

New Hebrides.

LETTER FROM MR. ANNAND.

SANTO, May 3. 1890.

Dear Mr. Morrison:

Yours of the 23rd January was received last mail. It is such a change for us to get our mails so frequently. Were we depending upon the old Dayspring, as formerly, we would not be expecting for two or three weeks yet. As it is we have had four mails already this year and a fifth due next week. Time seems to pass more quickly than formerly. We like the steamer arrangements very well. We propose taking a voyage to Aneityum to Synod meeting in the beginning of June. Thanks for attending to matters of which I wrote. As for specials sent I will acknowledge most of them to the donors direct.

The news items sent us we read with much pleasure. Progress all along the line is cheering news. Not so is the report of Dr. Lyall's death after all his years of labor for his church and country. However he is all right now. No more sorrow nor sighing. The depths of philosophy may now all be made plain to him. And Judge James, good man, is gone. I once attended a Bible-class of his in Poplar Grove Church and received benefit therefrom.

I see that Pine Hill is becoming too small for the school of the prophets. Let them go to the Jordan and cut down trees to enlarge, or build anew.

Our prospects of one more laborer in the New Hebrides this year are good. Poor Mr. Shank's loss of his young wife as they were about to leave Scotland, deprives us of his services for a time at least. Mr. A. H. McDonald is expected back to the islands again this month. So also are Mr. and Mrs. Robertson.

A NATIVE FEAST.

This is Saturday evening and this afternoon I spent attending a feast at the village trying to learn something more of their ways, their pleasures and customs. This was a feast in dedication of a new house, also as payment to those who helped build it.

Shall I try to give you some idea of what was done? The house was finished and occupied nearly a year ago, but the feast was postponed until the yam was abundant.

Due notice was given a day or two ago that such was to take place. Yesterday the people were again reminded of the fact and their duty thereto by the blowing of a trumpet shell. This warning voice bade them all go and dig a load of their best yam and bring them home, for all the people must help

make the feast. No one man has enough yam for such an occasion. This morning cooking began and continued till about three o'clock. By that time every man and boy in the village as well as all the visitors had each been presented with a yam and coconut pudding, big enough for a dinner for six men.

After all had been thus served the remaining yams were carried to the public square. Also some fifteen or twenty small pigs were brought and a small dress mat from each and all present.

Then the ceremony of distribution began. For this purpose the village is divided into four sections and each section has a part assigned it, then every male of that section has his portion laid out. Over a ton of yam is lying arranged for the recipients. All this being completed the trumpet-shell again sounds, and each portion is picked up and carried to the feet of him for whom intended. The principal men only receive the pigs, but all receive a mat each with their yam. I being a spectator to-day I heard the chief giving an order for a portion for the "white one"; so by and bye a pile of yam and a mat were laid at my feet as my share of the feast.

My observations to-day lead me to think that such a system of feasting does not impoverish the man who makes it much if any more than those who participate in it. There is a general mixing and exchanging of food, but each man gets back much the same as what he gave. I had given nothing for my share received, but I may yet have a reminder that something would be very acceptable to the master of the feast. There does not appear to be any evil connected with this style of making a holiday and it helps to cheer and enliven the life of those who do not have very many luxuries.

To-morrow I shall bring before them another feast for the spiritual nature of man, and urge upon them the duty and privilege of coming to it. By attending the feast this afternoon I got an invitation to renew the services at the mainland village where I went for a number of weeks, and finally lost all my audience. They all were absent on Sunday, because some heathenism was to be performed in a few weeks. They saw that the gospel and their paganism were not consistent with one another, so they ran away from the worship. Now, however, that their ceremonies are over for a time I am asked to renew the services, which I shall gladly do.

INCIDENTS.

All is not rose-colored in our work. Some time ago I may have mentioned the name of a young man living with us who was doing remarkably well for a heathen lad. "Bati"