

LETTER FROM THE NEW HEBRIDES.

BY REV. J. W. MACKENZIE.

Erakor, Efate, New Hebrides,
June 10th, 1895.

DEAR MR. MORRISON, - I am glad to say that my daughter and I are keeping well; indeed, my own health has not been better for years. We enjoyed the change to Aneityum, to the meeting of Synod, a few weeks ago, very much. The fellowship with kindred spirits was truly delightful and soul-refreshing. The ten days we were away passed all too quickly. How different from the olden times when we went in the Dayspring, and were away five or six weeks.

But even away out here we are advancing, and were you to peep into many of our native's huts at night you would see that they are not stationary. I remember when we came among them, some of them used to string a number of candle-nuts on the mid-rib of a cocoanut leaf, and this made a very good light so long as it lasted. Then I advised them to make cocoanut oil, which they did, and I ordered small, cheap lamps for them. This was a great improvement, but after a time they were not satisfied with even these, and so they must have kerosene lamps. As there is a store at Fila Harbour where they can purchase both lamps and kerosene, I have seen many of them taking home a four-gallon can.

But to get back to the meeting. It was by far the largest we have ever had. Including one or two visitors, there were thirty six adults and nine children present. Not a missionary in the field was absent.

One of the most important subjects before us for consideration was the new Dayspring. On one point we were almost unanimous, and that was regret that the Foreign Missions Com. of Victoria had acted so hastily in ordering the vessel to be built. Before taking such a step, the Synod should have been consulted, especially as to have done so would only have caused a delay of a few months. Had the order to build not been sent to Scotland, the majority of us would have voted against having a vessel built. Her annual expense, we think, will be much more than is paid for the present steam service, which is giving fair satisfaction.

Our people are now busy preparing their arrow root. We were afraid it was going to be a failure, as two days after they commenced it rain began to pour, and it continued wet for five days. All that was made those two days had to be left in the tubs, and we thought it would be all spoiled. To-day being a beautiful, sunny day, we turned it out on sheets to dry, and were delighted to find that it was all right. Had it been partially dried, it would doubtless have spoiled. We have not yet heard what last year's contribution realized, but hope to hear soon.

We expect to have a larger quantity this year than we had last.

The good work is progressing slowly, but steadily, at Mele. Over sixty have joined us since this time last year. In one sense, we are better pleased that they are coming in gradually, as we can overtake them more successfully in school. We are managing very nicely, both there and at Fila, in regard to the language. As you may be aware, the language of these two islets is altogether different from that spoken on the mainland of Efate. When we began to visit them, none of the children and but few of the women could understand the Efatese. Most of the men could understand it, and some of them could speak it, as they had had more intercourse with the mainland.

Teachers from Erakor have been settled at both Fila and Mele, and Efatese books have been placed in their hands; and so now, not only can the women and children understand the Efatese, but most of them can speak it. Strange, their language is like that of Aniwa and Futuna, and like the Samoan.

Among those who recently renounced heathenism at Mele is Mal, the principal chief of the island. In days gone by he did his best to prevent us from visiting them, and on more than one occasion threatened my life. Those who have not yet come in are quite friendly, and not only allow the teachers to have service in their huts, but some of them ask them to do so. The same time the chief just referred to joined us, several children came to church for the first time along with their parents.

Another little boy whose father is still heathen was very anxious to come with them, but his father would not consent. When he saw the other boys start off, he began to cry, and kept on crying the greater part of the day. The father's heart was touched, and in the evening he allowed him to go to Sabbath-school, so he bounded off with a happy heart. He had on a man's shirt which someone had lent him for the occasion.

The Mele people—although until recently they buried the first-born alive, thinking the mother would have no more children if they failed to do so—are very fond of their children. Inner-looking children you cannot find anywhere in the group.

In my last report I told you how grieved I was that a number of my young men, to whom I had devoted a good deal of time, had been taken away to Queensland. I am glad to know that my interest in them has not been altogether fruitless. Several of them have since written to me, expressing their sorrow for having gone away, and assuring me that they have not forgotten the instruction I gave them.

One thing especially made their hearts very sore, as they expressed it. They heard that some of their class-mates whom they had left