

gone. And after the feast, and the school inspection, and the hot walk over the plantation, came an interesting talk on the verandah where the sea breezes were beginning to blow up fresh and cool. . . . What these Fathers and Brothers do not know about the heart of the Papuan, no one knows. It must be remembered that the Catholic Mission, as a rule

Does Not Delegate Its Work to Native Teachers.

There are very few of these, and what work they do is strictly under direction. The Catholic priest asks nothing of the black man that he will not do himself; he takes for his own portion the terrible risks of the new, untamed cannibal country, as well as the slow, monotonous, year-by-year grinding on at the districts already reclaimed, far from civilisation, out of the way of steamers, towns, luxuries, and conveniences of every kind. Alone in New Guinea, the Catholic missionaries have dared to penetrate into the far unexplored interior; have set up their stations in inaccessible, dreary spots where news from the outer world can scarcely penetrate. It is in these places that mission work is most of all needed; about the easy and accessible coast districts, where other missions congregate, there are many civilising influences, and the native is under Government control.

II.

For the Priest, the Brother, the Sister, Papuan missionary life means hard work, hard living, danger, sickness, poverty; the giving up of all things that men and women hold most dear, the laying down of every personal ambition, of every thought of self—for ever. The hidden life is theirs, as it was of Jesus and Mary; the life of sacrifice and service. Each body and each mind in the Mission gives all it can. Each coin that the Mission owns does the utmost work that a coin can do. Nothing is spent in splendor, nothing in luxury, nothing on anything at all but the barest needs. So it is that the Catholic mission does wonders, on an income that is painfully and pitifully small. They are not good beggars; they are good at almost everything in the world save that, but there they fail. They would dearly like to have more money to spread their work; to have another sixpence or two, so that they can harness it skilfully, and make it do the work of half a sovereign by miracles of contrivance and care; to see cases of goods and groceries and shirts and trousers and boots and cotton stuffs coming up to Yule Island by the Sydney steamers, so that they can give the missionaries a little larger allowance of food, a few more clothes; to have the price of a lady's new spring dress, in order to build a house with it; or the cost of a box of cigars, so that they may keep a deserted orphan child a year. . . . But they are so busy teaching and preaching, and making peace and nursing the sick, and helping the dying, and travelling about, that they have no time at all for begging; nor do they know how to set about it, if they did. So they pray—they have always time for that—and confidently expect Sydney and Melbourne, and all the rich towns of Australia, will feel the effect of their prayers sooner or later, and send them just a little of the superfluity of those luxurious lives—just a drop or two of the golden river that runs down Pitt and George and Collins streets, every day and all day long.

Are they right in so expecting? There is no one who reads this book but can say for himself or herself whether they are. If the hand goes to the purse, these praying souls are justified. It is their prayers that have sent your hand there, fingering your cheque book or your coin.

But in any case they pray, and they believe.

Sorcery.

Back to Tou Ovia—a long way back. It was sorcery that I was hearing about that afternoon, among the many strange customs of the Mekeo country. The Father was a specialist in his subject, and the Brother was one of the original founders of the Mission: he had been in Mekeo no less than twenty-seven years. Between the two, they could open the whole mind of the Papuan before your eyes—had there been time that day.

There are great sorcerers in Mekeo; it is, indeed, the chief interest of native life, and the influence against which the Mission has to fight most strongly. Every village has its sorcerer, usually working hard against the Mission teaching, and claiming for himself the right to order the ways of all the people. At Mou there is actually a school of sorcery. Here the enterprising youth who desires to become a magician puts himself under the care of older sorcerers, and studies the mysteries of the black art as known to Papua. At times the whole school goes off into the depths of the forest, and hides itself there for many weeks. What they do, not even the priests can tell you; it is the most jealously guarded secret of native life. But when the youths come back and start their career as sorcerers, the results are plain enough. Tyranny, oppression, blackmail, magic ceremonies of the most degrading kind, superstitions of the grossest and most mischievous sort, all shot through with a black shadow of midnight terror, and a red web of secret murder—that is Papuan sorcery in its essence. Whole villages tremble under it; tribes are oppressed by other tribes; Mission converts are terrorised. A brave fight is made against the sorcerer, and his power is weakening year by year; but he still remains the greatest obstacle in the path of Mission work, and also of civilisation.

Charms are the great sorcerer's stand-by; he is learned (after a native fashion) in geology and botany, and uses both sciences to favor his art. He knows the names and properties of every plant, flower, fruit, and herb in the teeming life of the Papuan forest, and he has a magical use for most of them. Some plants, he says, will make the yam crop grow, if planted at the right time, and with the right ceremonies. Some will bring down rain. Some will make a woman fall in love with you; others will bring misfortune to your enemies. There are plants that will keep the spirits of your ancestors from biting you as you sleep (but none apparently to keep the local flea or universal mosquito from biting you when you are awake, which seems like a serious omission). One, if you tie it to your hunting bow, will give you an infallible aim; one will make your dog run fast after wallaby or pig. Quite a number, if suitably used, will rid you of your enemies.

In geology (Papuan variety) they are equally skilled. According to the sorcerer-scientist, there are stones that will do almost anything you want, if you choose the right kind and use the right way. I saw a sorcerer's charm-bag in one of the villages; it was filled with stones for the most part, things of curious shape and strange color—fossils, water-worn pebbles and bits of coral, quartz crystals, like ends broken from chandeliers. With these the sorcerer says that he can make war or peace, can cause a snake to bite any person who has incurred his enmity, or even incite an alligator to catch him by the leg as he swims across a stream. Some, he says, he can charm into his enemy's body, to cause a fatal disease. Others, like the ring of the genii in Eastern fable, will bring to heels all sorts of devils, ready to undertake any kind of devilish work that may be suggested to them by anyone able to pay a good price for it; for sorcery is a regular trade and a most lucrative one.

In addition to all this, the elder sorcerers of Mekeo are nearly all competent anatomists, knowing as much about the mysteries of the human body as any medical student who has been made free of the dissection room—and for the same reason. When they were young, there were interesting things you could do with pieces of human bodies, in the way of really high sorcery—there are still, in districts that lie just round the corner, in Papua. But here in Mekeo civilisation has progressed so far that the murders of sorcery must be secret, and not clearly labelled as murder. The Government has a nasty way of hanging people by the neck till they are dead, without consideration for their social position as sorcerers; and the Mission discourages even the most interesting forms of killing, persistently and effectively. I saw and heard more, later on, of this mighty guild of sorcerers. There is no escaping the subject in Mekeo.

(To be continued.)