

As to the cause of the outrage, we copy the following extract from a letter by the Rev. W. Cuthbertson, one of the band of missionaries.—

"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 amongst the natives. At Lefou, Mare, Aniteum, 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 contrary, who had tried all means in their power to avert the calamity—I mean the missionaries. At Aniteum, 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 towards 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.

Mr. Gordon was a most devoted and laborious missionary. Amidst all his trials his faith was firmly established on the Rock of Ages. The last words in his diary were:—"Thanks be to God for the measure of faith granted to us in these troublesome and perilous times."

We deeply sympathize with our brethren in Nova Scotia in the heavy bereavements and trials which they are called upon to endure. May they be enabled, in the hour of trial, to trust in the faithfulness of a covenant-keeping God, and to look forward to a better and brighter day. Such a day will assuredly come. It is stated by Mr. Cuthbertson that, at the funeral of Mr. and Mrs. Gordon, he observed the deepest emotion manifested by a native standing near. That very man in 1839 had murdered another servant of God—John Williams. May we not believe that some of those who have now imbrued their hands in the blood of these Christians will yet live to express the bitterest grief for what they have done, and may yet feel the power of the glorious Gospel? At all events the church must not despond. In other places the blood of the martyrs has been the seed of the church. The very cruelties which we are now recording will, no doubt, lead to many prayers for the conversion of the heathen in Erromanga; and we doubt not that missionaries will be found ready to take the place of those who have fallen, and to lift again the standard of the cross. In the storming of some strong citadel, the fall of the first band of assailants does not cause discomfiture. Others press forward into the breach. The thinned ranks are closed up, and victory may in the end be secured. Shall it not be thus in such a case as the present? We doubt not it will be so, and that even now some may be resolving in the strength of God to offer themselves to His service, and to fill a place, even if it should be in the forelorn hope, in the army of Emmanuel.

Since the preceding sentences were written, we have learned, with pleasure, that the clouds which have gathered so gloomily around the New Hebrides' Missions are clearing away. The latest tidings from Saria and Erromanga are hopeful. The measles had not quite disappeared, but the people were less turbulent. Several of the converts had died in the faith.