

New Hebrides.

LETTER FROM MR. McKENZIE.

ERAKOR, EFATE,
Nov. 23rd, 1886.

My Dear Mr. Scott:

On the 14th inst. the *Dayspring* arrived from Sydney. We had been expecting her for some time, and could not imagine what was detaining her. Being one of a deputation appointed to assist in erecting a house for a new missionary, should one arrive, I was prepared to go on board. But although there were three new missionaries the season was too far advanced to think of settling any of them. Our good ship had to be taken into dry dock for repairs, hence she was so late in returning to the Islands. She is now North and will return for our mail in the course of ten or twelve days.

Many thanks for your favor, as well as for the *MARITIME PRESBYTERIAN* and the *CHILDREN'S RECORD*. My little boys are very much pleased with the latter. You are very happy in your selection of little stories such as children like. I hope your *CHILDREN'S RECORD* will have a wide circulation, as it will be sure to interest the youth of our church in the spread of Christ's kingdom.

One thing you will be specially anxious to hear from us at present is, whether our work is affected by the proceedings of the French. So far, they have not in any way, to my knowledge, interfered with the work, but if the latest reports of their intentions are true, our prospects are anything but cheering. Unfortunately they have their head-quarters on this island, and they are now settled on all sides of us, so that more than most stations, ours will be affected by their movements.

A French military post, as you are aware, was established on this island some months ago, ostensibly to protect their settlers, but virtually, I believe, and indeed the settlers assert this, the first step towards annexation. I don't believe they ever had the slightest idea of removing their soldiers. I hope I may be mistaken in this, but present appearances do not look as if I am.

You can imagine my feelings on being informed a week or two ago that French priests are to be settled on Meli, part of my field. I need not be informed, although one of the French settlers had the kindness to tell me, that they will be op-

posed to our work. Three French fathers lately visited the group in a man-of-war—one of them, my informant said, was on Aneityum in Dr. Geddie's time.

When on our way to Meli last Sabbath a French man-of-war overtook us in Pango Bay. We supposed the priests were on board, and we waited anxiously for some time expecting they would come ashore. She left early next morning for Havannah Harbor, without visiting Meli, so we are still left in doubt as to the truth of the report. She may land them on her return.

At present we are all well, and the good work is gradually advancing. Since meeting of our Mission Synod in July, about sixty heathen have joined us—part of whom have moved from the interior and settled at Bufa. More are soon to follow. A number of the young men of Fila have lately joined our candidates' class. A few weeks ago the natives of that village completed a commodious and substantial lime church. With a contribution kindly forwarded by Rev. Mr. Warden from the Sabbath school of Erskine Church, Montreal, I intend purchasing a bell for them, and so instead of the beat of the heathen drum of former years the sound of the "church going bell" will be wafted across the waters to the ships at anchor and the homes of the planters around the harbor.

Our new church at this village is near completion. When we get seats for it our congregation will have quite a civilized appearance. Thanks to the kindness of the W. F. M. S. of Durham, Pictou Co., I am able to order seats to be brought down next trip. As they have not expressed their wishes for any particular object to which their contribution is to be applied, I trust it will meet their approval if I use it for this object.

My stock of *gods* is gradually increasing. A day or two after the death of the sacred woman of Fila which took place about two months ago, I received two. One of them is in the shape of a ring and is about three inches in diameter. It looks as if made from a large bivalve shell. It is the god of Fila; and so Fila is won for Christ at last. It is the strongest fortress on the side of the island yet taken from the enemy, and has endured a long siege. And now with our united kind regards, and with best wishes for your success in Christ's cause, I remain,

Yours sincerely,

J. W. McKENZIE.