

LETTER FROM MR. GEDDIE.

ANEITEUM, JUNE 26TH, 1861.

Rev. and Dear Sir,—This letter will convey painful intelligence to you. Our friends and fellow labourers Mr. and Mrs. Gordon are no more. They were both killed by some Erromangans on the 20th of last month. The news of their death reached this island about three weeks after the sad event.

The only information which I have at present is from some white men and Erromangans in the sandal wood vessels. The cruel deed was done by a party of natives from a place called Bunkill, about seven miles distant from Dillon's Bay. They first killed Mr. Gordon with their hatchets, at a new house where he was at work, and afterwards went to the dwelling-house, and put poor Mrs. Gordon to death in the same way. Some natives who lived in the mission premises, ran off to the Bay, and gave the alarm there. A party went from one of the sandal wood establishments, and were soon on the spot. They found both bodies as the natives had left them, but life was extinct or nearly so. They were brought down to the Bay and decently buried. The graves are now enclosed, and all respect has been shewn to their remains, that relatives and friends could desire. The natives did not interfere with the property, and as there was no person to look after it, an inventory of the whole was taken by a Mr. Milne, and a part if not the whole has been sent off to our agent in Sydney.

But what led to so dark, so cruel, and so unexpected a deed? This is a question which cannot at present be satisfactorily answered. You are aware that the measles and dysentery have visited Erromanga in common with other islands, and cut off according to Mr. Gordon's estimate, two-thirds of the population. Now the white men say that previous to the breaking out of the sickness, Mr. Gordon visited the place from whence his murderers came, and told them that if they did not become Christians, God would visit them with some calamity, and the fatal disease which followed they regarded as a fulfilment of his prediction. On the other hand the Erromangans say that they were told by some of the sandal wood traders that Mr. Gordon caused the sickness, and that the natives were all dying on the islands where missionaries were stationed, and this is the reason why he and his wife were killed. It would be premature to place implicit confidence in any statements we hear, until they are more fully examined. I hope to visit Erromanga soon, to seek all information about the sad event which has taken place, ascertain the present state of the island, and the future prospects of the Mission there.

The death of Mr. and Mrs. Gordon has, I need scarcely say, cast a gloom over our Mission. We had scarcely begun to recover from the shock caused by the death of Mr. Johnston, when this new and more severe trial has fallen on us. How unsearchable are God's judgments, and his ways past finding out. The melancholy deaths which have occurred in this Mission are surely a loud call to us who survive to be more diligent and more earnest in our work, for the night cometh when no man can work. May God give us grace to improve these painful dispensations, as well as to sustain us under them.

The "John Knox" has just returned from Tana. The members of the Mission on that island are well. The report of the massacre on Erromanga made some excitement among the natives hostile to the cause on Tana, but there does not appear to be any immediate danger there.

The sickness has disappeared on this island. About eleven hundred have died of it, and probably one hundred more will sink under its after effects.

I have just returned from visiting and re-organizing my schools. It is painful to notice the blanks in them, and to see the number of new graves which meet the eye in every direction.

I have been conversing with the captain of a sandal wood vessel from Erromanga. He says that there are sandal wood stations all around the island, and the white men who occupy them are unmolested by the natives. It is only a few months ago since the natives declined all trading with the sandal wood men, as they brought the sickness to the island.

I trust that you will not be unduly cast down by the information which this letter contains. You must remember that we have our encouragements as well as