

Our Foreign Missions.

Report of the J. D. Murray.

ANELCAUHAT, ANEITYUM, }
July 13th, 1874

Rev. P. G. McGregor, Sec., &c.

I am thankful to be able to inform you that we are all well here, and that we have enjoyed a large measure of good health, during the past year.

REVIEW.

Respecting our year's work and its results I have little to say. From the close of our Synodal meeting on the 24th July, 1873, until the 31st Aug., we were absent from our station, making a voyage round the Islands, I having been appointed by the Synod to accompany the vessel then as I have been again at the end of this season, as Deputy. During those five weeks public worship was conducted by the elders every Sabbath and Wednesday, both at Anelcauhat and at the outstations. Since our return, till now, I have been able, in the good Providence of God, to preach every Sabbath, either at this place, or elsewhere. The weekly prayer meeting, also, I have attended regularly and addressed frequently. All the Schools I have inspected once, in the course of the year, when I examined old and young on the Catechism, Scripture History and Personal Religion. Besides studying, preaching, visiting the sick and dying, mediating between the disaffected, journeying by land and sea, and attending to other such duties as usually fall to the lot of my brethren in the ministry at home, I have been teaching, translating the Scriptures, dispensing medicine, and directing and co-operating with natives in such manual labours—too manifold to mention—as devolve upon me in common with my fellow-missionaries among the New Hebrideans and uncivilized races.

NATIVE PECULIARITIES.

The greatest difficulties of our position have arisen, I think, so far as the natives are concerned, out of the peculiarity of their mental and moral characteristics and habits, and in consequence of what appears to us as their transition state between that of absolute barbarism and a low degree of civilization. Their principle of action in taking revenge upon each other, for example, has often sadly puzzled and annoyed us. If they have been offended by any one instead of coming and telling us their grievances, they keep shy of us, or do something wrong, or something outrageous, that we may ask them what has broken their hearts. On one occasion I wrote to

Mr. Inglis on this subject, stating to him how preposterous their mode of retaliation appeared to us; and he sent me a reply to the following purport; "They are Orientals. They do as Absalom did when he sent and burnt Joab's barley that he might get Joab to come and speak to him, instead of going to Joab's house some morning, and calling on him himself, as you or I would do: or still more to the point, they act much on the same principle as Samson did, when he sent his foxes and his fire-brands into the standing corn of the Philistines; Samson's grievance was with his father-in-law; but this was the round-about way he took to punish him: and the Philistines find no fault with Samson. It was evidently *use and wont* that he followed." They are an extremely timid race. They are also indolent and impassive beyond anything I ever observed in other human beings. They are avaricious, deceitful, lacking in feelings of gratitude, and with very little sense, apparently of the "true, the beautiful and the good." Nothing seems to excite in them emotions of wonder, awe, or rational fear. So unimpressible and careless are they, that one is sometimes tempted to cease from reasoning and expostulating with them altogether. They will quietly listen to what you have to say to them on the most important subject, but give the most provokingly apathetic answer. The least trifle sets them a-laughing, but they are seldom known to weep. What would prove a most crushing calamity to persons of acute sensibilities only produces in them, at most, the slightest impression. The only conditions under which they seem to become excited are these; viz., that if working in large companies, when, between their boisterous laughing and the singing of their old, unmusical ancestral songs, they raise, and keep up, for hours and days, the most disagreeable and deafening noises; and when quarrelling, when the still uneradicated savagism of their hearts emerges unmistakably to view. They are an amazingly proud, independent and obstinate people. Another characteristic of theirs is that of gossiping, which, as in other places, tends to do immeasurable mischief here. Their statements are often extremely exaggerated, and, in many instances utterly false. Then, in intellect they are but babes. They have very, very few abstract notions, and their combinations of concrete ideas are simple, in the extreme. It is hard for us, therefore, to adapt our instructions to their capacities. As Elisha, in raising the Shunamite's son to life, had to adapt his large form to the child's little form, so have we something very like that to do, as we 'prophesy on these dry bones.' The Aneityumese may