

**A NARRATIVE**  
**OF**  
**MISSIONARY ENTERPRISES**

**IN THE**  
**SOUTH SEA ISLANDS;**

**WITH**  
**REMARKS UPON THE NATURAL HISTORY OF THE ISLANDS, ORIGIN, LANGUAGES,**  
**TRADITIONS, AND USAGES OF THE INHABITANTS.**

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*And the idols he shall utterly abolish.—Isaiah li. 23. (See page 115.)*

**ILLUSTRATED WITH**  
**ENGRAVINGS ON WOOD, BY G. BAXTER.**

**SECOND THOUSAND.**  
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INFANTICIDE.—This practice did not prevail either at the Navigators or Hervey groups; but the extent to which it was carried at the Tahitian and Society Islands almost exceeds credibility. Of this, however, I may enable the reader to form some estimate by selecting a few out of numberless circumstances which have come within my own knowledge. Generally, I may state that, in the last-mentioned group, I never conversed with a female that had borne children prior to the introduction of Christianity, who had not destroyed some of them, and frequently as many as from five to ten. During the visit of the Deputation, our respected friend, G. Bennett, Esq., was our guest for three or four months; and, on one occasion, while conversing on the subject, he expressed a wish to obtain accurate knowledge of the extent to which this cruel system had prevailed. Three women were sitting in the room at the time, making European garments, under Mrs. W.'s direction; and, after replying to Mr. Bennett's inquiries, I said, "I have no doubt but that each of these women have destroyed some of their children." Looking at them with an expression of surprise and incredulity, Mr. B. exclaimed, "Impossible! such motherly, respectable women\* could never have been guilty of so great an atrocity." "Well,"

\* It is a fact, which I have often observed, and one worthy of special notice, that the influence of religion is manifested, not only in the character, but even in the countenance, by changing the wild and vacant stare of the savage into the mild expression of the Christian.

I added, "we'll ask them." Addressing the first, I said to her, "Friend, how many children have you destroyed?" She was startled at my question, and at first charged me with unkindness, in harrowing up her feelings by bringing the destruction of her babes to her remembrance; but, upon hearing the object of my inquiry, she replied, with a faltering voice, "I have destroyed *nine*." The second, with eyes suffused with tears, said, "I have destroyed *seven*;" and the third informed us that she had destroyed *five*. Thus three individuals, casually selected, had killed one-and-twenty children!—but I am happy to add, that these mothers were, at the time of this conversation, and continued to be so long as I knew them, consistent members of my church.

On another occasion, I was called to visit the wife of a chief in dying circumstances. She had professed Christianity for many years, had learnt to read when nearly sixty, and was a very active teacher in our adult school. In the prospect of death, she sent a pressing request that I would visit her immediately; and, on entering her apartment, she exclaimed, "O, servant of God! come and tell me what I must do." Perceiving that she was suffering great mental distress, I inquired the cause of it; when she replied, "I am about to die; I am about to die." "Well," I rejoined, "if it be so, what creates this agony of mind?" "Oh, my sins, my sins," she cried; "I am about to die." I then inquired what the particular sins were which

so greatly distressed her, when she exclaimed, "Oh, my children, my murdered children! I am about to die, and I shall meet them all at the judgment-seat of Christ." Upon this I inquired how many children she had destroyed; and, to my astonishment, she replied, "I have destroyed *sixteen!* and now I am about to die." As soon as my feelings would allow me, I began to reason with her, and urged the consideration that she had done this when a heathen, and during "the times of ignorance, which God winked at;" but this afforded her no consolation, and again she gave vent to her agonized feelings by exclaiming, "Oh, my children, my children!" I then directed her to "the faithful saying, which is worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." This imparted a little comfort; and after visiting her frequently, and directing her thoughts to that blood which cleanseth from all sin, I succeeded, by the blessing of God, in tranquillizing her troubled spirit; and she died, about eight days after my first interview, animated with the hope, "that her sins, though many, would all be forgiven her." And what, but the Gospel, could have brought such consolation? I believe that, without the grand truth of pardon by the blood of Christ, I might have reasoned with her from that time to the present in vain. But I forbear all comment; for if such facts fail to demonstrate the value of Missions, no observations of mine will do so.

Frequently have our feelings been most power-

fully excited, at the examination of our school children ; and scenes more affecting than some which have been witnessed on such occasions it is scarcely possible to conceive. One of these, which occurred at my own station at Raiatea, I will briefly describe. Upwards of six hundred children were present. A feast was prepared for them, and they walked through the settlement in procession, most of them dressed in European garments, with little hats and bonnets made by those very parents who would have destroyed them, had not Christianity come to their rescue. The children added much to the interest of the day, by preparing flags with such mottos as the following: "What a blessing the Gospel is!" "The Christians of England sent us the Gospel." "Had it not been for the Gospel, we should have been destroyed as soon as we were born." On some, texts of Scripture were inscribed: "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." "Suffer little children to come unto me," and other similar passages. Insensible indeed must he have been, who could have witnessed such a scene without the liveliest feelings of delight. After proceeding through the settlement, they were conducted to the spacious chapel, and opened service by singing the Jubilee hymn in the native language. The venerable old king then took the chair. He had been worshipped as a god, and had led fierce warriors to the "battle and the fight," but he evidently felt that he had never occupied a station so delightful, or honourable as that of pre-

siding at the examination of the children of his people. These were placed in the centre of the chapel, and the parents occupied the outer seats. Each class was then called up and examined, and after this, individuals from the different classes were selected, and questioned by the Missionary. While this was proceeding, the appearance of the parents was most affecting. The eyes of some were gleaming with delight, as the father said to the mother, or the mother to the father, "What a mercy it is that we spared our dear girl!" Others, with saddened countenances, and faltering voices, lamented in bitterness that they had not saved theirs; and the silent tear, as it stole down the cheeks of many, told the painful tale that *all* their children were destroyed. In the midst of our proceedings, a venerable chieftain, grey with age, arose, and with impassioned look and manner, exclaimed, "Let me speak; I must speak!" On obtaining permission, he thus proceeded, "Oh that I had known that the Gospel was coming! oh that I had known that these blessings were in store for us, then I should have saved my children, and they would have been among this happy group, repeating these precious truths; but, alas! I destroyed them all, I have not *one* left."\* Turning to the chairman, who was also a relative, he stretched out his arm and exclaimed, "You, my brother, saw me kill child after child,

\* This chief was an arioi of the highest rank, and the laws of his class required the destruction of all his children. In this infamous society there were a variety of orders, not unlike those which exist among the Freemasons.

but you never seized this murderous hand, and said, 'Stay, brother, God is about to bless us; the Gospel of salvation is coming to our shores.'" Then he cursed the gods which they formerly worshipped, and added, "It was you that infused this savage disposition into us, and now I shall die childless, although I have been the father of *nineteen* children." After this he sat down, and in a flood of tears, gave vent to his agonised feelings.

This scene occurred in my own place of worship. I saw the man, and heard him utter these expressions. I shall leave the fact to speak for itself. Many other instances equally affecting might be added, but I shall content myself with mentioning but one more. This related to a chief woman, who had been united in marriage to a man of inferior rank; and it was the universal custom to destroy the children of such an union. The first babe was born and put to death. The father wished the second to be spared, but the mother, and the mother's relatives demanded its destruction. The third was a fine girl. The father pleaded and entreated that it might be saved, for his bowels yearned over it, but the mother, and the mother's relatives again carried their point, and the babe was doomed to die. One of the numerous modes of infanticide was, to put the babe in a hole covered with a plank to keep the earth from pressing it, and to leave it there to perish. This method was adopted in the present instance. The father happened to be in the mountains at the time of the

child's birth and interment ; but, on his return, he hastened to the spot, opened the grave, and finding that the babe was not dead, he took her up, and gave her in charge to his brother and sister, by whom she was conveyed to the island of Aimeo, about seventy miles distant, where they trained her up. The husband died, without having informed his wife that their daughter was still alive. After Christianity was embraced, the mother was, on one occasion, bewailing most bitterly the destruction of her children ; when a woman who happened to be present, and who was acquainted with the fact of the child's disinterment, astonished and overwhelmed her with the announcement, that her daughter had been saved, and was yet living at Aimeo. A short time after receiving this extraordinary intelligence, she sailed to Aimeo, and on reaching the shore, hurried with excited feelings to the house of her relatives, and as she approached it, beheld with wonder and delight, a fine young girl standing in the doorway. At once she recognised her own image in the countenance of the child. It was her daughter. She clasped her to her bosom—but I must leave imagination to fill up the scene as she exclaimed, "Rejoice with me, for this my daughter was dead and is alive again." The mother is gone to her rest, but her daughter is, at the present time, an active teacher in our schools, and a consistent member of a Christian church !

The reasons assigned for this inhuman practice afford an affecting comment upon that passage,



“The dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty;” The first cause alleged was their wars. These were so frequent, sudden, and desolating, that mothers have often told me, that to avoid the horrors and distress thus entailed on those who had families, they destroyed many of their children.

A second cause, as we have already intimated, was inequality of station. If a woman of rank was united to a man of inferior grade, the destruction of two, four, or six infants was required, to raise him to an equality with her; and when this had been effected, the succeeding children were spared.

A third reason adduced for the practice was, that nursing impaired the personal attractions of the mother, and curtailed the period during which her beauty would continue to bloom.

The modes by which they perpetrated this deed of darkness were truly affecting. Sometimes they put a wet cloth upon the infant's mouth; at others, they pinched their little throats until they expired. A third method was, to bury them alive. And a fourth was, if possible, still more brutal. The moment the child was born, they broke the first joints of its fingers and toes, and then the second. If the infant survived this agonising process, they dislocated its ankles and the wrists; and if the powers of endurance still continued, the knee and elbow joints were then broken. This would generally terminate the tortures of the little sufferer; but if

not, they would resort to the second method of strangulation. We had a servant in our employ for fifteen years, who previously performed infanticide as her trade ; and we have many times listened with feelings of the deepest agony, while she has described the manner in which she perpetrated the horrid deed.

What a truly affecting picture do these facts exhibit of human nature, where the light of Divine truth has not beamed upon its darkness—where the religion of the Gospel has not exercised its benign influence ! They show that the sun may shine for ages, with all his boundless beneficence, and yet fail to kindle in man a spirit of benevolence ; that the earth may pour forth her abundance, and not teach man kindness ; that the brute creation, impelled only by instinct, may exhibit parental fondness, and man fail to learn the lesson. By no species of ingenuity could we instruct the beasts of the field thus barbarously to destroy their young. Even the ferocious tiger prowls the forest for their support, and the savage bear will fearlessly meet death in their defence. But the facts now stated are only in harmony with innumerable others, which prove that, in every place, and under all circumstances, men need the Gospel. Whether you find them upon the pinnacle of civilization, or in the vortex of barbarism ; inhabiting the densely populated cities of the east, or roaming the wilds of an African wilderness ; whether on the wide continent, or the fertile islands of the sea ; sur-

rounded by the icy barriers of the poles, or basking beneath a tropical sun ; *all* need the Gospel ; and *nothing* but the Gospel can elevate them from the degradation into which they have been sunk by superstition and sin. You may introduce among them the arts and sciences, and by these means refine their taste, and extend the sphere of their intellectual vision ; you may convey to them our unrivalled constitution, modified and adapted to their peculiar circumstances, and thus throw a stronger safeguard around their persons and property, and elevate them from a state of barbarous vassalage, to the dignity and happiness of a free people ; but if you withhold the Gospel, you leave them still under the dominion of a demoralizing and sanguinary superstition, aliens from God, and ignorant of the great scheme of redemption through his Son.

Let science, then, go with her discoveries ; and philosophy, with her wisdom ; and law, with her equitable sanctions and social benefits ; and let them exert their united influence to bless and elevate our degraded world ; but let it be the honour and ambition of the Christian to convey that GLORIOUS GOSPEL, by which *alone* the regeneration, and happiness of mankind can be fully, and permanently secured.