

bring it to a close. But feelings of revenge for the slain burned fiercely in many breasts; and young men had old feuds handed on to them by the recital of their fathers' deeds of blood.

CHAPTER XXI

UNDER AXE AND MUSKET

ABOUT this time, our Sabbath audiences at the Mission numbered forty or so. Nowar and three or four more, and only they, seemed to love and serve Jesus. They were, however, changeable and doubtful, though they exerted a good influence on their villages, and were generally friendly to us and to the Worship.

One morning at daybreak I found my house surrounded by armed men, and a Chief intimated that they had assembled to take my life. Seeing that I was entirely in their hands, I knelt down and gave myself away body and soul to the Lord Jesus, for what seemed the last time on earth. Rising, I went out to them, and began calmly talking about their unkind treatment of me and contrasting it with all my conduct towards them. I also plainly showed them what would be the sad consequences, if they carried out their cruel purpose. At last some of the Chiefs, who had attended the Worship, rose and said, "Our conduct has been bad; but now we will fight for you, and kill all those who hate you."

Grasping hold of their leader, I held him fast till he promised never to kill any one on my account, for Jesus taught us to love our enemies and always to return good for evil! During this scene, many of the armed men slunk away into the bush, and those who remained entered into a bond to be friendly and to protect us. But again their Public Assembly resolved that we should be killed, because, as they said, they hated Jehovah and the Worship; for it made them afraid to do as they had always done. If I would give up visiting the villages, and praying and talking with them about Jehovah, they intimated that they would like me to stay and trade with them, as they liked the Traders but hated the Missionaries! I told them that the hope of being able to teach them the Worship

of Jehovah alone kept me living amongst them; that I was there, not for gain or pleasure, but because I loved them, and pitied their estate, and sought their good continually by leading them to know and serve the only true God.

But my enemies seldom slackened their hateful designs against my life, however calmed or baffled for the moment. Within a few days of the above events, when Natives in large numbers were assembled at my house, a man furiously rushed on me with his axe; but a Kaserumini Chief snatched a spade with which I had been working, and dexterously defended me from instant death. Life in such circumstances led me to cling very near to the Lord Jesus; I knew not, for one brief hour, when or how attack might be made; and yet, with my trembling hand clasped in the Hand once nailed on Calvary, and now swaying the sceptre of the Universe, calmness and peace and resignation abode in my soul.

Next day, a wild Chief followed me about for four hours with his loaded musket, and, though often directed towards me, God restrained his hand. I spoke kindly to him, and attended to my work as if he had not been there, fully persuaded that my God had placed me there, and would protect me till my allotted task was finished. Looking up in unceasing prayer to our dear Lord Jesus, I left all in His hands, and felt immortal till my work was done. Trials and hairbreadth escapes strengthened my faith, and seemed only to nerve me for more to follow; and they did tread swiftly upon each other's heels. Without that abiding consciousness of the presence and power of my dear Lord and Saviour, nothing else in all the world could have preserved me from losing my reason and perishing miserably. His words, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world," became to me so real that it would not have startled me to behold Him, as Stephen did, gazing down upon the scene. I felt His supporting power, as did St. Paul, when he cried, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." It is the sober truth, and it comes back to me sweetly after twenty years, that I had my nearest and dearest glimpses of the face and smile of my blessed Lord in those dread moments when musket, club, or spear was being levelled at my life. Oh the bliss of living and enduring, as seeing "Him who is invisible"!

One evening, I awoke three times to hear a Chief and his

men trying to force the door of my house. Though armed with muskets, they had some sense of doing wrong, and were wholesomely afraid of a little retriever dog which had often stood betwixt me and death. God restrained them again; and next morning the report went all round the Harbour, that those who tried to shoot me were "smitten weak with fear," and that shooting would not do. A plan was therefore deliberately set on foot to fire the premises, and club us if we attempted to escape. But our Aneityumese Teacher heard of it, and God helped us to frustrate their designs. When they knew that their plots were revealed to us, they seemed to lose faith in themselves, and cast about to circumvent us in some more secret way. Their evil was overruled for good.

CHAPTER XXII

A NATIVE SAINT AND MARTYR

NAMURI, one of my Aneityumese Teachers, was placed at our nearest village. There he had built a house for himself and his wife, and there he led amongst the Heathen a pure and humble Christian life. Almost every morning, he came and reported on the state of affairs to me. Without books or a school, he yet instructed the Natives in Divine things, conducted the Worship, and taught them much by his good example. His influence was increasing, when one morning a Sacred Man threw at him the kawas or killing-stone, a deadly weapon like a scythe stone in shape and thickness, usually round but sometimes angular, and from eighteen to twenty inches long. They throw it from a great distance and with fatal precision. The Teacher, with great agility, warded his head and received the deep cut from it in his left hand, reserving his right hand to guard against the club that was certain to follow swiftly. The Priest sprang upon him with his club and with savage yells. He evaded, yet also received, many blows; and, rushing out of their hands, actually reached the Mission House, bleeding, fainting, and pursued by howling murderers. I had been anxiously expecting him, and hearing the noise I ran out with all possible speed.



RETURNING THE STOLEN GOODS.

On seeing me, he sank down by a tree, and cried, "Missi, Missi, quick! and escape for your life! They are coming to kill you; they say they must kill us all to-day, and they have begun with me; for they hate Jehovah and the Worship!"

I hastened to the good Teacher where he lay; I bound up, washed, and dressed his wounds; and God, by the mystery of His own working, kept the infuriated Tannese watching at bay. Gradually they began to disappear into the bush, and we conveyed the dear Teacher to the Mission House. In three or four weeks, he so far recovered by careful nursing that he was able to walk about again. Some petitioned for him to return to the village; but I insisted, as a preliminary, that the Harbour Chiefs should unitedly punish him who had abused the Teacher; and this to test them, for he had only carried out their own wishes,—Nowar excepted, and perhaps one or two others. They made a pretence of atoning by presenting the Teacher with a pig and some yams as a peace-offering; but I said, "No! such bad conduct must be punished, or we would leave their island by the first opportunity."

Now that Sacred Man, a Chief too, had gone on fighting with other tribes, till his followers had all died or been slain; and, after three weeks' palaver, the other Chiefs seized him, tied him with a rope, and sent me word to come and see him punished, as they did not want us after all to leave the island. I had to go, for fear of more bloody work, and after talk with them, followed by many fair promises, he was loosed.

All appearing friendly for some time, and willing to listen and learn, the Teacher earnestly desired to return to his post. I pled with him to remain at the Mission House till we felt more assured, but he replied, "Missi, when I see them thirsting for my blood, I just see myself when the Missionary first came to my island. I desired to murder him, as they now desire to kill me. Had he stayed away for such danger, I would have remained Heathen; but he came, and continued coming to teach us, till, by the grace of God, I was changed to what I am. Now the same God that changed me to this, can change these poor Tannese to love and serve Him. I cannot stay away from them; but I will sleep at the Mission House, and do all I can by day to bring them to Jesus."

It was not in me to keep such a man, under such motives, from what he felt to be his post of duty. He returned to his

village work, and for several weeks things appeared most encouraging. The inhabitants showed growing interest in us and our work, and less fear of the pretensions of their Heathen Priest, which, alas! fed his jealousy and anger. One morning during worship, when the good Teacher knelt in prayer, the same savage Priest sprang upon him with his great club and left him for dead, wounded and bleeding and unconscious. The people fled and left him in his blood, afraid of being mixed up with the murder. The Teacher, recovering a little, crawled to the Mission House, and reached it about mid-day in a dying condition. On seeing him, I ran to meet him, but he fell near the Teacher's house, saying, "Missi, I am dying! They will kill you also. Escape for your life."

Trying to console him, I sat down beside him, dressing his wounds and nursing him. He was quite resigned; he was looking up to Jesus, and rejoicing that he would soon be with Him in Glory. His pain and suffering were great, but he bore all very quietly, as he said and kept saying, "For the sake of Jesus! For Jesu's sake!" He was constantly praying for his persecutors, "O Lord Jesus, forgive them, for they know not what they are doing. Oh, take not away all Thy servants from Tanna! Take not away Thy Worship from this dark island! O God, bring all the Tannese to love and follow Jesus!"

To him, Jesus was all and in all; and there were no bands in his death. He passed from us, in the assured hope of entering into the Glory of his Lord. Humble though he may appear in the world's esteem, I knew that a great man had fallen there in the service of Christ, and that he would take rank in the glorious Army of the Martyrs. I made for him a coffin, and dug his grave near the Mission House. With prayers, and many tears, we consigned his remains to the dust in the certainty of a happy resurrection. Even one such convert was surely a triumphant reward for the Missionaries, whom God had honoured in bringing him to Jesus. May they have many like Namuri for their crown of joy and rejoicing in the great day!

CHAPTER XXIII

BUILDING AND PRINTING FOR GOD

FOR fully three months, all our available time, with all the native help which I could hire, was spent in erecting a building to serve for Church and School. It was fifty feet long, by twenty-one feet six inches broad. The studs were three feet apart, and all fixed by tenon and mortise into upper and lower wall plates. The beautiful roof of iron-wood and sugar-cane leaf was supported by three massive pillars of wood, sunk deeply into the ground. The roof extended about three feet over the wall plates, both to form a verandah and to carry the rain-drop free beyond the walls. It was made of sugar-cane leaf and cocoa-nut leaves all around. The floor was laid with white coral, broken small, and covered with cocoa-nut leaf mats, such as those on which the Natives sat. Indeed, it was as comfortable a House of Prayer as any man need wish for in the tropics, though having only open spaces for doors and windows! I bought the heavy wood for it on Aneityum—price, fifty pairs of trousers for Natives; and these again were the gift of my Bible Class in Glasgow, all cut and sewed by their own hands. I gave also one hundred and thirty yards of cloth, along with other things, for other needful wood.

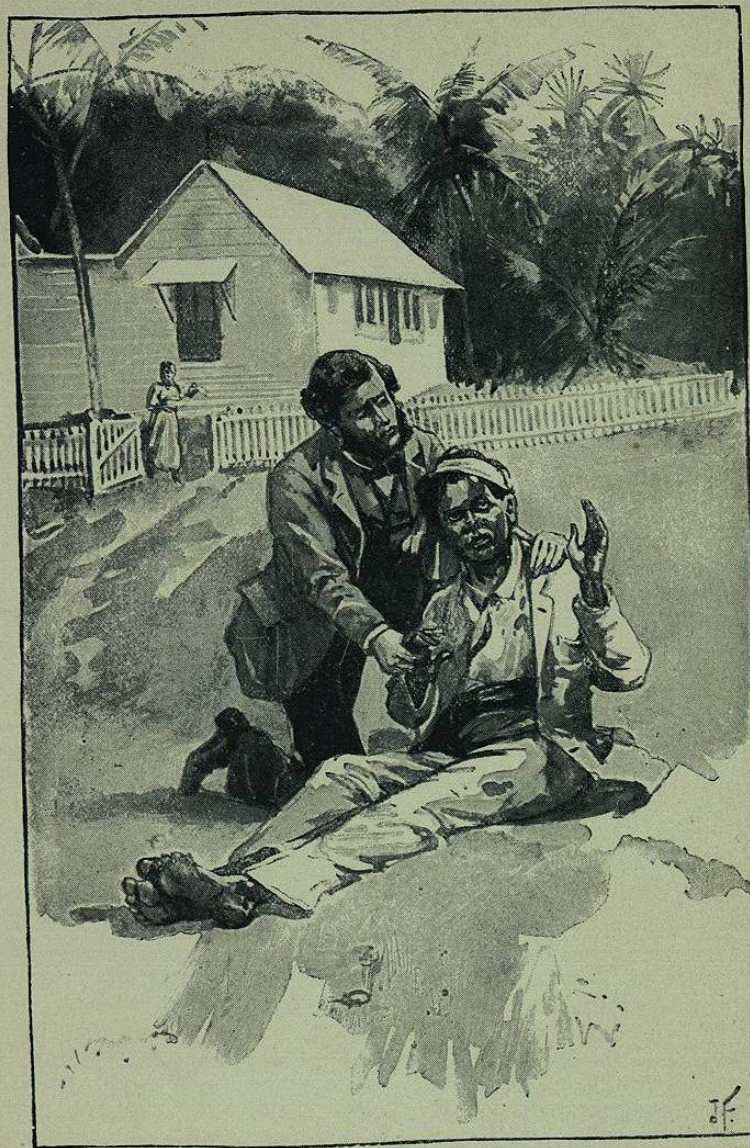
As we were preparing a foundation for the Church, a huge and singular-looking round stone was dug up, at sight of which the Tannese stood aghast. The eldest Chief said, "Missi, that stone was either brought there by Karapanamun (the Evil Spirit), or hid there by our great Chief who is dead. That is the Stone God to which our forefathers offered human sacrifices; these holes held the blood of the victim till drunk up by the Spirit. The Spirit of that stone eats up men and women and drinks their blood, as our fathers taught us. We are in greatest fear!"

A Sacred Man claimed possession, and was exceedingly desirous to carry it off; but I managed to keep it, and did everything in my power to show them the absurdity of these foolish notions. Idolatry had not indeed yet fallen throughout

Tanna ; but one cruel idol, at least, had to give way for the erection of God's House on that benighted land.

An ever-memorable event was the printing of my first book in Tannese. Thomas Binnie, Jun., Glasgow, gave me a printing-press and a font of type. Printing was one of the things I had never tried, but having now prepared a booklet in Tannese, I got my press into order, and began fingering the type. But book-printing turned out to be for me a much more difficult affair than house-building had been. Yet by dogged perseverance I succeeded at last. My biggest difficulty was how to arrange the pages properly! After many failures, I folded a piece of paper into the number of leaves wanted, cut the corners, folding them back, and numbering as they would be when correctly placed in the book ; then folding all back without cutting up the sheet, I found now by these numbers how to arrange the pages in the frame or case for printing, as indicated on each side. And do you think me foolish, when I confess that I shouted in an ecstasy of joy when the first sheet came from the press all correct? It was about one o'clock in the morning. I was the only white man then on the island, and all the Natives had been fast asleep for hours! Yet I literally pitched my hat into the air, and danced like a schoolboy round and round that printing-press ; till I began to think, Am I losing my reason? Would it not be liker a Missionary to be upon my knees, adoring God for this first portion of His blessed Word ever printed in this new language? Friend, bear with me, and believe me—that was as true worship as ever was David's dancing before the Ark of his God! Nor think that I did not, over that first sheet of God's Word ever printed in the Tannese tongue, go upon my knees too, and then, and every day since, plead with the mighty Lord to carry the light and joy of His own Holy Bible into every dark heart and benighted home on Tanna!

Yet dangers darkened round me. One day, while toiling away at my house, the war Chief and his brother, and a large party of armed men, surrounded the plot where I was working. They all had muskets, besides their own native weapons. They watched me for some time in silence, and then every man levelled a musket straight at my head. Escape was impossible. Speech would only have increased my danger. My eyesight came and went for a few moments. I prayed to



A NATIVE SAINT AND MARTYR.

my Lord Jesus, either Himself to protect me or to take me home to His Glory. I tried to keep working on at my task, as if no one was near me. In that moment, as never before, the words came to me—"Whatsoever ye shall ask in My Name, I will do it;" and I knew that I was safe. Retiring a little from their first position, no word having been spoken, they took up the same attitude somewhat farther off, and seemed to be urging one another to fire the first shot. But my dear Lord restrained them once again, and they withdrew, leaving me with a new reason for trusting Him with all that concerned me for Time and Eternity.

CHAPTER XXIV

HEATHEN DANCE AND SHAM FIGHT

THE Chief, Nowar Noukamara, usually known as Nowar, was my best and most-to-be-trusted friend. He influenced the Harbour Chiefs and their people for eight or ten miles around to get up a great feast in favour of the Worship of Jehovah. All were personally and specially invited, and it was the largest Assembly of any kind that I ever witnessed on the Islands.

When all was ready, Nowar sent a party of Chiefs to escort me and my Aneityumese Teachers to the feast. Fourteen Chiefs, in turn, made speeches to the assembled multitude; the drift of all being, that war and fighting be given up on Tanna,—that no more people be killed by Nahak, for witchcraft and sorcery were lies,—that Sacred Men no longer profess to make wind and rain, famine and plenty, disease and death,—that the dark Heathen talk of Tanna should cease,—that all here present should adopt the Worship of Jehovah as taught to them by the Missionary and the Aneityumese,—and that all the banished Tribes should be invited to their own lands to live in peace! These strange speeches did not draw forth a single opposing voice. The Tannese are born talkers, and can and will speechify on all occasions; but most of it means nothing, bears no fruit.

After these speeches, a scene followed which gradually as-

sumed shape as an idolatrous ceremonial and greatly horrified me. It was in connection with the immense quantity of food that had been prepared for the feast, especially pigs and fowls. A great heap had been piled up for each Tribe represented, and a handsome portion also set apart for the Missionary and his Teachers. The ceremony was this, as nearly as I could follow it. One hundred or so of the leading men marched into the large clear space in the centre of the assembled multitudes, and stood their facing each other in equal lines, with a man at either end closing up the passage between. At the middle they stood eight or ten feet apart, gradually nearing till they almost met at either end. Amid tremendous silence for a few moments, all stood hushed; then every man kneeled on his right knee, extended his right hand, and bent forward till his face nearly touched the ground. Thereon the man at the one end began muttering something, his voice rising ever louder as he rose to his feet, when it ended in a fearful yell as he stood erect. Next the two long lines of men, all in a body, went through the same ceremonial, rising gradually to their feet, with mutterings deepening into a howl, and heightening into a yell as they stood erect. Finally, the man at the other end went through the same hideous forms. All this was thrice deliberately repeated, each time with growing frenzy. And then, all standing on their feet, they united as with one voice in what sounded like music running mad up and down the scale—closing with a long, deep-toned, hollow howl as of souls in pain. With smiles of joy, the men then all shook hands with each other. Nowar and another Chief briefly spoke; and the food was then divided and exchanged, a principal man of each Tribe standing by to receive and watch his portion.

At this stage, Nowar and Nerwangi, as leaders, addressed the Teachers and the Missionary to this effect: "This feast is held to move all the Chiefs and People here to give up fighting, to become friends, and to worship your Jehovah God. We wish you to remain, and to teach us all good conduct. As an evidence of our sincerity, and of our love, we have prepared this pile of food for you."

In reply, I addressed the whole multitude, saying how pleased I was with their speeches and with the resolutions and promises which they all had made. I further urged them to

stick fast by these, and that grand fruits would arise to their island, to themselves, and to their children.

Having finished a brief address, I then walked forward to the very middle of the circle, and laid down before them a bundle of stripes of red calico and pieces of white calico, a number of fish-hooks, knives, etc. etc., requesting the two Chiefs to divide my offering of goodwill among the Tribes assembled, and also the pile of food presented to us, as a token of my love and friendship to them all.

Not without some doubt, and under considerable trial, did I take this apparently unfriendly attitude of refusing to take their food. But I feared to seem even to approve of any act of devil-worship, or to confirm them in it, being there to discourage all such scenes, and to lead them to acknowledge only the true God. Yet all the time I felt this qualm,—that it might have been better to eat food with men who acknowledged some God and asked his blessing, than with those white Heathens at home, who asked the blessing of no God, nor thanked Him—in this worse than the dog which licks the hand that feeds it! Nowar and Nerwangi explained in great orations what I meant, and how I wished all to be divided amongst the assembled Tribes to show my love. With this, all seemed highly satisfied.

Heathen dances were now entered upon, their paint and feathers and ornaments adding to the wildness of the scene. The men seemed to dance in an inside ring, and the women in an outside ring, at a considerable distance from each other. Music was supplied by singing and clapping of hands. The order was perfect, and the figures highly intricate. But I have never been able to associate dancing with things lovely and of good report! After the dancing, all retired to the bush; and a kind of sham fight then followed on the public cleared ground. A host of painted Savages rushed in and took possession with songs and shoutings. From the bush, on the opposite side, the chanting of women was heard in the distance, louder and louder as they approached. Snatching from a burning fire flaming sticks, they rushed on the men with these, beating them and throwing burning pieces of wood among them, till with deafening yells amongst themselves and amidst shouts of laughter from the crowd, they drove them from the space, and danced thereon and sang a song of victory. The

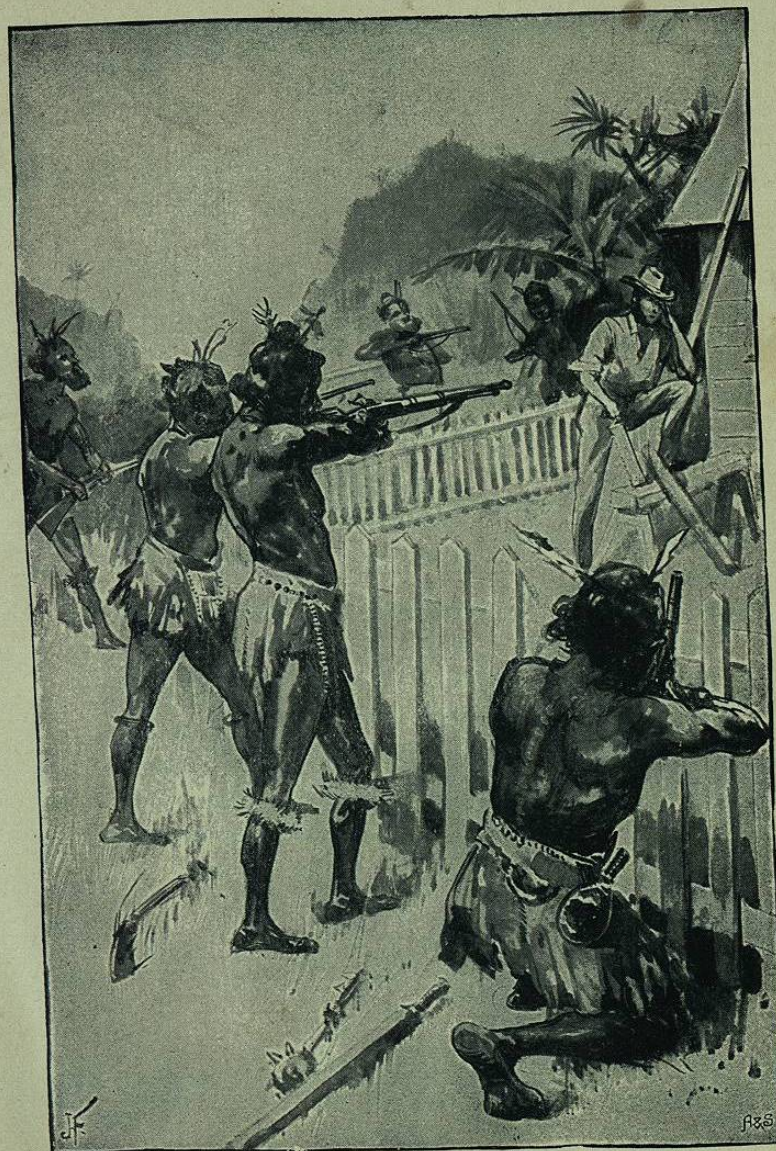
dancing and fighting, the naked painted figures, and the constant yells and shoutings, gave one a weird sensation, and suggested strange ideas of Hell broken loose.

The final scene approached, when the men assisted their women to fill all the allotted food into baskets, to be carried home and eaten there; for the different Tribes do not sit down together and eat together as we would do; their coming together is for the purpose of exchanging and dividing the food presented. And now they broke into friendly confusion, and freely walked about mingling with each other; and a kind of savage rehearsal of Jonathan and David took place. They stripped themselves of their fantastic dresses, their handsomely woven and twisted grass skirts, leaf skirts, grass and leaf aprons; they gave away or exchanged all these, and their ornaments and bows and arrows, besides their less romantic calico and print dresses more recently acquired. The effusion and ceremonial of the gifts and exchanges seem to betoken a loving people; and so they were for the feast—but that laid not aside a single deadly feud, and streams of blood and cries of hate would soon efface all traces of this day.

CHAPTER XXV

CANNIBALS AT WORK

EARLY one morning, the savage yells of warring Tribes woke me from sleep. They had broken into a quarrel about a woman, and were fiercely engaged with their clubs. According to my custom, I rushed in amongst them, and, not without much difficulty, was blessed in separating them before deadly wounds had been given or received. On this occasion, the Chiefs of both Tribes, being very friendly to me, drove their people back from each other at my earnest appeals. Sitting down at length within earshot, they had it out in a wild scolding match, a contest of lung and tongue. Meanwhile I rested on a canoe midway betwixt them, in the hope of averting a renewal of hostilities. By and by an old Sacred Man, a Chief called Sapa, with some touch of savage comedy in his breast, volunteered an episode which restored good humour



"Every man levelled a musket straight at my head."