

## THE JUBILEE OF THE NEW HEBRIDES MISSION.

BY REV. ROBERT STEEL, D. D., SYDNEY,  
NEW SOUTH WALES.

In November, 1839, fifty years ago, the "Apostle of Polynesia"—John Williams—gave his life in an endeavor to pioneer the gospel of Jesus Christ in the islands of the New Hebrides. He had heard of the savage cannibals of Eromanga, and of the many atrocities committed by them; but as he knew the effects of Christianity on some of the Polynesian islands, he was anxious to extend its blessings to other groups. He had awakened an immense interest in South Sea Missions by his visit to England and by the publication of his "Missionary Enterprises." No book of its class ever created so great a sensation. The Archbishop of Canterbury, after perusing it, declared that it read like a new chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. Peers and Peeresses not only read it, but sent their donations to aid the work of evangelization in Polynesia. The press reviewed it with favor. In a few years 40,000 copies were sold. John Williams became the hero of the hour, and many sympathizing friends breathed their benedictions as he sailed away on his new mission for the extension of the gospel among the isles of the Pacific. It was not long after his return to the scenes of his triumphs in Raratonga and Samoa that he set his heart on a visit to the New Hebrides. It had been one of his philanthropic utterances: "It is our duty to visit surrounding islands. For my own part, I cannot content myself within the limits of a single reef." He, therefore, took twelve native teachers as pioneers and sailed in the *Camden*, under Captain Morgan, for the New Hebrides in 1839. As the vessel neared the group he was all anxiety as to whether the savages would receive him in a friendly spirit, and allow the landing of a few of the teachers to prepare the way of the Lord. The first island of the group at which the vessel touched was Futuna, a huge rock which rises up 2,000 feet above the sea. The natives there were friendly, but there was not opportunity for making arrangements to locate teachers. It was otherwise at Tanna. The harbor of Port Resolution was a safe anchorage, and had been visited by European traders. The chief promised protection to the Samoan teachers, and three were left. To Mr. Williams this was a notable event. He wrote of it in his journal thus: "This is a memorable day, a day which will be transmitted to posterity, and the record of the events which have this day transpired will exist af-

ter those who have taken part in them have retired into the shades of oblivion."

He little thought that the very next day would be rendered still more memorable, not indeed by the landing of teachers, but by his own martyr death at Eromanga, on the 20th of November, 1839. He landed, along with Mr. Harris, a young man sailing in the *Camden*, and seriously thinking of giving himself to missionary work. Captain Morgan and Mr. Cunningham also landed. All seemed pleasant at first, and the party proceeded inland along the banks of the river at Dillon's Bay. Suddenly a shout was heard. The natives became hostile, and it was necessary to seek safety in the boats. Captain Morgan and Mr. Cunningham were nearest the shore and got into their boat. Mr. Harris was struck and fell into the river. Mr. Williams was clubbed just as he reached the bay. No help could be given, and their friends in the boat saw the natives spear and kill both Williams and Harris. Arrows flew around the boat, and the men had to pull for their lives. The bodies of the martyr pioneers were dragged into the bush by the infuriated cannibals for their horrid feast. When the vessel reached Samoa great sorrow was awakened by the heavy tidings of the death of John Williams. From island to island the wailing cry arose, "Aue Williamu! Aue Tawa!—Alas, Williams! Alas, our Father!"

But as of old, "the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church." It was at once resolved by the mission brethren in Samoa that another effort should be made to place Christian teachers on blood-stained Eromanga. The Rev. T. Henth offered to lead the forlorn hope on the condition that if he also fell, another man should take the colors. He succeeded in his effort, and in 1840, six months after the death of Williams, two Christian Samoan teachers were landed. A veteran survivor of that eventful period, the Rev. A. W. Murray, author of the "Martyrs of Polynesia," "The Bible in the Pacific," and other works on missions, visited the island in 1841, when Mrs. Williams was on board the mission vessel on her way to England and saw the scene of her devoted husband's death in the cause he loved. The teachers were found alive, but they had a tale of living martyrdom to relate, and had experienced so many sufferings and hardships that they had to be removed. In England, after the sad intelligence of the death of the heroic Williams, it was also resolved by the directors of the London Missionary Society to endeavor to plant the standard of the Cross at once as near as possible to the spot where the apostolic pioneer had fallen. Two young missionaries, with