

cutting wood. There were a number of Lifu natives also. In the night eight Vate men swam off to our vessel, imploring us to take them home; and ten Lifu men also wished us to compassionate them. They say that they are badly provided for, flogged, or beaten with a stick, at the discretion of their overseer; are kept longer from their home than they wish to stay, etc.; and we were informed by Mr. Gordon, that numbers of the poor creatures sink under it, and either die, away from their friends, or are taken home in a dying state. Captain Williams and I went on shore to the sandal-wood establishment, to see what was to be done about the said runaways and others who wished us to take them away. A Captain Mair claimed all the Lifu people as his men, and begged us not to take one of them; and Captain Edwards said that the Vate men, to the number of about sixty, were under engagement to him for six months, and that he wished to keep them, and take them home honourably, according to his contract with them. He readily gave up two, however, in whom we felt a special interest, as belonging to the Christian settlement at Erakor, to which we were going, and paid them for the four months they had been with him. Captain Mair sent his boat to remove from our vessel any Lifu natives who were there, and to watch, until the anchor was up, that none escaped. We preferred his doing this, that the natives might see it was his doing, not ours, that some of them did not go with us.

Mr. Gordon, if spared to labour at Erromanga, will be able in a few years to furnish many details respecting the manners, customs, and traditions of that interesting branch of the Papuan tribes. For the present, the following fragments, partly from him and partly from a Samoan teacher who was three years on the island, will not be uninteresting. The population, it has been observed, may be set down at 5000. They are a kindred race to the Tanese. They are scattered, and without any settled, well-ordered village. They are migratory in given localities, as war and planting may require. Their chiefs are numerous, but not powerful. There are two dialects on the island, differing widely from each other, but the one is only partially known on the north-east end of the island, and among a tribe which numbers but a few people. Children are kindly treated in general, but Mr. Gordon thinks there are some instances of infanticide, and that on the death of a mother, her infant child is buried alive with her. There are but few children in a family. Four is considered a large family. One albino has been seen. The population of the island is thought to be less now than formerly. The dysentery which raged in 1842 in other parts of the group, and which led to the breaking up of the Tana mission, and the massacre of our teachers on Futuna, raged fearfully in Erromanga. They traced it to some *hatchets* taken on shore from a sandal-wooding vessel, and threw them all away. It is supposed that about a third of the population of the island died at that time.

Women carry the children on the side. Circumcision is practised. Connected with marriage there is a formal dowry. Polygamy prevails. A great chief has perhaps ten wives. The wife of a deceased husband is taken by the brother of the departed. Bread fruit, yams, taro, fish, pork, and human flesh are the prevailing kinds of food of the people. The women cover their persons from the waist to the heels with leaf-girdles. The men prefer nudity, and a thick rope-work of leaves or cloth in front, half a yard long. The women tattoo each other about the mouth, cheeks, and chin, with rude devices of leaves and flowers. The people are fond of such amusements as dancing, racing, dart and stone throwing. The principal articles of manufacture are clubs and bows and arrows.

A number of old people are to be seen. The sick are not well cared for. They have some medicines for cases of poisoning, difficult labour, etc. They believe in witchcraft, and other things as causing disease. There are few hunchbacks.—Ulcerous sores are common, and also elephantiasis, and fever and ague. The dead are buried, in some cases, without any covering, and, in others, with a winding-sheet of cocoa-nut leaves. They do not *raise* any mark over the grave. It is known rather by a *depression* in the earth of a few inches, and by two sticks standing up, the one at the head and the other at the feet. Some also are laid in caves, without any earth or covering. They do not eat anything which grows within about 100 yards of a place where *their own* dead are buried, but strangers from another district will pluck cocoa-nuts, and eat freely of such things as grow there.