

abide faithfully by the other ; and these two repudiated wives were at the same time married to two other men. There are still a few men, chiefly among the most recent converts from heathenism, who have two wives each ; but without using any other than moral means for its removal, this evil is gradually disappearing. It is an easy thing to set up house here, and we give every encouragement to suitable marriages. If the Lord continue to bless his work on this island, in a few years there will be a mighty improvement in the social condition of this people. For some time past on the Sabbath afternoons, our most intelligent and influential natives have gone forth in small select bands to visit the heathens. They talk with them, and exhort them to give up their heathenism, and receive the word of God ; and if they are favourably received they have worship with them before they leave them. The heathen are now a mere handful, living in twos or threes, and scattered here and there ; a portion of them are inclined to hear what is said to them, but another portion continue very obstinate. The most noted of these is an old chief, named Natato, whom I have mentioned, I think, before. Some months ago, his son, a young man, quarrelled with his wife and her father-in-law, and in revenge went away in a sandal-wood vessel, and may not be back for a twelve-month. Natato is grieving for his son, and says when he comes back he will become Christian. The natives are however very doubtful of his sincerity. A number of the heathen are kept back on his account ; they say that when Natato joins us they will join too. Although many of the heathen appear very, very obstinate, we have strong hopes that they will not hold out long. O that the Spirit were poured out upon us from on high.

Your letter and the annual report brought me the latest news I have had respecting Mr Duncan. I mentioned formerly that Mr Geddie and I had written him very fully last year, giving him, as we believed, all the information necessary to enable him to decide satisfactorily, whether or not he ought to remove to this group. We have as yet received no answer to these letters. It is however highly probably that answers to them were in the vessel which was wrecked in August last, off the Isle of Pines. I have written him twice this year on the

same subject ; but no opportunity as yet has occurred to forward these letters. I wrote him first, after I saw the Bishop of New Zealand, and learned from him that he was still willing to afford him a passage from New Zealand to this group. And I wrote him again, when I learned by your letter and the annual report, that the principal, if not the only obstacle in the way of his coming to this mission was " his belief that neither himself nor his family could venture the change on the ground of health." I am inclined to think that he must have come to this decision before receiving Mr Geddie's letter and mine. It was in the hope that this might have been the case that I wrote my last letter, in which I endeavoured to shew him that, as far as health is concerned, he need entertain no fears. The Island of Fotuna, on which we think he could be most advantageously settled, is the Madeira of this group ; The language would present no difficulty ; in its grammatical structure it is the same as that spoken by the New Zealanders ; a great number of its vocables must be nearly if not quite the same. In twelve if not in six months, he might speak the language of Fotuna as well as he now speaks the language of New Zealand ; and might open up the word of God to them in a very short time. There would be no loss of time in preparatory labours ; the whole of his past experience and acquirements would be at once made available for strictly missionary purposes. He would possess great advantage for that island over any newly-arrived missionary. His own hopes and the expectations of the Church might, through the favour of Divine Providence, be yet fully realised. Moreover, now that we are to have the " John Knox," the isolated position of living alone upon a small island would be less felt ; mutual intercourse could be obtained ; and to meet any unforeseen emergency, we should place our present large mission-boat the " Columba" at his disposal ; so that in case of any necessity he could send it across to this island or Tana in charge of a native crew. May the Lord himself make the path of duty clear and plain before him !

In the event of Mr Duncan still thinking it to be his duty not to come to this group, I do hope that the committee will in no degree abate their endeavours to procure a missionary for Fotuna. We look upon the state of things on that