

of the poorest savage, he could still recognize a man and a brother, with a heart beating responsive to his own. Mr. Geddie was as well acquainted with the state of the heathen, as one could be without personal contact with them, but his intercourse with the natives revealed a depth of moral degradation for which even he was scarcely prepared. "Two practices especially excited horror. The first was cannibalism. Of the 300 islands inhabited by the Papuan race not one has been found on which it did not prevail. Nor did it cause them any shame. They either regarded it as a matter of course, speaking of human flesh as their "fish," or they gloried in it as the fruit of some deed of blood. The other was the strangling of widows. Every woman on marriage had a stout cord twisted round her neck, and in the event of the death of her husband it was immediately used to strangle her. This was regarded as a duty devolving on the nearest relative, and the honour of all connected was considered as involved in the performance of the deed. On the death of persons who had no wives, others were also strangled, as for example, a mother on the death of a son.

As soon as the true nature of the Gospel came to be understood, as entirely opposed to these and other practices of heathenism, opposition was excited, and before many months plots were laid for his life, from some of which he had remarkable escapes. Other troubles followed. In that climate, the rainy season which lasts from the end of December to April is unhealthy. That year it proved unusually so and the missionaries had not learned, as they have since done, to use the proper precautions. The result was that most of the mission band, including the eastern teachers, were laid down with sickness, Mr. Powell being brought to the very point of death. This excited the superstition of the natives, who regard all sickness as from supernatural causes. Then hurricanes swept over the island doing much damage in one of which Mr. Geddie's house was unroofed. But the mission at the same time began to experience what has been the greatest difficulty in the way of this and other missions in the South seas, the opposition of depraved white men. Before the arrival of the missionaries in the New Hebrides unprincipled traders had

been attracted thither by the sandal wood trade, and their intercourse with the natives were characterised by cruelty and brutal licentiousness. There was an establishment of this kind on Aneiteum when Mr. Geddie landed, and as the mission necessarily came in conflict with the wickedness of those connected with it they were excited to the bitterest hostility against the missionaries. Then the man whom the church had at great expense sent as his assistant fell into gross sin and became a scandal to the cause, and to crown all, when the "John Williams" visited the island in September 1849, Mr. Powell, broken in health and discouraged in spirit, abandoned the field and left him to prosecute the work alone, and that "at the very time," as he said, "when clouds thicken around us, which will sooner or later burst, and the result will be the destruction of the mission or the triumph of the Gospel."

The situation of Mr. Geddie for the next three years was such as few missionaries have been placed in, either in modern or we may say any other times, and such as no missionary should be placed in. He and his family were left alone, 1,500 miles from any missionary brother or any Christian society—in the midst of the fiercest savages, or white men as hostile to the Gospel as they—with no regular means of communication with any civilized society and without any reliable means of obtaining even the necessaries of life. But he continued his work with his usual energy, and soon he began to see evidence that his labour was not in vain. A number of natives renounced their superstitions and waited upon his instructions, and a few gave evidence of feeling the power of Christian truth. But with this came increased animosity of natives and white men. Plots were formed against his life in one of which a young convert obtained the crown of martyrdom and Mr. Geddie escaped, as on various other occasions, only through the care of Him who had given his angels charge over him. At length on the instigation of white men, the natives declared war upon the mission and commenced destroying Mr. Geddie's property. Happily the danger was averted before matters had come to extremities. And finally, under the same instigation, the torch of the incendiary was applied to his