

We have had rather stirring times at this station since I last wrote you. The occurrences which have taken place are of considerable interest and importance, and will probably exercise no small influence on the future of the mission, and also of the country. I proceed to give you some of the details.

In the *Record* for April 1855, I gave an account of "Poisonings at Henshaw Town." These poisonings, by the *esere* on poison bean, took place in November 1854, on the death of a boy, the son of a freeman called *Oko Odiong*. Three persons, an old man, with one of his sons and one of his daughters, were pitched on as having killed the boy with *ifot*, freemason, or witchcraft. They were compelled to take the *esere* on a glorious Sabbath morning, and all died under its influence.

Well, in November last year, 1855, the pale horse and his rider, *Death*, revisited the household of *Oko Odiong*, and another of his sons then sickened and died. As usual here, several persons were suspected of having killed him, also, by *freemason*, and were doomed to take the ordeal of the *esere*. Three persons in particular were thus suspected, and thus doomed. These were, 1. *Okunga*, a half brother of *Oko Odiong's*, a young man of about 24 or 25 years of age; 2. a half sister of *Okunya's* named *Iquaya*, a comely damsel of 18 or 20 years of age; 3. a decent looking matronly lady of from 40 to 50 years of age. The two young people call her "mother," but I believe she is their aunt.

These three persons, dreading the too frequently fatal ordeal of the *esere*, fled to the mission house for protection. As I was confident that they had committed no crime, protection was at once afforded them. Time passed on; it was well known that they were on the mission premises, but they were never demanded from me, in any manner, by the gentlemen of the town. A band of the "blood-people" did, indeed, come to Henshaw Town one morning, and took off as prisoners several of the relatives of the refugees, in the expectation that either they would deliver themselves up, or that I should give them up, to take the *esere*. I went, accompanied, if I remember rightly, by Mr. Goldie, both to the head man of Henshaw Town and to the Duke, about the matter, as we had strong grounds of suspicion that both of them not only connived at, but encouraged the blood people in their violent proceedings.

I went repeatedly to the Duke, requesting him to allow the refugees to return to their home, under his protection; to cause *Oko Odiong* to restore their property, of which he had unjustly taken possession; and to have done with the *freemason* nonsense at once and for ever. The Duke, both when drunk and when sober, was very surly when spoken to on the subject, represented that as *Oko Odiong* was a head man among the blood-people, he could do nothing to protect the three refugees from these people; and finally, on my last application, he got very insolent, and charged me never to mention the thing again in his hearing.

When Mr. Consul Hutchinson visited this river officially in January last, I reported the matter to him, requested his good offices on behalf of the refugees, whom I presented to him. He approved of my having afforded them an asylum, and wrote a letter to the Duke, intimating that as they had been guilty of no crime, and had sought protection under the British flag, he (Consul H.) took them under his protection and they were not to be molested till he should return to the river.

After this, the refugees remained undisturbed for a time. They were afraid to leave the mission premises, but wrought industriously at any work which was going on at the station, and were thus entitled to their food. But a storm was impending.

In the end of April or beginning of May, *Oko Odiong* himself died in the plantation, between 10 and 20 miles from the mission premises. For five months the deceased and the refugees had not been within several miles of each other; yet, strange to say, they were pitched on as having killed *Oko Odiong* by *ifot*, or witchcraft. It began to be rumoured that the Duke and the blood-people between them, were resolved to administer the *esere* to the refugees. They were greatly affrighted, but I endeavoured to assure them, by representing to them that they were fully under the protection of the white people, and that they should not be given up. I could scarcely bring myself to believe that the Duke would be either so rash or so ill-advised as to molest them. In this, however, I was disappointed.

Yesterday and to day a number of "blood-men" are coming into the town armed to demand the supposed murderers of *Oko Odiong*, that they may take the *esere*.

At Old Town during the greater part of the day. On my return, was informed