

opportune juncture: various forms of opposition had been removed; a movement in favor of Christianity had just commenced, and we arrived just at the most favorable time for assisting to carry it forward. In less than six years after our arrival, in less than ten years after the settlement of missionaries, the whole population (3500) had abandoned heathenism and placed themselves under Christian instruction. In 1857, Mr. Gordon arrived from Nova Scotia, and was settled on Erromango, where he and Mrs. Gordon labored for four years with considerable encouragement, and without any apparent danger, till the measles broke out, and the people were dying by hundreds on all sides of them. It is a fixed article of belief throughout all those islands, that neither death, disease, nor any calamity, is occasioned by natural causes: they are all produced by sorcery and witchcraft. Their sacred men are all disease-makers. The missionaries are all sacred men: they administer medicines, and profess to cure diseases; and the natural inference is, that if they can cure, they can also cause disease. Working on this feeling, during this awfully exciting time, an enemy to the mission, it is confidently said, instigated the natives against the missionary and his wife, as causing the epidemic. The melancholy result is already stated.

The following year, 1858, three more missionaries joined us.—Mr. Matheson, from the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia, and Messrs. Paton and Copeland from the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Scotland. These three brethren were located on Tanna. In 1859, my wife and I, accompanied by a native of Aneityum, returned home in the "John Williams," that I might superintend the printing of the New Testament in the language of Aneityum. Mr. Copeland took charge of our station during our absence. In 1860, Mr. and Mrs. Johnston arrived from Nova Scotia, and were settled on Tanna. All was encouragement and prosperity in our mission, till 1859. Aneityum was Christianised, Erromango and Tanna were supplied with missionaries; and three other islands, Aniwa, Fotuna, and Fate, were supplied with teachers, and ready for the reception of missionaries. It seemed to be only a question of time, that, humanly speaking, could be almost safely calculated, when these five islands would also be Christian; but the Lord's thoughts are not as man's thoughts.

"God moves in a mysterious way.
His wonders to perform."

Our first trial was in 1859, on the death of Mrs. Paton: she died six months after her arrival on the island. 1861-2 were, however, the two great years of trial to

this mission: in the end of 1860, the measles were brought from Sydney to these islands by two sandal-wood vessels. It would appear as if no care whatever had been taken by those on board to prevent the infection from spreading: it would seem as if they purposely tried to spread the disease, especially at the stations occupied by missionaries and teachers. The results were fearful; on Aneityum more than a third of the population were consigned to their graves; on Erromanga the mortality seems to have been still greater. About the same time a fearful hurricane once and again passed over those islands, destroying or damaging mission buildings to a great extent, and laying waste the houses and food plantations of the natives; these were followed by partial famine, which greatly aggravated the calamity caused by the measles. Mr. Johnston died on Tanna about six months after his arrival; Mr. and Mrs. Gordon were massacred on Erromanga, as stated above; a fine new church was burned on Aneityum: this was the work of a superstitious heathen, one of a few stragglers that still clung in heart rather than life to the faith of their fathers. This year was altogether one of unprecedented trial both to the missionaries and the natives. In 1862 another great hurricane passed over the islands, laying waste everything in its progress, but was withal less destructive than those of the preceding year. War broke out on Tanna; and in consequence of this, both the mission stations were broken up, and the missionaries fled to Aneityum to save their lives. Mr. Matheson's health was in a precarious state when he first arrived here, and Mrs. Matheson though in good health, was not robust. They suffered so much during those trying times, that Mrs. Matheson died six weeks after her return to Aneityum. Mr. Matheson survived six months, but died on Marc, whither he had gone for a change of air. Mr. Paton being driven from Tanna, with no immediate prospect of resuming his labours there, was appointed by his brethren to visit Australia, and bring the claims of this mission before the Christian public there, especially the Presbyterians. The result of his appeals on behalf of the New Hebrides Mission,—his raising nearly 5000*l.* in the different colonies for the new mission vessel, for the bringing out of new missionaries and for the support of native teachers,—these things are all well known. Our new vessel has been built in Nova Scotia, and is, as we hope, at this time on her way out to those islands with a reinforcement of missionaries. Mr. Paton has returned to Scotland to try and obtain a large staff of missionaries for the New Hebrides: for truly the harvest here is