

his wife arrived here—viz., since 14th June, 1857—and during this time they have laboured hard among the rude and ferocious Erromangans with little apparent success. Privations of the most distressing kind have been cheerfully and uncomplainingly borne, and the many attempts made against their lives, although hitherto unsuccessful, have rendered their residence here continually full of anxiety and alarm.

The cause of the murder, I am informed, and from my own experience I am certain to be the case, is as follows:—Several months ago the measles, which had previously raged in Sydney, made its appearance in New Caledonia, and there, notwithstanding the exertions of the Governor and the other officials, it rapidly made progress, and a serious mortality was the result. The infection was thence carried by the various trading vessels calling there to all the surrounding islands, and fearful were the ravages of the distemper among the natives. At Lefou, Mare, Aneiteum, Tana, Sandwich, Espirito Santo, and Erromanga, thousands and thousands died—in fact some of these places have been nearly depopulated. Strange to say, a similar disease has never before made its appearance among the natives, and they at once attributed it to their connection with the white men, and called it “the white man’s curse.” The consequence of this idea, especially among the more savage tribes, was naturally a bitter hostility against foreigners, and, singularly enough, against the only class who had had nothing to do with the introduction of the disease, but, on the contrary, who had tried all means in their power to avert the calamity—I mean the missionaries. At Aneiteum, where the mortality was dreadful, the natives repeatedly threatened to take the life of Mr. and Mrs. Geddie, and they burnt down the two handsome churches there. At Tana matters were equally bad; repeated attacks were made on Mr. Paton and his property; and I myself, on one occasion, heard Miaki, the chief at Port Resolution, threaten to take his life if he would not go away in the vessel which brought me there. He refused to go, and hitherto his life has been spared, but I much fear that unless he has left before the tidings of the Erromangan massacre reaches Tana, he will also fall a victim. Here, however, the malady being so virulent as to threaten the extermination of the natives, and their characters being so savagely ferocious, the greatest animosity existed toward the whites; and notwithstanding that Mr. Gordon went daily from morning to night amongst the people, administering medicine, and endeavouring to alleviate as far as lay in his power their misery, he became the object of their extreme hatred. Nuivan, a chief, having been prostrated by the disease, when almost dying, sent for Mr. Gordou, who gave him some medicine. Nuivan died next day; the tribe said that the missionary had poisoned him, and it was resolved to kill all the whites. A plan was laid, and so ingeniously artful was the scheme that had it not been divulged by a friendly native, about ten minutes before the time appointed for its execution, we would almost certainly have all perished. Of course, when the party came to carry their intentions into effect we were prepared, and they went off disappointed. To add to their feelings of enmity towards Mr. Gordon, there was yet another reason, and to illustrate this I copy the following entry in his diary. Speaking of this singular disease, which is strange and alarming to all, he writes: “It was preceeded by nearly an universal opposition to the Gospel, and much murder and idolatry. I felt sure that God would visit them in judgment, and warned them most solemnly but a few days before they were attacked. The chiefs, who maintain that, to give up their idols is the cessation of their rule, can hardly now persuade their people that this is not the finger of Jehovah.” “I warned them to flee from the wrath to come, but they took not warning till too late.” From the disease following close on these warnings, the natives believed that the missionary had prayed to God to send it on them; and this belief readily accorded with the fixed ideas of witchcraft which obtain universally in this island. About two months ago he writes:—“It seems that I was nearly shot about two Sabbaths ago, near Bunkhill, as I was getting on my horse. Some circumstance prevented—perhaps the torrents of rain which fell, while I was engaged as Paul and Silas by the Macedonian river side. It is almost impossible for a missionary to fall into greater perils among such a people, for their belief in witchcraft is universal, and they seem to look upon me as their destroy-