Fiji to-day. A questionable gain, I confess! I must say I am greatly disgusted by the tone in which I hear this matter discussed,—not by any of our own party, however, for they, one and all, hold the mission in the very highest honour, and constantly attend the native services."

## THE SPEED OF MODERN STEAMSHIPS.

In an illustrated article contributed by S. G. W. Benjamin to the September "Century," the author describes the improvements in ocean steamships, and says in part:

"Thirty years ago sixteen days was a fair allowance for the passage between England and New York by steam. By gradual steps the point was reached when eleven days was the minimum, and this startled the world. Then began a rivalry between the Inman and White Star lines, attended by a succession of runs showing a gradual increase of speed, which proved a great advertisement for these lines. In 1871 the average time of twenty-four crack voyages by these lines was eight days fifteen hours and three minutes. The *Adriatic's* best westward time was forty-three minutes less. It should be remembered that the westward passage is generally longer than in the other direction, owing to westerly winds and the Gulf Stream. In emulation of this speed, in 1877 the *City of Berlin*, of the Inman line, made the trip to Queenstown from New York in seven days fourteen hours and twelve minutes, and in the same year the *Britannic*, of the White Star line, crossed from Queenstown in seven days ten hours and fifty-three minutes. In 1879 a new rival appeared in this field, the *Arizona*, of the Guion line. This steamship made the eastward passage in 1880 in seven days ten hours and forty-seven minutes, and in one trip in 1881 she lessened this time about three hours. It seemed to be about the best that could be expected of these superb ships, when the new Guion steamer, *Alaska*, after a number of astonishing runs, accomplished the westward passage between the two ports, on April 18, 1882, in seven days six hours and twenty minutes, actual time, against heavy seas. In a subsequent trip eastward she ran the distance in six days and twenty-two hours, actual time. In this, the quickest passage ever made across the Atlantic, the *Alaska* travelled 2,895 knots, being about an average of 418½ knots per day, for seven successive days. It will be observed that the increase of speed has been graduated in proportion to the gradual increase of size. The ships of 1850 were rarely much over 2,500 tons, and were barely 800 feet long. Now the average length of ocean steamers is upward of 400 feet, while 500 feet is not uncommon. The *City of Rome* is 586 feet long, and registers 8,826 tons; the *Servia* is 580 feet, and 8,500 tons; the *Alaska* is 529 feet, and 6,932 tons. The *Austral*, intended for the Australian trade, is 474 feet long and 48 feet 8 inches broad, and registers 9,500 tons. The measurements of this vessel, and of the new Cunarder, *Cephalonia*, which is 440 feet long by 46 feet beam, indicate that the reaction against extreme length has already commenced in the great ship-yards of Great Britain, being in each of these cases less than ten beams to the length."

## WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?

"I have been a member of your church for thirty years," said an elderly Christian to his pastor, "and when I was laid by with sickness only one or two came to see me. I was shamefully neglected." "My friend," said the pastor, "in all those thirty years how many sick have you visited?" "Oh," he replied, "it never struck me in that light. I thought only of the relation of others to me, and not of my relation to them." Common enough is this sort of lop-sided religion. Quarrelsome people complain that there is no love in the world now, and unsociable folks murmur that everybody is so backward to speak up divine things. Many have a very wide eye toward the graces which they receive, but they are nearly blind when it comes to giving out—they do not see it. "It is hard to part," they say; and so they let their gold abide together.—*Sword and Trowel*.

WHAT the church wants is the under-propping of solitary prayer, the strength that comes from secret communion with heaven.