

drinking of the blood, of some one or more, with whom but yesterday they may have eaten together in the house of God.

In writing we always endeavour to look upon the bright side of the picture; but during the past month, the Tana Mission has not had a very bright side upon which to look. Disease and death have been doing their work, their strange work in our midst to a very alarming extent—have cut off many of our natives—and have, as you may naturally suppose, confirmed this awfully superstitious people in the idea, that we and the gospel are the sole cause of this mortality. Since the commencement of the sickness, none of our chiefs *Lut Tana* and *Kapuka* have attended public worship, the former regularly, the latter occasionally.

#### TESTING THE CHARACTER OF THE NATIVES.

Though we have all along had something of the form, still we were often afraid that we had little or none of the real power of vital godliness—my intercourse among the people during the past month, and the many trying dispensations through which in the providence of God, we have been called to pass, have confirmed the opinion which I had previously formed.

Lest we should be deceiving ourselves as to the foundation upon which we were attempting to build, and lest our poor natives should not have proper ideas of the advantages, temporal and spiritual, derivable from the gospel, and of some of the duties devolving upon those, who profess to be the followers of God, I set about a careful investigation of the motives, by which they were indifferently actuated in attending public worship. I commenced with the chiefs, without whose permission none dare attend. I began by enquiring what did they expect to derive from the religion of Jesus? Why were they so punctual in their attendance upon the house of God, and at the same time refuse to give up any of their heathenish practices? The following are some of the reasons assigned by particular persons. *Yaresi* who was the first man on this side of the island, to apply for teachers or missionaries, had been to *Aneiteum* several years ago—he was well acquainted with the *Aneiteumese* in these days of heathenism—he was back to *Aneiteum* lately—since the arrival of missionaries—he was delighted with the temporal advantages, which he saw them enjoying, with the property which he saw in their possession, all of which he knew they had obtained in consequence of having missionaries residing among them. Taking it for granted that he and his people would enjoy similar advantages, if they had only teachers and missionaries living on their island, he asked for teachers; he got ten *Aneiteum* families to live on his land. They were well supplied with native and foreign property, much of which they distributed gratis among his people. He also got many presents on account of his protecting the *Aneiteumese*—and professing himself favorable to the new religion, until eventually his sanguine expectations were more than fully realized. As regards deriving of spiritual blessings, he had not the most remote idea, not the least desire; and when told that in order to be a sincere worshipper of the true God, they must renounce every false God, abandon their heathenism and sacrifice to none but the only living and true God, he thought that I was requiring more of him and his people than God would require. To interfere with their long established manners, customs, &c., is in their estimation an unpardonable sin. Tell them that they cannot serve God acceptably, and at the same time renounce none of even the worst abominations of heathenism, and they will not believe you. Finding that the Gospel of Jesus when properly embraced is a gospel, the end and design of which is (in addition to enriching them temporally) to strike at the very foundation of their heathenism—to restrain their corrupt appetites and passions—to regulate and reform their hearts and lives—and to bring them under the government of a religion pure and undefiled, neither he nor one of his people have been to worship during the past month.

*Nanua*, one of our chiefs, attends regularly during certain months in the year, and some months he never makes his appearance. Upon enquiring into the cause of his attending only part of the year, and also into the advantages which he hoped to derive from his being (*afuace*) a worshipper, I was told that he was promised to go to *Aneiteum* two years ago in the "*John Knox*," and that none but *afuace* persons should go in her. After receiving that promise the year before last he