

they have killed without punishment, and boast of the number of outrages they have committed with impunity. Moreover, whenever an outrage is committed either on Tanna or Erromanga, it is a motive and a stimulus for the natives of the other island to do the same. When the Gordons were killed, a number of Erromangans accompanied a Tahitian in a boat to Port Resolution, to stir up the Tannese to kill the missionaries and all connected with them, and then to proceed to Aneiteum to complete the work of destruction. They had heard that Mr. Geddie's church had been burned, and that all the natives had become heathen. But when they reached Tanna and heard the true state of affairs; that the burning of the church was the act of one man only, and that he was a prisoner for his crime; after creating some excitement they returned home.

It must be borne in mind that, as a general rule, on these islands no deliberate outrage upon life or property is ever committed, except on the authority of the chief; because to do so is to declare war, and unless a chief is prepared to go to war he will not allow an outrage to be committed; but when committed the whole tribe assume the responsibility of the act. Little can be said on behalf of their bravery or courage; but they are naturally cunning and deceitful; and when wishing to commit an outrage on a white man living ostensibly under their protection, they will bring natives from a distance to perpetrate the deed, and then profess they cannot help it. One of the few acts of stealing that have occurred on this island for a long time back, and which took place some months since, was conducted on this principle, effected by proxy.

The plea of ignorance can no longer be set up on their behalf, as excusing or palliating their conduct towards missionaries. This might have been used with some show of reason twenty-five years ago, but not now. Since that time, both on Tanna and Erromanga, they have had continuous intercourse, with missionaries, teachers, and mission ships; and for four years before the last outrages, missionaries had been living among them. They knew that the missionaries and all connected with them were peaceable; that they injured no one, but were ever ready to do good, as opportunity occurred. These crimes, whatever they might be, were not crimes of ignorance.

Besides this, the principle of blood for blood, or life for life, the *lex talionis*, is a principle which every native, even the most ignorant and degraded, understands perfectly well. Every one knows that if he kills a man, or commits any similar outrage, he is doing an act for which a like punishment will be inflicted, as soon as the

friends of the injured have it in their power to do so. On this point above all others, the law of God is still legibly written on their hearts, their conscience bearing witness to their crimes, and their thoughts accusing them of guilt. Hence, whenever a native commits an outrage on the life or property of a missionary, he knows that he is committing a crime which exposes himself and his tribe to punishment, on his own acknowledged principles. He expects that punishment will be inflicted on him if it be possible. He may think himself beyond the reach of punishment, and rejoice in his crimes; but he knows well what he has merited, and if punishment does not reach him, he ascribes it to the weakness, not to the forgiving spirit, of the parties injured. Men-of-war had often visited these islands; but for the earlier and lesser outrages no punishment had been inflicted; the natives had been admonished, cautioned, and threatened, till they concluded that every visit would end only in words.

It must also be understood that Port Resolution is the centre of political power on Tanna; the influence of the tribes around the harbor is felt over the whole island. It was through their influence that Mr. Matheson's station was broken up, as well as Mr. Paton's. Two years ago Mr. Copeland found their mischievous influence at work on the opposite side of the island at Black Beach; and it was owing chiefly to the same influence, that our teachers were driven away last year, and that same station broken up. But for the kindness of the captain of a trading vessel, who gave them a passage to Erromanga, it is probable that the *Daya* spring, on her visit there last year, might have found the party all killed. To repress crime at Port Resolution, is to repress it over the whole island.

Such being the history of the two islands; such being their mutual influence for evil; such being the principles on which outrages are committed; such being their hopes of committing crime with impunity; and such being the leading position of the tribes around Port Resolution for instigating evil, that, in all the circumstances of the case, it appeared to be necessary, that the natives should be made distinctly to understand that missionaries, as well as other British subjects, were cared for, and would be protected by the representative of the British Government.

I come now to state our connexion with the man-of-war, and how that connexion originated. After the murder of the Gordons, a man-of-war, the *Pyrolus*, Commodore Seymour was sent down here to enquire into the matter. The Commodore visited Aneiteum, Tanna, and Erromanga, but did nothing in the way of inflicting punishment on any of those connected with