

inches, rather than suddenly; *malaria*, more or less virulent, continually invests all the low districts of most of the islands, and is most injurious in dry warm seasons. The presence of this *malaria* has never once been discovered by any one of the five senses. It walks the earth as invisible as the Evil One himself. It cleaves to the ground: it cannot live on the ocean: hence men are safe till they touch our shores. It requires the four principal elements of the ancients—earth, air, heat, and moisture,—for its production; yet it cannot be detected by the most skilful and delicately conducted chemical analysis, although from its effects—various forms of well marked diseases, chiefly fever and ague, and milder forms of intermittent fevers,—its existence is as certainly known as the existence of moral depravity is ascertained by the degrading heathenism which prevails on every one of these unchristianised islands.

DEGRADATION AND SIN OF THE PEOPLE.

Another difficulty arises from the low and degraded condition of the natives, and the smallness of the tribes. It is on account of the first that human life is so little valued; and on account of the second that the power of the chiefs, where they are disposed to protect life, so very limited. It has been chiefly from these two causes that our mission stations have been so often broken up.

LANGUAGE.

A third permanent source of difficulty is the diversity of languages in the group. There are, perhaps, more languages spoken on the New Hebrides than in the whole of Europe. On almost every island there is a different language spoken; in some islands two. Nor are these mere dialectic differences. In the first place, the languages belong to two totally distinct families, the Malay and the Papuan—the Papuan greatly predominates;—and while a common origin, a common family likeness can be traced through all its dialects, yet, for all practical purposes, they are like totally different languages. The languages spoken on the six southern islands of the group occupied by the mission are as different from one another as English, Gaelic, French, and German.

On these, as well as on other accounts, we find the services of the *Dayspring* more and more important every year, both for the safety and success of the mission. It was to the presence of the *Dayspring*, three years ago, enabling us to take advantage of a favourable juncture, that we are indebted, under providence, for the favourable state of Aniwa to-day. But for the repeated visits of the *Dayspring*, most probably the Erromangan Mission might have been broken up during the late epidemic, and

the labours of years again cast to the winds.

But with all these difficulties there is much that is encouraging in the group. Wherever missionary efforts have been continuously put forth for a sufficient length of time the results have been satisfactory; and wherever the natives have been Christianized, their capacity, and disposition, and character, have greatly exceeded expectations. In another document we have called attention to the carrying away of natives from this group, and hence we pass over that subject here.

DAYSPRING.

At our annual meeting this year it was decided that Melbourne should be the headquarters of the *Dayspring* when she goes up to the colonies. Sydney has many advantages over Melbourne for this purpose; but in weighing all the circumstances of the case, it was agreed to fix upon Melbourne. Our arrangements are, that the vessel should be out of the tropics during the hurricane months, which extend from the middle of December till the end of March. She stays in the islands as long as it is considered safe, and should leave the colonies as soon as the equinoctial gales are over. She will remain fully two months in Melbourne, receive the necessary repairs, be exhibited to the public when it may be considered expedient to do so; supplies both for the vessel and the missionaries will be procured, and she will be in readiness to leave at the appointed time. This year, in addition to her ordinary expenditure, she will require to be coppered anew. This will cost about £500, and for this sum we must draw upon the shareholders—sixpence a-piece *extra* from each would cover the whole. Her expenses are necessarily heavy, for, except the two months or so that she lies in the colonies, she is constantly sailing; she has always more or fewer mission families or missionaries on board, and generally a number of natives; and she has no returns to meet this expenditure. But it has been the object of all connected with the vessel to keep down her expenses to the lowest figure that is consistent with the safety and efficiency of the vessel.

FINANCIAL.

We have nothing startling, nothing sensational, to relate, to call forth special sympathy, or excite unusual interest in her behalf. We rest our claims solely on your sense of duty to God, and to the perishing heathen. With a liberality rarely paralleled in the circumstances, you bought the vessel at first, and have now kept her afloat for four years; and we confidently trust that you will abate nothing in the rate of your former contributions. Our income this year has not equalled our expenditure; there has been a falling off in several of the