

suppose by your letter that you had spent years in the mission field, you have so thoroughly before your mind, and that accurately, our difficulties here, and the best way of meeting and overcoming them. It seems to be the most difficult thing in the world to get persons—even those most deeply interested in foreign missions—to understand, even in the slightest degree, the state of matters out here. From the time of my landing in Nova Scotia till the time of my sailing again for the Islands, I lectured or gave short addresses on the subject about five hundred times, besides private conversations without number, letters in the *Record*, &c.; and yet I am surprised beyond measure to find, in quarters I little dreamed of, such a want of accurate knowledge. This has led me to think that unless some of our friends visit the islands, and reside some time among the natives, and have charge of a mission station, they can know but little either of the field or the work. Your letter, however, was the most hopeful thing I have yet seen from home; and perhaps when the wild ideas our friends have so often formed of the field, of the kind of material we have to work upon, and of the kind of work we perform, shall give place to ideas built upon the facts of the case, then we may succeed in making ourselves generally understood.

Mission work out here is very hard work; it is also dry work at times, and always difficult, up-hill, thankless, laborious, disheartening, and almost hopeless work. Often your fairest hopes are blighted, and all your labor seems useless. The hearts of the heathen are so hard—they have such a heart-hatred of the Gospel—to their minds it brings no “glad tidings”—it is not the Gospel of their wishes, though, indeed, ’tis the Gospel of their needs. They are perfectly content to live on in their own old ways; they like the old paths of evil in which from time immemorial they have been accustomed to walk. They feel heathenism no burden—nay, they like it—’tis their delight; revenge, sweet revenge, gets full rein, blood for blood, and the more the better. Mercy, to them, means cowardice; forgiveness is weakness, and characteristic of women and children; but revenge is manly, and if ten men waylay and kill one man, they are called heroes.

But, on the other hand, there is much to encourage. What the Gospel has accomplished, it is still able to accomplish. The Gospel of Jesus Christ has accomplished changes that no other agency could. Even in this group of Islands what marvellous changes hath it wrought? Men on Aneityum, Aniwa, Eromanga, and Fata, who were at one time more in nature like wild

beasts than like rational men, are now peaceful and peace-loving, sober men, and loving Christians. There is much to encourage missionaries, viewing it in this light; and oh! there is much to encourage us from the Bible stand-point, “But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD.”

When, again, a few heathen do come in, and join the Christian party, how the missionary is encouraged! And when he contrasts even the face of the *weakest* Christian on his island, with the best men among the heathen, the contrast is very marked indeed in favor of Christianity. The Christian natives must be viewed as a whole, or we do them injustice. If they have their weak points, and there is no doubt they have, still it is equally true that they have their good points. Perhaps, however, it is not so much the weakness of their Christianity, as our own error in expecting to find among them too high a type of Christianity all at once. They have been lifted up out of such deep pits, that it is unfair to judge them, except in view of the depths from which they have been taken. It is very trying, I must say, to discover the remains of revenge, deceit, dishonesty, untruthfulness and superstition among the very best Christians on Eromanga; but perhaps, like others, I am inclined to expect too much from the poor natives, who are as yet only babes in Christianity.

You may feel surprised to notice, by the heading of this letter, that we are on Tanna, and not on Eromanga; but one word will explain. The state of Mrs. Robertson’s health at present renders it necessary that we should come here or go to some other island for a time.

We were very busy at house-building for several months before coming away, and did all in our power to make preparation for our coming by settling, and afterwards visiting teachers, and giving charge of the work to teachers and chiefs. All things being ready, and a fine able boat’s crew being engaged, we started in our boat—the *Yarra Yarra*—at 6 a. m., on Wednesday, November 26th, and at midnight arrived at Port Resolution. (Mr. Neilson’s Station.) The day was very, very hot, and we had very little wind, but what little we had was in our favor. We pulled the first four hours, then got up both sails and ran across under the lee of Tanna, then pulled again to the harbor, very glad indeed to get out of the boat and into Mr. Neilson’s house to rest. Here we remained till Friday, a then came round to the place where I am writing this letter, and distance of only twelve miles, though from Eromanga we came a distance