

DEEDS OF DARKNESS.

Rev. Fred. Paton, who is settled on the large island of Malekula, not far from Santo, where our Mr. Annand labors, gives, in *Quarterly Jottings*, some fearful illustrations of the tender mercies of heathenism:—

At a place called Pange, a married woman eloped with a man of another village called Billy. The natives went to get the pair, but did not succeed.

Their failure was a pretext for a hideous deed. According to heathen custom the killing of a relative of the evil doer is almost equal to killing the actual transgressor. Having failed to catch the guilty parties, the natives took the woman's child—a little girl of four years old—and *buried her alive!* The deed was hushed up, and I heard nothing of it till six days afterwards.

On my urging peace, they agreed to cease active war until they had caught the woman. At length they caught her. My teachers pleaded earnestly for her life, and it was agreed that she should be spared. The promise, however, was of little avail, for her own son waylaid and murdered her.

The Pange tribe, having thus lost two lives, determined, in revenge, to kill two people of the other village. The villain Billy, who had caused all the trouble, had escaped, so they decided to kill his brother Surnidangov and his baby-girl of two years old. The mother rushed away with her child, and sought refuge in a powerful village, whose chief was her brother; and Surnidangov fled for refuge to the Pangkumu Mission Station, ten or twelve miles distant by the track. His house and yam house were burned almost to ashes.

Billy now appeared upon the scene and deliberately went to the Pange tribe, offering to save his own life by murdering his brother Surnidangov. The tribe agreed—not caring whether the evil doer or his relative were slain, so long as one of their lives was forfeited. Billy then made arrangements—as it afterwards appeared—for some of the Pange tribe to meet him and witness the murder.

Of course all these plans were kept secret, and Billy came to Pangkumu with the utmost suavity. He drank tea out of the same pannikin with his brother, and in the most friendly spirit suggested that they should go together on a visit to their mother. Though we never imagined the treachery that was lurking in Billy's breast, we felt it would be unwise for the brother to venture, and warned Surnidangov not to go. However, it was of no avail, and they left the Mission together.

We watched them through the glass, and presently in the distance saw a band of men approaching them. They were men of the Pange tribe, and we feared the worst. The suspense was most painful. Presently Billy slipped stealthily behind his brother, and raising his musket shot him in the back. The wounded man dashed into the bush and fell forward dead!

The murderer and the Pange men fled, leaving the body in the bush. One of our Mission scholars found it lying where it fell, and, having kindly buried the poor victim by the seashore, came and told us. We visited the spot and put more sand and stones over the body to save it from desecration.

But the Pange tribe were not yet satisfied—one life only had been taken, against the two they had lost—and now they wanted to kill the fatherless baby-girl. I was able to interpose to save the child—urging peace; and a French trader behaved splendidly, by going to the tribe at ten o'clock one night and forbidding the death. The natives rose in anger, and the mother of the trader, a French lady, came to Pangkumu to be out of danger. But no fighting occurred. The good offices prevailed, and peace was proclaimed on October 31st.

The peace ceremony was interesting, though the actors were heathen. The one tribe brought a standard of beautiful leaves and flowers to the sacred ground of their enemies and laid it down, with pigs for a feast. Then the others, in their turn, offered a peace standard of leaves and flowers, and placed it in the sacred ground of the smaller tribe, also with pigs for a feast. The feast was then made and peace declared.

The two teachers living nearest to the troubled district behaved well, and had a steady effect for peace. They showed no fear, and it was only at my suggestion that one teacher went to another village for a short time when the natives were becoming angry.

I was constantly in the villages during the troubles, and was always treated with great courtesy. The day that the French lady came to Pangkumu, before reaching the boat we met three fighters, but not a gun or weapon was to be seen. They were too well bred to show a weapon of war before a harmless lady, though scoundrels enough to shoot her if they thought it expedient.

I have seen as many as one hundred muskets at one time on the beach near the part at war. On one occasion I met two chiefs and sixty men by appointment. Not a weapon was in sight, and it was only when the guns had to be shifted out of the glare of the sun that I knew every man had a gun handy, and every gun was loaded.

Such are the heathen, who some people say are so happy that it is quixotic to bring the Gospel to them.

Exactly the same trouble as I have described happened quite recently between Pangkumu, our mission station, and another village near. But the villages had heard the story of the Prince of Peace, and though only semi-Christian, they abstained from fighting; the affair was quietly investigated, and settled by a fine of five pigs.

Thus there is sunlight and shadow in our Mission district. But I hope the good Word is surely spreading—brightening the dark