

Missions in Fiji.

BIBLE BURNING.

Fiji newspaper files by the Miowera contain lengthy accounts of the Bible-burning. The first reference to the incident appeared in the "Western Pacific Herald" on February 13, wherein it was stated that some months previously practically the whole of the Fiji inhabitants of the province of Namosi, hitherto professed Wesleyans, turned Roman Catholics. This caused no little excitement amongst the people. Various reasons were given for the occurrence. The "Herald" added—"Matters advanced another stage yesterday. We are informed on reliable authority that some 238 Bibles belonging to the Namosi people were publicly burned at the Catholic mission station at Nalivilili."

The next issue of the "Herald" contained a letter from Father Rongier, declaring that both the fact and statement as regards the burning of Bibles were false, and "from inquiry I fell certain you have been misled by some malicious, ill-wishing individual."

On February 21 the "Suva Times" published a letter signed by the Rev. W. A. Burns, Wesleyan missionary, traversing Father Rongier's denial. The letter goes on to say—"There are so many reputable witnesses, with so much substantial corroboration, that one might calmly invite all risk of a lawsuit upon the evidence." The writer adds: "I fearlessly assert that except for the number said to have been burned the statement in the "Herald" is perfectly correct."

In his letter to the "Suva Times" Mr Burns gives a circumstantial account of the burning of Bibles, supplied by an eye-witness, according to whom two or more cases of books, mostly, if not all, Bibles and Methodist hymn books in the Fiji tongue, were burned in a limekiln specially erected for the occasion in the grounds of the Catholic mission station.

The work of tearing up the books before inserting them in the kiln was done by native girls at the station, supervised by two European sisters. Mr Burns declares that he knows of more than twenty adult spectators, besides a large number of school children old and intelligent enough to be competent witnesses.

In answer to Mr Burns' letter Father Rongier wrote to the "Fiji Times" that the first intimation he had of the burning was the "Herald's" announcement. Upon making inquiry he found that according to the practice of the Catholic Church and the strict injunction laid down in the rubrics, which ordain that all material of a sacred character appertaining to Church worship, including Bibles and prayer books, when worn out shall be destroyed by fire, the Catholic sisters at Nalivilili, assisted by a few pupils, had, as they had periodically burned in a biscuit tin useless Catholic books and Church material, burned in a kerosene tin soiled, useless Wesleyan Testaments and hymn books. He asserts that the sisters were not actuated by any hostile feelings or a spirit of wanton destruction.

In a letter to the "Fiji Times" Mr Burns shows that the chairman of the Wesleyan Mission wrote to Father Rongier prior to the publication of Mr Burns' first letter, asking if the "Herald's" statement of the burning was correct, and that Father Rongier failed to reply.

Passengers by the Miowera state that when the steamer left Suva excitement was still high.

Father Rongier has a letter in the press, in which he asks Mr Burns if the case were reversed and he became possessed of a quantity of Catholic Testaments and hymn books all battered, torn, soiled worn and no longer acceptable to anyone, what would he do with them? He adds, "So far as we Catholics are concerned, we would feel deeply indebted to him if he quietly committed them to the flames and saved them the risk of being used for vile purposes."

Speaking at the Methodist Conference, held last week at Sydney, the Rev. Dr. Brown, general secretary of missions, made a lengthy statement regarding church affairs in Fiji. He said that amongst the chief points of consideration were the aggressive character of the work of the Roman Catholic Bishop and his missionaries and of the

ever-increasing influx of Indians, the political unrest amongst the Indians, the political unrest amongst the natives caused in a great measure by the agitation in favour of federation with New Zealand, and the desire for more self-government by the people. There was a growing desire in the minds of the Fijians for higher education. Another grievance was the poll-tax. Did the conference wonder that some of them felt strongly on the matter and wanted to bring the attention of the Fiji authorities to their grievance, or if necessary to bring it under the notice of the British House of Commons? His opinion was that as at present levied it was a cruel injustice. He appealed for an increase of the missionary staff amongst the Indians.

During the discussion the Rev Mr Carruthers asked if it was a fact that on the occasion of the swearing in of the Governor the Catholic Bishop was given the first place at the function, while the Wesleyan chairman, who was virtually Bishop of Fiji, was relegated to an inferior position.

Dr Brown replied that it did occur. The Methodist Conference Mission meeting at Brisbane adopted a resolution regarding the Bible-burning, expressing their indignation and apprehension of the tendency to revive the worst spirit of ecclesiastical antagonism on the part of the Roman Catholic Church, and that the product would have disastrous results amongst the Fijians.

The Melbourne Methodist Conference adopted a resolution condemning the Bible-burning as an atrocious act and a deliberate insult offered not only to the people of Fiji, but to world-wide Protestantism.

A private letter lately received by a well-known lady of Dunedin from the wife of a gentleman very long resident in Fiji contains some information which is of interest at the present juncture. The writer states that soon after the arrival of the new Governor the natives were informed by the priests that the Governor had brought the new lotu (religion), and that if they did not go over to his lotu their lands would be taken from them and other penalties would be inflicted, such as banishment to other islands, of which the natives are much afraid. The Governor, of course, is not for a moment to be thought of as cognisant, still less as approving, of these steps, but the effect upon the native mind is quite as strong as if he had actually been so.

CHRISTCHURCH, March 7.

Probably the largest audience that ever assembled at a Conference missionary meeting filled Durham-street Church last evening. The president of the Methodist Conference presided. The Rev. W. Slade, late of Fiji, gave a powerful address, lasting an hour, on the methods, results and perils of missionary work. He emphasised two perils—the communal policy, perhaps necessary in the very early days, but now, with its irritating poll tax upon all males over the age of sixteen years, and with its ordinances of undefined terms, was wholly unsuitable to a people developing in civilisation. It was not a suggested federation with New Zealand that had caused unrest. The unrest had been there for at least ten years. The other peril was the un-Christian rivalry of Christian communions. The Protestant denominations, however foolishly they might compete in Home lands, respected each other's defined spheres of operations in the foreign field. The Roman Catholics made no such honourable contract. He was not going to denounce that Church for its creed, but he detested the methods of proselytising adopted by the Roman Catholics in Fiji. He remembered hearing on his return to Fiji in 1890 from Sir John Thurston, the Governor, that he had been obliged to put a stop to the attacks of Bishop Vidal on the Methodist tribes in the mountains, for the Bishop had gone from tribe to tribe sowing seeds of discord. As for the Bible burning report, he had no doubts of its truth, for he knew the character of the Rev. Mr Burns, from whom the report had come. There was no saner nor more careful man in the affing of native evidences in Fiji. Moreover, the incident was not inconsistent with the whole history of that Church. Mr J. F. Arnold, M.E.R., followed, and prayed that the enthusiasm of the meeting towards foreign missions just awakened would also in-

clude the moral and spiritual needs of this colony. There were glimpses of hell in New Zealand as well as in heathendom, and the hope of radical reform must be centred in Him who came into the world to seek and to save the lost.

Tongan News.

A SEVERE GALE.

A SCHOONER WRECKED.

TONGA, March 2.

On February 18 we experienced here a severe gale—not a hurricane and no tidal wave—as was reported should be experienced in Friendly Isles at the same time as at Tahiti. The gale knocked the coconuts about, and generally cleaned things up; a few sheets of iron were stripped off, but otherwise little damage was done. The s.s. Rotokino, on her voyage to here, due February 16, fell in with the same weather, and had to leave-to, which delayed her about thirty hours. No damage occurred, her cargo and live stock being landed in good order.

At Haatal the schooner Croydon Lass is wrecked, and is a total loss. Other small vessels are stranded, but can be refloated.

Mr. Hamilton Hunter, C.M.G., British Consul and Agent, is at present in Fiji. The Orange crop has suffered a little by the recent gale.

The King of Tonga is well, and preparations are now being made to celebrate the anniversary of his coronation in March, with which will be coupled Princess Salote's third birthday.

Good rains have fallen, and temperate weather prevails.

Mr Seddon on Current Topics.

CHRISTCHURCH, March 7.

Mr Seddon addressed a large meeting at Hamner Springs last night. Referring to the South African condition of peace, he said that had the conditions been what were wished by the people of the colony and himself, there would have been no occasion for Mr Chamberlain to visit South Africa. The Boers would never realise the generosity of our nation. They were absolutely beaten and never intended to fight any more, and yet they were treated generously and admitted to a conference, and an arrangement was made so that they could come in voluntarily and surrender.

Referring to New Zealand, the Premier said that what the whole colony wanted was population. He had been told that the number of children was falling off in

Closer Settlement.

CHRISTCHURCH, March 6.

The Canterbury members of Parliament have drawn up a combined report urging upon the Government the necessity for their immediately taking such steps as will lead to closer settlement of the land in this province. The report points out that in the land taken up by fresh settlers the increase in the area of the holdings in Auckland amounted to 507,434 acres; in Taranaki, 319,227 acres; and Wellington, 422,489 acres; while in Canterbury for five years it showed an increased area of only 7418 acres. The report is to be presented to the Premier, and an attempt will be made to get him to inspect land suitable for settlement.

Consumption.

The only large line in plenty of good, rich blood. The only way to fight the bacilli, heal the lungs and build up the strength is through the blood. That is just the reason why Dr. Williams' Pink Pills for Pale People cure consumption. They make new blood. They give strength, energy and health. They actually create life-giving blood with every dose. Dr. Williams' Pink Pills are not a positive cure for consumption—they won't cure every case—but they have cured cases that doctors despaired of. That's a positive fact—and here is positive proof:

Consumption Saved from Death.—"Consumption attacked me over three years ago," says Mr. William Brown, of London, near Slavia. "I grew pale and emaciated, and was greatly weakened by a distressing cough. My lips became discolored, and I had profuse sweats. As I grew weaker and weaker I was removed to the Melbourne Hospital—where my life was despaired upon. But nothing could be done to save my lungs, the daily bacilli consumption was then away with me after weeks. After each spoon of anything I took back on the pillow so white and emaciated that death seemed very close. Then a doctor was actually called in to attend to me the last time. But I suggested an oral wash—enough to save to die. My friends, hearing of the wonderful blood-building properties of Dr. Williams' Pink Pills, made me take them. To my surprise they actually enriched my blood and gave my lungs strength to fight the consumption. Little by little I got on my feet, and at last left my bed. A further steady improvement with Dr. Williams' Pink Pills cured me. Now I am perfectly well and active; I have never seen any more of consumption. My lungs are quite normal again, and I can go through my work as usual, and sleeping for days together. Do not suppose me to exaggerate. Dr. Williams' Pink Pills pulled me through."

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