

moved by death, after a short illness, the precise nature of which appears not to be clearly ascertained. Mr. Paton thought that his death was occasioned by an overdose of laudanum; Mr. Geddie and Mr. Copeland are both decidedly of opinion that that could not have been the case. After his narrow escape from the clubs of the savages on the 1st of January he appears never to have been well. But whether his illness arose from the shock given to his system by the fright, or whether it was caused by atmospheric influences inducing fever and inflammation of the brain, and that terminating in apoplexy,—whether it was one, or other, or both of these, or something else, it is difficult to say. The Great Master called his young, promising and faithful servant home, and the youthful widow, a stranger in a strange land, is lamenting her early loss. “Even so, Father! for so it seemed good in thy sight.” I was one of the four missionaries who were present at the location of Mr. and Mrs. Gordon. The prospects at that time were highly encouraging. For nearly four years their lives appear to have been in no special danger. From all the evidence that has come before us we have always regarded the Erromangans to be a mild and tractable people when compared with the Tannese. And but for this fearful epidemic, by which two thirds of the population were swept away, they might never have been in any danger. But the universal belief in witchcraft or sorcery,—the belief that sickness and death are occasioned, not by natural causes, but by sorcery or witchcraft, and that the way to prevent these is to kill the sorcerers,—and the fact that this was a foreign disease, directly traceable to the white men, excited the revengeful feelings of the dark-hearted Erromangans, and led to this fearful and fatal catastrophe.

Mr. Gordon was a strong, bold, fearless man; a laborious, self-denying missionary; eager, earnest and unwearied in seeking the salvation of the heathen. If it is true, as the account of his death before the public would lead us to infer, that in some instances his zeal was greater than his prudence,—that in the peculiar circumstances of the island his preaching was calculated to have an irritating rather than a soothing effect,—that it was putting the new cloth on the old garment, pouring the new wine into the old bottles, and making what was previously bad only so much worse,—although on this point, till we have fuller information, we must suspend our judgment,—yet, admitting it were true, we would still tread lightly on the ashes of the dead—it was only an error in judgment, not implying any moral obliquity, but nevertheless teaching a lesson and giving emphasis to the admonition of our Saviour, “Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.” No blame, however, even of this kind, could be charged against Mrs. Gordon: hers was a meek, gentle, loving spirit; quiet and uncomplaining; prudent, earnest, and devoted to the service of Christ; she was esteemed and beloved by all who knew her. And her name will henceforth be written in the same martyr list with that of Mrs. H-lmore and Mrs. Price. Her sufferings and death in the cause of Christ, and while seeking the salvation of the heathen, will awaken loving sympathies in many hearts, and excite to noble efforts in many and far distant lands. Amen. So be it. But your young men and your young women may say, “What possible encouragement can you hold out to us to become missionaries to the New Hebrides, when you tell us that, within a few months, nearly a third of the population of Aneiteum has been swept away, and a half or two thirds on some of the other islands—that the winds and the waves have left the islands in desolation—that Mr. Johnston has fallen a victim to disease, and Mr. and Mrs. Gordon to the savage cruelty of excited, superstitious savages—and that Mr. Paton’s life was hanging trembling before his eyes?” The case is certainly discouraging, but by no means hopeless. The work is God’s, and he is faithful to his promises. Where Churches and missionaries are earnestly and honestly seeking the advancement of God’s glory, and the salvation of the heathen, he may try them and purge them, but he will not cast them off. These calamities have almost all come directly from the hand of God, and great are his tender mercies. “For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy, saith the Lord thy Redeemer” (Is. liv. 8, 9). I have just received a communication from an excellent Free Church minister, requesting me