

to be formed of mountains thrown together in the most romantic confusion. The day was fine and at one part of the road we had a view of New Caledonia in the distance and several of the Loyalty Islands. We were glad to find on reaching our destination that Mr Creagh's loss was not so great as he expected. The natives by great exertion saved the most of his clothes and books, &c. The cause of the fire is involved in mystery. It could scarcely have been the result of accident, as the house was shut up at the time, and there was no fire on the premises. The general opinion appeared to be that it was the work of an incendiary. The heathen were not suspected, as none live near the place, and could scarcely have come on such an errand without being seen. It is more than probable that the deed was done by some person living in the neighbourhood impatient of the restraints of Christianity. I embraced the opportunity while at Mr Creagh's station of visiting the graves of Mrs Creagh and Mr Nihil, both of whom have died at the very commencement of their missionary career and both of whom gave promise of becoming useful labourers in the cause of God in these dark islands.

#### RETURN TO ANEITEUM.

After spending ten days on *Mare*, Captain Abbey who had gone to the Isle of Pinés called for us and brought us back to Aneiteum. Mrs Geddie's health has been much improved by the change of air, and at this date is quite restored. Mr Creagh, at our request, accompanied us to Aneiteum. We were of opinion that a visit to this island would be beneficial to him. He has been here about four weeks and expects to return to his own island when an opportunity occurs. We have had much agreeable intercourse with him and esteem him much.

#### DESCRIPTION OF MARE.

The island of *Mare* lies to the S. W. of Aneiteum, distance about 120 miles. The formation of the island is singular, being coralline with a thin sprinkling of earth. It is low, level, and thinly wooded. In several places there is a lower ridge of land by the sea-shore, and this narrow ridge which is in general covered with cocoa-nut trees is the place where the natives live. The ascent from this lower ground to the table land above is perpendicular and can only be ascended at certain places. The island abounds with caves of all sizes and every form.

The dead are deposited in these caves, as there is no depth of soil in which to bury them. I visited several of these natural sepulchres in the immediate rear of Mr Jones' premises and saw in them human bones innumerable. The only soil fit for cultivation is in the interior of the island, and many of the natives walk ten or twelve miles to their plantations. They usually spend two or three days in the week at their working ground, and the remainder of their time at home. The distance of their plantations renders their attendance at school very irregular, of which the missionaries complain, but which they cannot prevent. The ground near the shore is rough and full of pits and rents which makes walking unpleasant and in many places unsafe. There are no springs of water on the island, nor any running stream, but there are many natural pits in which water collects at certain states of the tide, which is blackish and unpleasant. As water is scarce the juice of the young cocoa-nut is used for drink and also the rain which collects in the hollows of rocks. The chiefs of the island possess great power. They are the proprietors of the soil and the natives work for them and give them food as tribute. Their word is law, and the power of life and death is in their hands. The people at large are in a very abject condition, and among the heathen both sexes go naked. But now that the work of evangelization has been successfully begun, we may anticipate with confidence the day when the natives of *Mare* shall sit at the feet of Jesus "clothed and in their right mind."

#### FRENCH AGGRESSION.

*Mare* and the other islands of Loyalty group are now French territory. They have not indeed been visited by any French ship of war, but foreigners have been prohibited by the French authorities from selling ardent spirits and fire-arms to the natives, from which it appears that they claim a jurisdiction over them. They regard them probably as dependencies of New Caledonia, which, however, is not the case, for there is no political connexion between them, and the languages of the people are entirely distinct. French aggression in the Pacific islands has hitherto been unfavorable to protestant missionary operations.

#### VESSELS VISITING ANEITEUM.

Our little island this year has been vi-