

THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL IN THE SOUTH SEAS.

For ourselves, we should be content to rest the whole burden of proof on the uncontested and incontestable facts of Christian missions in the islands of the South Seas; for surely we need not go in search of degradation below the depths of general and undisguised cannibalism. Nay, further, we should be willing to stake the whole upon the facts of three noble lives, unknown to us even by name till their histories, told by one who knew them well, thrilled us with a new sense of the glory of the grace of God.

It is to the Rev. Wyatt Gill, the veteran missionary who has spent nearly half a century in the South Seas, that we owe the following account.

Nasiline, a chief with whom he was intimate for many years, was both a worker and a sufferer for Christ, a man whom he and his colleagues deliberately counted worthy to stand beside some of the brightest examples of Christian heroism that have ever adorned the Church of God. And yet this man, consistent, nobly truthful, devoted and self-sacrificing, had grown to manhood as a heathen and a cannibal! Mr. Gill told us, with graphic power, how Nasiline, in one of their walks, took him to a secluded bay where part of the skeleton of a wrecked ship was still lodged, gaunt and weather-worn; and told him, with deepest self-abasement and gratitude, of one of the exploits of his heathen days, thus brought to mind—how he had planned to lure this ship ashore, and then, with his people, had seized, and killed, and eaten the four white men who composed her crew!

Maretu, the next one mentioned, who was for thirty years Mr. Gill's much loved and valued assistant, in the mission work at Raratonga, had also spent his boyhood and youth in the darkest savagery of heathenism. On one occasion, going with his father and a few others on a raid undertaken solely to gratify their cannibal propensities, they had surprised and murdered a whole family, and spent the night, as was their custom and their glory, sleeping among the bodies of their victims. Morning roused them to the important task of cutting up and dividing their prey, and it was then discovered that the head of one of the little children was already gone. Maretu had hidden it away stealthily for his private eating.

Yet of this man, Mr. Gill testified that, in thirty years of constant intercourse, he could not point to a flaw in his Christian character, and never heard one even alleged by others. His force of character, his winning tact, and the spotless holiness of his life made him an untold power for good among his countrymen; and in any tribal difficulty, or any jealousy among the native churches, the missionaries always felt that the matter was safe in Maretu's willing hands. His apostolic life was closed by a death of saintly peace and dignity. Lying in a house near the little church, he prayed that he might live till Sunday morning, to hear once more the sounds of the hymns he had loved so long. His desire was granted, and then, lifting up his hands, he blessed his sorrowing people, praying that the Spirit of the living God might ever dwell among them, and so "fell asleep" in Jesus.

Tauraki, the third instance named, belonged to a younger generation, and was baptized in infancy; his father, Elikana, being an eminent deacon and evangelist in the native church. Gifted by nature, as well as grace, a good English scholar, married to a Christian wife, and happily settled as catechist and schoolmaster among his own people, a peaceful and happy life seemed to lie before the young Tauraki. But he had heard the call of Christ, and could not but "leave all and follow him." When it was proposed, a few years ago, to open a new mission among the fierce tribes of New Guinea, Tauraki was one of the first to volunteer. The missionary who loved him as his own son, was fain to dissuade him, or at least to point out plainly all the dangers he would run; but it is no strange thing among these South Sea Islanders to face death for Christ, and Tauraki could not be deterred. He went with his wife, and did good service among the Motumotuans near Port Moresby, gaining great influence among these "wild,

rowdy natives." Then, only last year, a blood feud arose between them and the Moriavians; and Tauraki, going up country on a peaceable errand, with five of his converts and his wife and adopted child, was surrounded by a party of the latter tribe. His plea that he was a foreigner, and a stranger to their feuds, was admitted by the savages, who gave him leave to depart, but refused to spare the Motumotuans, because, though innocent, they belonged to the hostile tribe. Tauraki's noble rejoinder was—"They are my children—if you kill them you must kill me first;" and the next moment they all fell beneath a hail of arrows. The five Motumotuans were all dispatched, and the three others left insensible, but when Tauraki recovered consciousness he found the child dead also. Drawing the arrows from his wife's wounds and his own, he again fainted, and they were found thus by some boys of the party,

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THE NORTHERN MESSENGER is printed and published every fortnight at Nos. 321 and 323 St. James st., Montreal, by John Redpath Dougall, of Montreal. All business communications should be addressed "John Dougall & Son," and all letters to the Editor should be addressed "Editor of the Northern Messenger."

who had been fishing at a distance during the attack. The lads put them into the canoe, and paddled it back to Motunotu, where the devoted pair were tenderly nursed by a Norwegian gentleman, who had settled there for the purpose of opening up trade, and his English wife. The wife survived and was placed in safety with the mission in Hall Sound, but the heroic young evangelist lies in a martyr grave among his "children" in the faith.

Words can add nothing to the weight of lives like these. If any should object that they are exceptional instances, we need only ask, "Are such common among ourselves?" And we may also boldly state the indisputable fact that in hundreds of these southern isles, once sunk in grossest darkness, the standard of both religion and morality is higher far than prevails in Christian England at the present day.—*Service for the King.*