

tional interest to these communications from their husbands, and in the intelligence furnished respecting their work, present and prospective. The mission is in fact *one*, and our desire is to keep our readers acquainted with the situation, labours, trials and progress of all who are doing the Lord's work on the islands.

Letter from Rev. Mr. McNair.

ERROMANGA, August, 1867.

To the Secretary of Free College Missionary Society, Glasgow.

When I had the pleasure of addressing your Society in December, 1865, I forget whether I then promised to write occasionally from this sunny clime or not. Be that as it may, I shall now take for granted that such a communication will not be much out of place; and if I only succeed in expressing myself clearly, cannot be otherwise, I think, than interesting to you. I shall also, with your pleasure, take for granted that you have hitherto paid little attention to this group of islands as a mission field, and that, therefore, you will not be offended if I should attempt to give you an account *ab initio*.

THE FIELD ITSELF

Consists of forty or more islands, twelve or fourteen of which may be conveniently compared with the larger of our *old* Hebrides, such as Bute, Arran,Islay, Jura, Mull, Skye and Lewis, from between 15 and 20 South Lat., and from between 165 and 170 East Long.—in other words 1500 miles N. E. of Sydney, or 1200 miles almost direct north of Auckland, New Zealand. No one at present can tell the exact population of these islands. It may, however, be estimated at 100,000.

GEOLOGICALLY

Speaking, these islands are of igneous origin, with not unfrequently a superstructure of an aqueous character in the shape of coral. The igneous formation, however, everywhere prevails; without which, it is very doubtful if the other would ever have made its appearance. Consequent on the volcanic origin of the group, some of the islands are extremely grand, picturesque, fertile and beautiful; giving rise to magnificent mountains and precipitous hills, lovely valleys and delightful glens, cascades and waterfalls. The mountains, in some cases, shoot up almost perpendicularly to a height which would have required the attitude of Arthur's seat to have been multiplied by four in order to overtop them. The valleys between these mountains are extraordinarily rich in soil, consisting of a kind of black loam, in some cases several feet deep. This vast accumulation of mould is easily ac-

counted for—the tropical rains wash the face of these precipitous hills almost bare of soil, which is carried along the valleys and level ground beneath, and which in return give rise to a prodigious crop of

VEGETATION,

In the form of trees, and shrubs, and parasites, and reeds, fruits and flowers of almost every hue and colour, shape, and size, and taste, and smell. Such richness of soil and superabundance of crop allowed to decay year after year, without being molested by the hand of man, constitute one of the drawbacks to the evangelization of these islands. It may sound strange, that the very richness of the land should be against it—should be one of its great drawbacks. Yet so it is, and *how*, we shall presently see. From the latitude of the groups, you will easily conceive that

THE CLIMATE

Cannot be very cold. If you, therefore, consider the vast amount of vegetation which is constantly decaying as well as constantly growing in the valleys referred to, you will readily come to the conclusion that they must be capital generators of fever and ague, and so they are. But in addition, there are many swamps or marshes, which are also prolific sources of the same malady. These swamps are formed by allowing fine springs, which issue forth at the foot of the mountains, to spread themselves over level land. The natives prize the swamps very highly for the purpose of growing *taro*.—But this will lead us to speak of

THE FRUITS AND FOOD.

The *taro* resembles our home rhubarb. There are two kinds, one of which grows in dry land, the other in the marsh, covered with water. The root is large, something like a Swedish turnip, but much tenderer, and more mealy and satisfying than even potatoes.

The *yam* resembles peas or vines, and has to be supported after the same fashion; but the root, on the other hand grows to a great size, sometimes six feet in length, and twelve or fifteen inches in circumference. It is more like our potatoes in taste and colour than the taro.

The *banana* grows in great abundance and in great variety. The leaf of the banana is very large as well as very fine. The fruit grows in bunches, from the stem of the tree. A tree has only one bunch, but a single bunch may contain 100 bananas, which, in form and taste, are something like a very ripe pear.

The *bread-fruit* is exceedingly pretty, both in colour and form. I am not aware that we have any fruit at home like it, either in shape, colour or taste. The natives and most foreigners prize it very highly, as they also do the banana; for my