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38.

THE FRENCH AT TAHITI.

We copy from the Sydney journals the following additional details of the noble struggle for liberty and independence now being made by Queen Pomare's demi-savage subjects at Tahiti. Truly France has cause to be ashamed of her handi-work:—

You have doubtless been informed of some of the painful events that have occurred here since the occupation of Tahiti by the French, but may not be aware of the bloodshed that has lately taken place. War broke out between the Tahitians and their invaders several months ago, and although for the present there is a cessation from actual hostilities, there is little prospect of permanent peace. Most of the people are living in the mountain glens and ravines, where they keep the French at bay, and express their determination to die to the last man rather than submit. We are fighting, say they, for our Queen, our flag, our country, our wives and children, and we are fighting for our religion; we will never submit to the French; we will abide by the flag that Britain gave us: if Victoria refuses to help, and forgets to perform what her fathers promised, we will not forget our fidelity to Pomare; deceitful priests we will not hear: when we are all dead Louis Philippe may be King of Tahiti, and his soldiers and his priests may possess our land. A large part of the island has been laid waste; houses and property have been destroyed; many souls have been hurried into eternity; some of our brethren have been obliged to leave their homes, and have suffered the spoiling of their goods, and melancholy to relate, during this sanguinary contention, one of our own number, the beloved and lamented Missionary M'Kean, has been killed. In addition to this, war has called into exercise all the angry passions of the human mind, and many of the natives taking advantage of the anarchy that prevails, run into all kinds of excesses; there are some, however, who hold fast their profession, and deplore the crimes and calamities occasioned by a war, in which they believe they are righteously engaged. You are aware that after the occupation of the island by the French in November last, Pomare appealed to Queen Victoria for aid, and protested against the acts of the French. The people at first were quiet, hoping that, by the interference of England, their flag and liberties would be restored to them; but the arbitrary imprisonment of some respectable natives for merely speaking their minds, and a demand that four chiefs, who refused to visit the Governor, should be given up to them, drove the people of Papara, Papeuriri, and Tairarahu, to assemble in a body, first at Taravao, the isthmus that joins the two peninsulas of Tahiti, and then to a large valley in the district of Hitiaa, called Mahaena, where they formed a strong entrenchment. About this time the confinement, and then the banishment, of Mr. Pritchard, increased the alarm of the people, and caused many more to join the *nuu* or native army. In the mean time, the French commenced fortifying Papeite, the seat of Government, and Taravao, the isthmus. On the 22nd of March last, a small body of natives from Mahaena attacked the French at Taravao, and in the conflict three Frenchmen and three natives were killed, and some on both sides wounded. A few hours after the above fight had taken place, the Missionaries arrived in a body at Hitiaa, hoping to accommodate matters, so that peace might be still preserved; but such was the excitement occasioned by the news of the conflict, they could do nothing, and therefore left immediately. On returning towards Papeite, we met the French steamer which bombarded the houses at Hitiaa, and killed a woman and child, and wounded two other individuals. April 18.—The Governor proceeded to Hitiaa with a frigate and steamer, and six hundred soldiers, and landing, attacked the entrenchment at Mahaena. A dreadful conflict ensued, the noise of the cannonade was heard for many miles, and after a severe struggle of five hours the French remained masters of the entrenchment, but abandoned it the next day, and returned by sea to Papeite. The natives had about seventy killed and a great many wounded, a few of whom afterwards died; the French had, it is believed, twenty-five or thirty killed, and fifty wounded, of whom some have since died. Amongst the slain were some officers, and on the native side fell one chief, who

lived in this district, Papara, and the son of our principal chief, Tati, also fell. After this, both parties for a time remained quiet, but owing to the prevalence of pillage, by foraging parties of natives, all cultivation having ceased, and the fear that war would soon re-commence, some of the missionaries removed their wives and families to the Leeward Islands for safety. On Sunday, 30th June, hostilities began again, and on that day Mr. M'Kean lost his life. After the fight at Mahaena, the natives retired to another valley called Papenoo, near Haapape or Point Venus, where Messrs. M'Kean and Wilson resided. This place is east of Papeite. A large body of natives had gone on a foraging expedition the preceding week, and approached within two miles of Papeite; they then returned through Papara and Haapape, to Papenoo, most of the people of Papara, where Mr. Moor resided, joining them. On the Sunday morning, as Messrs. Howe and M'Kean were breakfasting with Mr. and Mrs. Wilson, the French steamer came up and commenced firing at the houses. Thinking that the house of Mr. M'Kean was safe, they all went there and carried their breakfast with them. The steamer passed without doing them any injury; but soon afterwards, the Governor and his troops came up, firing right and left into the bush as they advanced. The French halted near Mr. M'Kean's house, just in front of the chapel, the yard of which is surrounded by a wooden fence. The Governor went into the house and spoke to the missionaries. During the conversation, he said he expected to meet the natives a mile or two farther on, and expressed his determination to pursue them to Papenoo. The brethren expressed their sorrow at the probability of blood again being shed, and on the Governor taking his leave determined to leave in Mr. Howe's boat for Papara, as soon as the troops had passed by. As the troops marched by, the missionaries stood in the verandah counting them. About three hundred had passed, and the rear guard was just coming up when a body of natives rushed out of the bush at the back of the house, and fired at them. The French rear immediately turning round, returned the fire, and jumped into the chapel yard to re-load under cover of the fence, the natives continuing to fire all the time. All this occurred in a minute or two. A shot struck the chair in which Mrs. Wilson was sitting, in the verandah; she immediately went into the house. Mr. Howe, startled by the sudden discharge of musketry, exclaimed, "What is this?—let us go in." Mr. M'Kean replied, "I think it is only a feint; but we had better go in." Just as they were turning round to enter the house, Mr. M'Kean gave a convulsive start and fell. Mr. Howe exclaimed, "My brother is killed," and seeing the blood flow from his head, found a ball had entered behind and lodged near the eye. With the assistance of a native, he drew his body into the house, and endeavoured to stop the effusion of blood; he raised his head and hoped to obtain some sign of recognition, but he never spoke, and after breathing a few minutes gently expired, with a faint placid smile upon his countenance. The fight had by this time become general, nearly the whole of the native men had come down, and a dreadful fire of musketry and field pieces was kept up for three hours. The chapel and the houses of Mr. Wilson and Mr. M'Kean were just between the combatants, so that the missionaries were obliged to remain where they were. In the course of the fight the Governor and French doctor came in, having seen M'Kean fall; they expressed their sorrow at his death. A number of wounded Frenchmen were also carried into the house, three or four of whom soon died. Mr. Howe said, that the shouts of the natives, the incessant discharge of musketry, the rattlings of the balls against the house, and the cries and groans of the wounded soldiers, gave him a shock from which he will not soon recover. At length the natives retired, carrying away their wounded and dead. From the number of trees by which they were sheltered, they had only three killed, but many wounded. The French slept upon the scene of action, and in the morning returned to Papeite. Their official report states their loss at five killed, one of whom was a native, serving on their side, and seventeen wounded. When the firing ceased, Mr. Howe obtained a file of soldiers to carry the body of Mr. M'Kean to the boat, and he and Mr. and Mrs. Wilson went to Papara, where they arrived about sunset. Messrs. Moore and Joseph,

with their wives, had been anxiously looking out for them, hearing distinctly the noise of the musketry, and you may judge of their distress, when the body of Mr. M'Kean was brought to their door. The following day, the corpse was placed in a coffin, and committed to the ground, close to the grave of the late Mr. Nott, and in the presence of most of the English residents, and Mr. Barff, senior, gave an address on the solemn occasion. The same day these tragical events occurred at Haapape, another fight took place in another part of the island westward of Papeite. In the district of Bunaanua, where Mr. Darling resides, a man was seized by the French for making cartridges; this aroused the natives, who all flew to arms, and being joined by a body of people from Eimeo, advanced to Faaa, about four miles west of Papeite; here they were met by a French captain, leading on a body of sailors and marines, and a conflict ensued, in which it is said fifteen Frenchmen were killed or desperately wounded, whilst the natives by keeping to the bush had none killed, and only two wounded. The French captain being wounded, ordered his men to retire to a small island near the shore, and the next day they returned by sea to Papeite. The natives then burnt down the house of Major Fergus, a native of Poland, who had accepted the office of magistrate of Faaa, under the French, killed three Frenchmen whom they found in the district, and advancing within two miles of Papeite, burnt down a large house two stories high, belonging to the Romish priest, and the chapel adjacent. A few days ago, news arrived here, that Louis Philippe refuses to accept the sovereignty of Tahiti, but would adhere to the protectorate. The Queen and people, however, are averse to the latter as to the former, and consequently, I fear the contest will be renewed. The Queen lately went in the *Carysfort* to Borabora. As affairs are unsettled, the missionaries work so impeded, and taking into consideration the deficiency in the society's funds at home, the missionaries determined to diminish the number of agents in Tahiti, and Messrs. Jesson, Howe, and Moore, are preparing to leave for England; Mr. Joseph, and the widow and children of the lamented Mr. M'Kean, will accompany the party. Mr. Buchanan is going to Rorotonga, and Mr. and Mrs. Wilson to Samoa. I hope you will excuse the liberty I have taken in sending such a lengthened account of our affairs, but I know that our friends in Sydney all feel an interest in Tahiti. The venerable Mr. Nott died in peace on the 2nd May last, and was buried near to his own house. Mr. Samuel Wilson died last March, after a short illness.

It will be seen by the above, that Queen Pomare had proceeded to a neighbouring island. The French Governor was very anxious that she should return to the shore to live; but she positively refused, and previous to her departure in H.M.S. *Carysfort*, wrote the following letter:—

"Copy of Queen Pomare's letter to Commodore Bruat, in his reply to his inviting her to come on shore.

"Commodore Bruat,—I received your letter of yesterday. This is my speech what I say: I shall not go on shore, I am going to another place until my *accouchement* is over; I wish my people to rest, remain in peace, and when intelligence arrives from Britain and France, I shall think of coming to a decision.

"POMARE, QUEEN."

The intelligence of the French Government having refused to accept the Sovereignty of Tahiti had been received; but after what has taken place lately, if it is intended to preserve the authority of the French in any way, continual bloodshed may be expected; for the natives will never submit to the control of men who have behaved in the tyrannical and oppressive manner that has been pursued by the French since their first arrival in Tahiti.

STRANDING OF THE "ELIZABETH AND JANE."—Intelligence reached town on Monday, of the stranding of this vessel at the Circular Head: the following particulars of which unfortunate occurrence may be relied upon as authentic. The *Elizabeth and Jane*,

left London on the 20th, and Gravesend on the 21st April, and after a stormy passage of 105 days, arrived at Circular Head on the 15th August, for which establishment a portion of her cargo was destined. Having anchored under the head in 4½ fathoms, with 50 fathoms cable; the boats were hoisted out and preparations made for discharging. On the 16th the weather being fine, the crew were engaged in discharging cargo. On the 17th, the wind came on to blow fresh from the eastward, and the vessel riding too heavily to continue discharging, the boats were hoisted on board. The 18th commenced with hard gales from the eastward: a tremendous sea running, which occasionally broke over the vessel, at 7 a. m. the anchor dragged home, and such was the fury of the gale, it was expected every minute the masts would go over the side. An attempt was made to heave the vessel a-head by means of the windlass, when the messenger carried away and the chain ran out. Cut away a second anchor, but the ship continued drifting and occasionally striking heavily. At 1 p. m. found to be making water, and the wind and sea still increasing in violence, it was thought advisable to ease her on the ground. Hoisted a signal, and a whale boat came off and took the passengers a-shore. At 2 p. m., the warp at the head of the second cable parted, and the vessel drawn in shore broadside on the bank, thumping heavily, and making a quantity of water. Set the fore-top sail and jib and hardened her on the ground, ran out a warp to the pier, and a kedge to the quarter. The gale continued until about 6 a. m. On the 19th, when the wind became more moderate, eight men besides the ship's crew, and four boats were employed in lightening the vessel; the pumps were constantly attended, but in spite of every exertion the water gained two inches per hour, and at 4 p. m., she had three feet water in her hold. The wind coming moderate from the S. W. an attempt was made to heave her off, but she had become embedded in sand. A survey was held, and the surveyors were of opinion that from the position of the vessel she would go to pieces should easterly gales prevail. Great fears were entertained that a large portion of the cargo would be seriously damaged if not wholly lost. It was supposed the vessel had broken her back, but this could not be conclusively ascertained. Mrs. Bee-craft was the only cabin passenger, but there were two or three in the steerage, all of whom escaped without the slightest personal injury. Part of the cargo has been received at this port, by a small craft, the *Widgeon* and other vessels have also proceeded to the spot with the expectation of bringing up goods from the wreck. As soon as possible after the receipt of the intelligence Mr. Reed, the agent for the vessel proceeded to Circular Head in the *Rambler*. By the latest accounts, the vessel was embedded five feet in the sand, with seven feet water in her hold; no hopes were entertained of getting her off, but a considerable quantity of cargo had been landed.—*Launceston Examiner*, August 28.

Mr. Reed has returned from the wreck. The ship has been condemned, and will be sold at Launceston, on account of those concerned. We believe the greater portion of the cargo has not sustained material damage; but the heavy goods in the lower part of the hold, consisting of ironmongery, &c., are supposed to be injured considerably. Upon the whole the damage to the cargo is slight, and will not probably exceed ten per cent., so that the underwriters of the merchandise will not suffer to a great extent.—*Ibid*, Sep. 7.