

more and more plainly uttered, and, one night, there was every reason to believe that the murderous purpose of the savages was to be carried into effect. These devoted men and women looked at one another and at their children, and felt as those only can feel who believe that their hours are numbered. They betook themselves to prayer, and the danger passed.

FRIENDLY VISIT AND OFFER.

About this time Commodore Wilkes, with two ships of the United States Exploring Expedition visited Somosomo, and seeing their dangerous position, offered to remove the mission families to some safer part of the Fijis. "Nothing," he said, "but a deep sense of duty, and a strong determination to perform it, could induce civilized persons to subject themselves to the sight of such horrid scenes as they are called upon almost daily to witness. I know of no situation so trying as this for ladies to live in, particularly when pleasing and well informed, as those at Somosomo." The missionaries and their wives, though appreciating much the Commodore's kindness, resolved *not to leave* the work which had been begun.

Success came slowly, especially through the illness of the young king and the benefit of the medical attendance upon him of Mr. Lyth, who had some knowledge of medicine. The old king he also attended in illness. Once, however, when Mr. Lyth ventured to speak to him about religion and his gods, he attempted to kill him. He held him tightly, waiting for club to effect his purpose, but Mr. Lyth made a spring, and left his coat-tail in his hands, and thus escaped. Somosomo had, however, to be abandoned.

CATCHING WOMEN TO KILL.

At Mbau where there was a most powerful king the mission made progress, but here it also encountered the most degrading aspects of heathenism. It was here that there occurred one of the most marvellous instances of female heroism recorded in history. The Mbauti tribe were rovers, spending most of their lives on the sea, and owning the dominions of Mbau. After a longer absence than usual they had lately returned, bringing a large offering to the king of Fijian property, the fruits of their buccaneering.

To entertain in good style such profitable guests, human victims must be obtained, and two youths were accordingly entrapped and killed. But this was not enough, other human sacrifices must be provided, enemies if possible, but if not, then friends. An expedition was prepared to procure them. They started in canoes, and halted under some mangrove bushes, waiting for any stray people that might unawares approach.

A company of young women were heard coming down merrily to the sea. A vile attack was made on the poor creatures, and fourteen were captured. When the capture was reported at Mbau, great was the rejoicing. The place was all excitement, and the people flocked to the shore to hail the canoe fleet with its victims. The missionaries were away. The report reached their wives. "*Fourteen women are to be brought to Mbau to-morrow to be killed and cooked for the guests.*" Mrs. Calvert and Mrs. Lyth were alone with their children. They hesitated not, but determined to go into the very furnace of wild savagery, and to risk their lives and every thing to save their fellow-creatures. A canoe was got and as they drew to the shore they heard the wild yells of the savages. The death drum was sounding and muskets firing. And then shriek after shriek was heard, telling that the work of murder had begun.

EXTRAORDINARY FEMALE HEROISM.

The two brave Englishwomen urged the boatmen to row quickly to the shore. They were met, as they sprang on shore by a friendly chief who ventured to join them, calling out, "Make haste, make haste! some are dead, but some are alive."

Protected by an Unseen Power, they passed through the frantic crowd of cannibals unhurt, and ran forward to the house of the king, to which entry was forbidden to all women. With a whale's tooth in each hand, an emblem of peace, they approached the king, pleading for mercy to those still alive. He was startled by their audacity. He was rather deaf, so the loudly raised their voices. The king at length uttered the welcome words; "Those who are dead are dead; but those who are still alive shall live." A man rushed at once to the executioner to stop him. Five were still living, nine had fallen. The ladies were not satisfied till they went to the murderer, whom they knew, and spoke to him of his cruelty, and warned him again of the king's decision, and saw that the women were safe.

A braver or more Christ-like act has not been recorded in history; and what a picture it gives of the sacrifice made by these heroic women in going to live in the midst of such scenes—and of their unbounded trust in God. Their calm and resolute advance through that bloodthirsty crowd, on the errand of mercy, might furnish an artist with one of the grandest subjects ever painted.

THE WONDERFUL CHANGE.

The faith of these devoted Wesleyan missionaries, many of whom sacrificed health and life in reclaiming this barbarous people, had its reward in the eventual Christianizing of the group. The following sketch, by Miss C.F. Gordon Cumming, gives a vivid idea of the wonderful change—as wonderful as anything that occurred in the history of the Apostolic Church, almost more wonderful—for none of the converts had been so utterly inhuman and degraded.

"We quote, first, from an article of hers in *Good Words*:

The contrast between the slow and uncertain progress of mission work in the Continent of Asia, and the rapid changes which have been effected in so many islands, struck me forcibly during three years of travel among the groups of the Eastern Pacific. I arrived there with a mind far more deeply imbued with the histories of the voyages of the last century than with more modern missionary records, and, like many another traveller, I found it hard to recognize these peaceable, educated, and essentially Christian communities, the children and grand-children of the fierce savages of whom Captain Cook and others wrote.

My first impressions of the South Sea Islands were derived from Fiji, which, in 1875 had, by its voluntary deed, become a British colony. Though it may seem inexcusable that a member of the governor's household should not have been better informed on such a subject, I confess to having been immensely astonished when, very undefined and misty notions about our cannibal and heathen fellow-subjects were suddenly dispelled by a quiet comment from a fellow-passenger (Superintendent of the Wesleyan Mission). He said, 'I think that you will find the Fijians are not altogether ignorant; they have already some schools and chapels.' On further inquiry, I learned that 'some' meant 900 chapels and 1,400 schools, built by the people themselves at every village in the isles, and