

PLEASANT HOURS

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MISSIONARY HEROES—JOHN HUNT, THE APOSTLE OF FIJI.

BY THE EDITOR.

How great a matter a little fire kindleth! This saying has seldom been more signally illustrated than in the story of John Hunt, the Apostle of Fiji. That a Lincolnshire ploughboy, who grew up to manhood with no educational advantages, should, before his thirty-sixth year, be the chief instrument in the conversion to Christianity and civilization of one of the most barbarous races of cannibals on the face of the earth, is one of the most remarkable events in the annals of Christian missions.

The father of John Hunt had been a soldier, but deserted and entered the navy. He was with Nelson at the battle of the Nile, and, from hearing his fireside stories, his son resolved to be himself a hero. Neither his father nor mother could read. Young Hunt was put, at ten years of age, to the hard work of a ploughboy. At sixteen he fell ill of brain fever, and was brought to the verge of the grave. His soul was filled with dread, and on his recovery he began to attend a Methodist chapel. As he followed the plough, thoughts of eternity agitated his mind, and so engrossed his thoughts, that once being ordered to take a load of corn to market, he set off with an empty waggon. He became soundly converted, and, being full of zeal, was soon asked to address a village congregation. His first attempt was a failure. His thoughts took flight. He sat down overwhelmed with confusion, and went home sad and discouraged. Conscious of his want of culture, he caught at every chance of training his mind, by attending night-school and learning to read and write.

In spite of his uncouth appearance and rustic brogue, he became a favourite with the rural congregations which he addressed. He was still a hard-working farm servant. After walking many miles on Sunday, often not reaching home till midnight, he was in the stables grooming his horses at four o'clock next morning. Being asked if he would like to become a preacher, he confessed he would like to go as a servant with a missionary to South Africa, and teach in a Sunday-school—so modest was his ambition. The Mission Secretaries rather laughed at the idea; but he was recom-

mended for the ministry, and at length was sent to the Hoxton training school. He devoted himself with energy to English, Latin, Greek, and Theology—hitherto his only books had been a Bible and Pilgrim's Progress—and during vacation this raw ploughboy was sent to preach—of all places in the world—in the collegiate city of Oxford.

"PITY POOR FIJI."

About two years before this, two Wesleyan missionaries had gone as pioneers from Australia to Fiji. Their account of the cannibal orgies of the islands was a revelation of horror to England. The Wesleyan Mission House issued an appeal. "Pity poor Fiji," which stirred the societies throughout the kingdom. Young Hunt, James Calver, and another were chosen to reinforce that little band among the cannibals. A fellow-student conduced with Hunt on the perils which he must encounter. "That's not it," exclaimed the brave-souled man. "There is a poor girl in Lincolnshire who will never go with me to Fiji, her mother will never consent!" He wrote at once a manly letter to his betrothed, and in a few days burst into his friend's room, saying, "It's all right! she'll go with me anywhere. In a few weeks they were married and on their way to the scene of their future trials and triumphs at the far Antipodes. At Sydney they met John Williams, the destined martyr of Erromanga, and they called the same day to their different

fields of toil. On reaching Fiji, December 22, 1838, the young missionary and his wife were appointed to Rewa, a solitary station remote from Christian aid or sympathy. They went undismayed to their arduous post. "They soon found," said Bishop Walsh, "that so far as the butcheries and cruelties of the people were concerned, the half

had not been told them. They were, perhaps, the most deeply degraded race of human beings that had ever been met with in any of the South Sea Islands. They were superstitious, cruel, and revengeful in the extreme, and addicted to war and bloodshed, in connection with which they often committed deeds of savage barbarity, a description of which would not be fit for the ears of civilized Christian people."

In personal appearance the Fijians are stout and robust. They care little about clothing, except on state occasions, when they paint their bodies and pay special attention to the dressing of the hair, which is arrayed in the most extraordinary and fantastic manner. We continue to quote as follows from Bishop Walsh's graphic sketch:

"HABITATIONS OF CRUELTY."
"Infanticide and



MODES OF WEARING THE HAIR IN FIJI.

cannibalism flourished in even darker forms than in other savage lands. Two-thirds of all the infants were killed at birth, and every village had an executioner appointed to carry out this deed of blood. Those who survived were early trained to the darkest deeds. Dead bodies were handed over to young children to hack and hew; living captives were given up to them to mutilate and torture. No marvel if we read that sick and aged parents were put out of the way by the clubs of their offspring, and that hoary hairs and failing strength excited neither reverence nor compassion. As to cannibalism, it had become an epicurean art. The mother rubbed a reeking portion of the horrible repast on the lips of her own infant, to generate an early taste for human blood. It was no uncommon thing for a man to select his best wife, or his most tender child for the dreadful festival, and even to invite his friends to the awful banquet.

"Ra Unereundu kept a register by means of stones, of the bodies which he had eaten, and they numbered 900! The horrid practice mingled itself with all the acts of life and worship. The building of a canoe, the burial of the dead, the payment of tax, and even the taking down of a mast, were each accompanied with this revolting ceremonial. A chief has been known to kill eight or ten men in order to make rollers for the launching of his canoe, and the ovens were previously ablaze to cook them for his banquet. We must draw the veil over still darker scenes which will not endure recital in Christian ears."

Amid all this savagery, Mr. Hunt writes, "I feel myself saved from almost all fear, though surrounded with men who have scarcely any regard for human life. We are in the hands of God, whom even the heathen fear, when they hear of him. The people at Lakomba say that their God has actually left the island, because our God has beaten him till his bones are sore!" Ere long converts were made to the religion of the cross and with conversion came persecution of the Christian neophytes, who were pillaged of their property by the heathen. Yet the sufferers bore with

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DANIEL APE, NATIVE FIJI MISSIONARY.



A CHEATING FAGAN PRIEST.