

their spiritual growth will be much affected by the treatment which they receive from those who watch for their souls. The missionary who presides over such a flock needs much wisdom, much patience, much tenderness, and above all much of God's grace. But while there is much in the character of heathen converts to awaken our sympathies, excite our fears, and stimulate our prayers in their behalf, there is much also to encourage us to labour for their good. If there is a weakness about their piety which causes them to yield readily to temptation, yet we are often impressed with christian excellencies which many of them manifest—such as strong faith, deep humility, great self-denial, and a constant readiness to make every sacrifice for Jesus' sake and the gospels. I can speak from experience, and truly say that my own faith has been strengthened, and my heart encouraged in the work of Christ in seasons of great trial, by the example of the native converts around me. There are christians in these distant regions of whose piety there can be no doubt, and who would adorn their profession of religion in any land.

RAVAGES OF DISEASE.

I regret to inform you that our island has been visited by whooping cough this season for the first time. It has been less fatal than some other foreign diseases, nevertheless a large number have fallen victims to it. No part of the island escaped its ravages; and many children died of it, and some adults also. The son of Lathella, one of the high chiefs of the island, was among the number. His name was Selwyn, and he was about nine years of age. He was, without exception, the finest looking, and most promising boy on the whole island. We have every reason to hope that death was gain to him. He enjoyed the training of a pious mother, and was at all times a thoughtful and well-behaved boy. I visited him often during his illness, read the scriptures to him, and prayed with him; and always found him in a calm and peaceful state of mind. Some days before his death Mrs. Geddie was conversing with him, and addressed him as a dying person. After she had done speaking he said, "I know that all you have told me is true, and have thought about these things already; tell them to my companions, that they may think about themselves." His death caused great regret, for his amiable disposition had made him a universal favourite. Our island has now been visited by measles, diphtheria and whooping cough in rapid succession. These diseases, within the space of a few years, have swept away one-half of the population. The natives are much dispirited by the great calamities which have befallen them, and we cannot wonder at this, for we

have been painfully affected by them ourselves. It has been a sad spectacle to see them swept by hundreds into a premature grave. We may rest assured that God has important ends to serve by these visitations of His providence. They are a mystery to us at present, but when we cannot comprehend let us stand still and adore. We know that God doeth all things well, and these adverse events form a part of His great plan of mercy towards these lovely, but deeply degraded isles. I think we have no reason to fear that these islanders are destined to be blotted out of existence, nay some things seem to indicate that the time is coming when more than a remnant will be spared to love, serve and enjoy the true God whom we make known to them.

REFUSAL TO RECEIVE A MISSIONARY BY THE TANESE.

I must now inform you of our unsuccessful attempt to introduce the gospel into the island of Tana this year. In a former letter to you I stated that Nauka, the principal chief of Port Resolution, had visited this island last year, and consented to allow Mr. Neilson to settle in his district. I visited Tana a few months after to ascertain the state of matters, and make necessary arrangements to renew the mission once more. Nauka was not at home when I arrived, but I waited a few days for his return. This delay gave me an opportunity of some intercourse with the natives, and of learning the state of feeling among them. I landed on both sides of the harbour, and though I met with civil treatment everywhere, yet there was a reserve about the natives unusual to them in former years. Many old acquaintances did not come to see me until I sent special invitations to them, and then their visits were very short. There was a want of cordiality about them which I did not like, and they endeavoured to evade all conversation about the special object of my visit. The chief returned at last, and came off to the *Dayspring* to see me. He told me that the people were almost unanimously opposed to a missionary settling among them, but said that if Mr. Neilson wished to come to Tana he would use all his influence to protect him. The only native who expressed a wish for a missionary was our old friend Nowar, whose mother was a native of this island. At our annual meeting I gave a report of my visit to Tana, which was by no means favourable. Nevertheless we thought that if white traders could live safely at Port Resolution, missionaries might do so likewise, and Mr. Neilson was forthwith appointed to that place. He embarked after in the *Dayspring* for Tana, with the materials for a house, and I accompanied