



"EVEN TO-DAY . . . human flesh still figures in the ceremonial Nambu feasts." The illustration shows an island war-party returning with the skulls of victims.

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sonary's prohibitions and the trader's cotton clothes will be speedily disillusioned by a few days spent among these unwashed Melanesians, lips stained vivid red with betelnut chewing, hair-mop bleached yellow with lime, leaf skirt crawling with vermin, body (almost as often as not) hideous with gigantic cysts or suppurating sores, and face sullen with ancestral fears. Both the missionaries themselves and their endeavours (putting content into their verbal message by long years of welfare service) will extort any visitor's admiration. Under constant threat of fever and climate, storms and hostilities, appetite flagging from monotonous diet, mental balance tottering under long loneliness, and spirits rarely stimulated by visible success, they occasionally face more sudden and spectacular disasters. Take the case of the Dunedin man, who, going to the Reef Islands to erect a mission house, was so impressed that he begged to be given the theological training to occupy it. Once when passing between two of his islands his whaleboat was swept by a sudden squall and carried out of sight of land. For 17 torrid days, without water or compass, he was swept hither and thither, sometimes painfully paddling all day towards some sighted or suspected land, only to find it vanish again in the succeeding night. And then in midnight blackness he was flung through the surf of a reef on to a lagoon—to discover himself by dawn light on his own home beach!

All Black Among the All-Blacks

One day, too, alone and clad only in a fathom of calico loincloth, there landed on cannibal San Cristoval the Rev. Dr. Charles Edward Fox, M.A., Litt.D., and sometime Senior Scholar of the University of New Zealand and an All Black half-back. Though the islanders knew white men only as treacherous "black-birders," he was still alive next morning. And thereafter, as month after month, year after year, passed by he graduated from hourly danger through contemptuous toleration and then half-hearted acceptance to actual blood-brotherhood with the chief's son. The

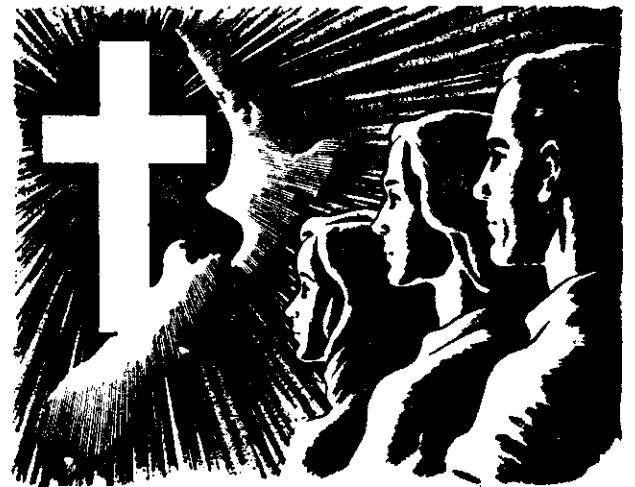
ceremony of opening the veins and mingling the bloods signified a complete transference of identities—names, titles, possessions, wives. So that, when years later the former Cannibal King died, the missionary buried him as "Charles Fox." And, though he refused to become tribal chief in his place, this University graduate and ex-All Black still pays a yearly poll tax as "Martin Takahaina."

A Miss By 25 Miles

The Spanish names on most of the islands are due to their being discovered by the Mendana expedition, out from Peru in 1567. The pilot Pedro Fernandez de Quiros, who brought its shattered remnants at last to Manila, spent the next quarter century dreaming and intriguing to get back to colonise the "Islas de Solomon." For himself he believed them to skirt Terra Australis itself, the mysterious undiscovered Great Southern Land. Sure enough, when in 1593 he at last got command of the fleet of his desire and crossed the Pacific slightly to the south, there he saw a long lofty continuous coastline. Naming his landfall Australia del Espiritu Santo with all the sensations of Columbus, he surveyed out a "New Jerusalem" on the "Jordan." Then a storm drove him out of the bay and back to Mexico in most mysterious circumstances (a hushed-up mutiny?) for he was certainly no worse a seaman than his lieutenant Luis Vaes de Torres who, riding out the storm, discovered in the process that the new-found Continent was an illusion caused by the overlapping from their angle of approach of the New Hebridean chain. Torres therefore continued west looking first for the true Australia and secondly for a way home to Spain. He found the latter in the Strait that now bears his name. And the former he saw just 25 miles away, but did not investigate supposing it to be "just another of these blank blank islands" (I paraphrase his Spanish).

At the moment it looks as though the Japanese, also running into trouble in the Solomons, may miss Australia by a good many more than Torres' 25 miles.

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Speaker: The Rev. H. J. Ryburn, M.A., B.D.

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Speaker: The Rev. J. J. North, D.D.

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