

News of the Church.

The Foreign Mission Field—Letter from Rev. John Goodwill.

Cape Lisbourne, Nov. 10th, 1871.

MR. EDITOR,—In my last I stated that when we arrived at Santo we found things in a pretty good state, but after a short time, however, we saw that matters were considerably changed. The kidnappers, who are always bent on mischief, had several vessels on the look-out for natives, both after the *Dayspring* left and before she returned again to Santo. Some of these vessels brought natives back who had been away for some years. These the white men have poisoned against the Mission, and filled with hatred against us and horror of the worship, as if it was the cause of all that is evil; besides this, they also provide them with *fire-arms*. They are quite a terror to us, as they are bent on mischief, even for no other cause than out of revenge for the way in which they were themselves treated by the white men. Last year there was not a musket on Santo, as far as I know, but this year there is no scarcity of them, as the slavers deal them out largely in purchasing natives. Santo was always spoken of as a very populous island, but at the rate in which natives are carried off at present, it will soon, like some of the other islands of this group, be depopulated. To my own knowledge above 260 natives have been taken away this season from our neighbourhood, and that is nothing to what is taken away from other parts. Within the last four months no less than 24 vessels anchored in our harbour. It is of very little use to be sending out missionaries to these islands, exhausting the funds of the church, if the slave traders are to continue their traffic. It would be better to send missionaries to the Fijis or to some of the other islands to which the natives are taken: there would be less danger of life and that is no small consideration.

One of these vessels brought Influenza, and as a natural consequence, we had a great deal of sickness and many deaths. The natives imagine that the disease-makers are at work and are killing the people, and say there will be war. There has been a great deal of rain, and as this is also attributed to the miracle-makers, it is no small cause of vexation, as they are prevented from putting in their yams, &c. There is a saying among the natives that none are dying except those who do not attend the worship. I attend them and administer medicine as the cases require. We

feel thankful that we live so far away from the town or villages, as the natives do not bury their dead for 100 days. The dead are kept in their houses. You can easily imagine the effect. The large black flies are horrible. They follow the natives in swarms wherever they go, so that we are very much annoyed by these pests when the natives come near us. Each individual of a family in which a death takes place must remain within doors for five days, and no person under the chief in whose district the death takes place is allowed to eat anything that is cooked on fire until the fiftieth day, on which day they make a feast in honour of the dead, presents are given to all the relations of the deceased, and if any one of these be not satisfied with his portion, he has a right to demand more by a declaration of war. When a person is expiring a great ado is made by blowing shells and making a great noise, so as to prevent the spirit of the departed from going away too far; and in particular the spirit of a chief is thus detained, as it is supposed to enter into some one of his sons or relations, who is to become a chief and sacred man. They also plant Yams, Taro, &c., around the graves for food for the spirits of the departed. All the people of a vicinity in which a person expires are very exact in not being out late in the day. They are very much afraid of the Ranar, or ghosts; but as they have many superstitious notions, and do many things about the dead which I do not understand, yet, therefore, I had better not say any more about this subject until I am a little more initiated into these secrets. One thing I may, however, state, that before they inter the remains of the deceased, the friends are very careful in selecting the best of the bones for their spears and arrows, which they barter away to any one who buys them.

The white men succeeded in corrupting the minds of some of our people while I was away in Aneiteum. Our high Chief, who took a good deal of interest in the Mission last year, can only be brought out to the worship this year by giving him presents. He runs to every vessel that comes, to see what he can get from the traders. Natives are very changeable and fickle, as well as exceedingly greedy. The more you give them, the more they look for, but they take very good care and give you very little in return, but steal from you everything they can get hold of. If they can get away without your seeing them, they compliment themselves on their good fortune, and heartily enjoy themselves.

Our Eracore man, who came on with us as a teacher, committed a great mistake;