

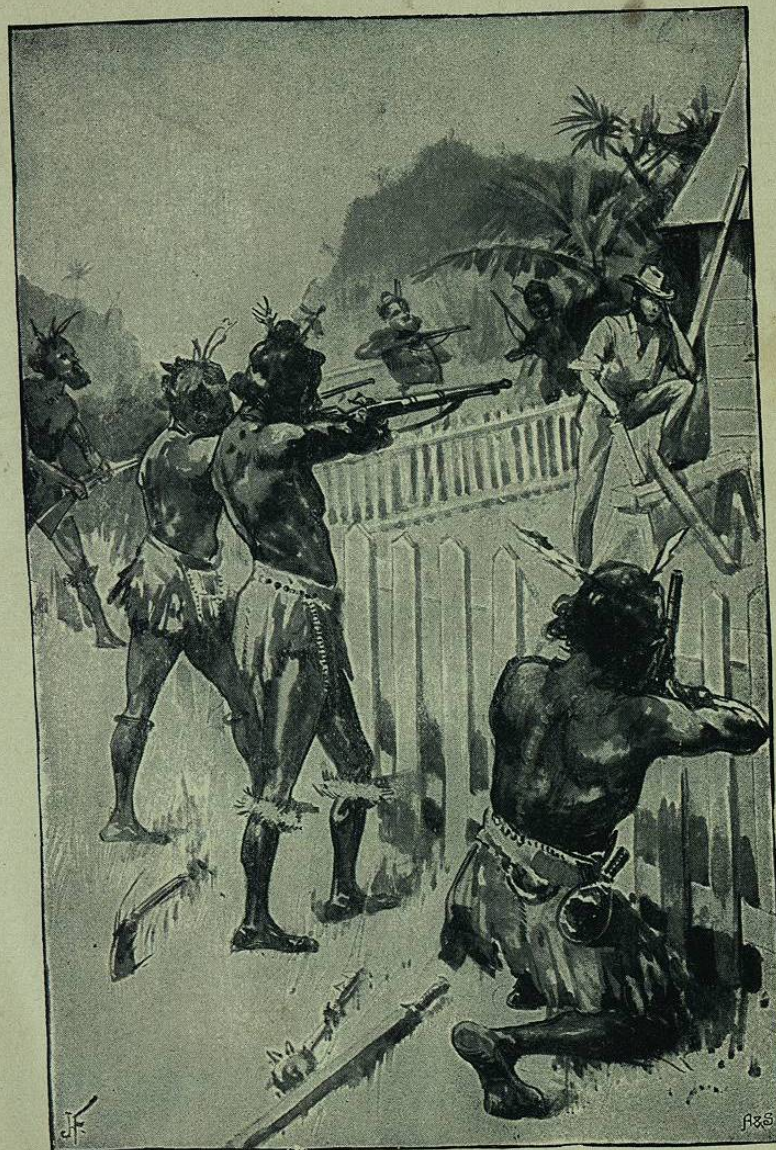
dancing and fighting, the naked painted figures, and the constant yells and shoutings, gave one a weird sensation, and suggested strange ideas of Hell broken loose.

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."

to the scene. Leaping up, he came dancing and singing towards me, and there, to the amusement of all, re-enacted the quarrel, and mimicked rather cleverly my attempt at separating the combatants. Smashing at the canoe with his club, he yelled and knocked down imaginary enemies; then, rushing first at one party and then at the other, he represented me as appealing and gesticulating and pushing them afar from each other, till he became quite exhausted. Thereon he came and planted himself in great glee beside me, and looked around as if to say, "You must laugh, for I have played." At this very juncture, a loud cry of "Sail O!" broke upon our ears, and all parties leapt to their feet, and prepared for a new sensation; for in those climes, everything—war itself—is a smaller interest than a vessel from the Great Unknown Beyond sailing into your Harbour.

Not many days thereafter, a very horrible transaction occurred. Before daybreak, I heard shot after shot quickly discharged in the Harbour. One of my Teachers came running, and cried, "Missi, six or seven men have been shot dead this morning for a great feast. It is to reconcile Tribes that have been at war, and to allow a banished Tribe to return in peace."

I learned that the leading men had in council agreed upon this sacrifice, but the name of each victim was kept a secret till the last moment. The torture of suspense and uncertainty seemed to be borne by all as part of their appointed lot; nor did they prepare as if suspecting any dread assault. Before daylight, the Sacred Men allocated a murderer to the door of each house where a victim slept. A signal shot was fired; all rushed to their doors, and the doomed ones were shot and clubbed to death, as they attempted to escape. Their bodies were then borne to a sacred tree, and hung up there by the hands for a time, as an offering to the gods. Being taken down, they were carried ceremoniously and laid out on the shore near my house, placed under a special guard.

Information had reached me that my Teachers and I were also destined victims for this same feast; and sure enough we espied a band of armed men, the killers, despatched towards our premises. Instantaneously I had the Teachers and their wives and myself securely locked into the Mission House; and, cut off from all human hope, we set ourselves to pray to

our dear Lord Jesus, either Himself to protect us or to take us to His glory. All through that morning and forenoon we heard them tramp-tramping round our house, whispering to each other, and hovering near window and door. They knew that there were a double-barrelled fowling-piece and a revolver on the premises, though they never had seen me use them, and that may, under God, have held them back in dread. But the thought of using them did not enter our souls even in that awful time. I had gone to save, and not to destroy. It would be easier for me at any time to die, than to kill one of them. Our safety lay in our appeal to that blessed Lord who had placed us there, and to whom all power had been given in Heaven and on Earth. He that was with us was more than all that could be against us. This is strength; this is peace:—to feel, in entering on every day, that all its duties and trials have been committed to the Lord Jesus,—that, come what may, He will use us for His glory and our own real good!

All through that dreadful morning, and far into the afternoon, we thus abode together, feeling conscious that we were united to this dear Lord Jesus; and we had sweet communion with Him, meditating on the wonders of His person and the hopes and glories of His kingdom. Oh, that all my readers may learn something of this in their own experience of the Lord! I can wish them nothing more precious. Towards sundown, constrained by the Invisible One, they withdrew from our Mission House, and left us once more in peace. They bore away the slain to be cooked, and distributed amongst the Tribes, and eaten in their feast of reconciliation; a covenant sealed in blood, and soon, alas, to be buried in blood again! For many days thereafter we had to take unusual care, and not unduly expose ourselves to danger; for dark characters were seen prowling about in the bush near at hand, and we knew that our life was the prize. We took what care we could, and God the Lord did the rest; or rather He did all—for His wisdom guided us, and His power baffled them.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE DEFYING OF NAHAK

SHORTLY thereafter war was again declared, by the Inland people attacking our Harbour people. It was an old quarrel; and the war was renewed and continued, long after the cause thereof had passed away. Going amongst them every day, I did my utmost to stop hostilities, setting the evils of war before them, and pleading with the leading men to renounce it. Thereon arose a characteristic incident of Island and Heathen life. One day I held a Service in the village where morning after morning their Tribes assembled, and declared that if they would believe in and follow the Jehovah God, He would deliver them from all their enemies and lead them into a happy life. There were present three Sacred Men, Chiefs, of whom the whole population lived in terror—brothers or cousins, heroes of traditional feats, professors of sorcery, and claiming the power of life and death, health and sickness, rain and drought, according to their will. On hearing me, these three stood up and declared they did not believe in Jehovah, nor did they need His help; for they had the power to kill my life by Nahak (*i.e.* sorcery or witchcraft), if only they could get possession of any piece of the fruit or food that I had eaten. This was an essential condition of their black art; hence the peel of a banana or an orange, and every broken scrap of food, is gathered up by the Natives, lest it should fall into the hands of the Sacred Men, and be used for Nahak. This superstition was the cause of most of the bloodshed and terror upon Tanna; and being thus challenged, I asked God's help, and determined to strike a blow against it.

A woman was standing near with a bunch of native fruit in her hand, like our plums, called quonquore. I asked her to be pleased to give me some; and she, holding out a bunch, said, "Take freely what you will!"

Calling the attention of all the Assembly to what I was doing, I took three fruits from the bunch, and taking a bite out of each, I gave them one after another to the three Sacred Men, and deliberately said in the hearing of all, "You have seen me eat of this fruit, you have seen me give

the remainder to your Sacred Men; they have said they can kill me by Nahak, but I challenge them to do it if they can, without arrow or spear, club or musket; for I deny that they have any power against me, or against any one, by their Sorcery."

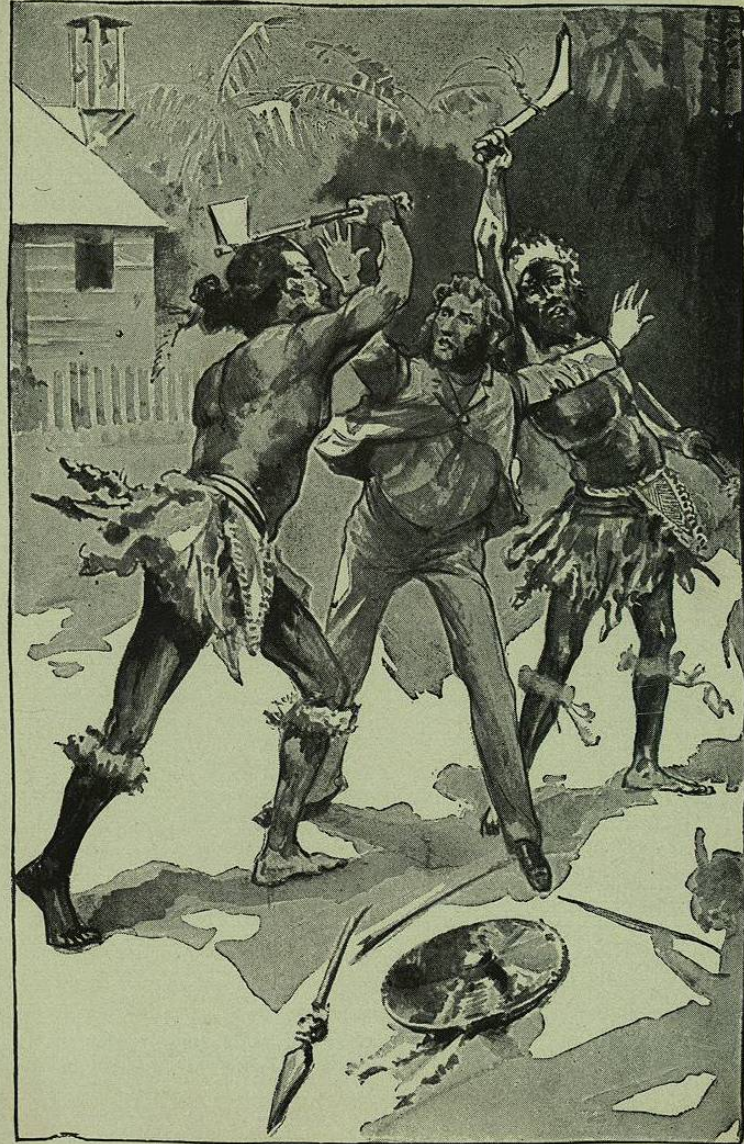
The challenge was accepted; the Natives looked terror-struck at the position in which I was placed! The ceremony of Nahak was usually performed in secret,—the Tannese fleeing in dread, as Europeans would from the touch of the plague; but I lingered and eagerly watched their ritual. As the three Chiefs arose, and drew near to one of the Sacred Trees, to begin their ceremonial, the Natives fled in terror, crying, "Missi, Iawé! Alas, Missi!"

But I held on at my post of observation. Amidst wavings and incantations, they rolled up the pieces of the fruit from which I had eaten, in certain leaves of this Sacred Tree, into a shape like a waxen candle; then they kindled a sacred fire near the root, and continued their mutterings, gradually burning a little more and a little more of the candle-shaped things, wheeling them round their heads, blowing upon them with their breaths, waving them in the air, and glancing wildly at me as if expecting my sudden destruction. Wondering whether after all they did not believe their own lie, for they seemed to be in dead earnest, I, more eager than ever to break the chains of such vile superstition, urged them again and again, crying, "Be quick! Stir up your gods to help you! I am not killed yet; I am perfectly well!"

At last they stood up and said, "We must delay till we have called all our Sacred Men. We will kill Missi before his next Sabbath comes round. Let all watch, for he will soon die and that without fail."

I replied, "Very good! I challenge all your Priests to unite and kill me by Sorcery or Nahak. If on Sabbath next I come again to your village in health, you will all admit that your gods have no power over me, and that I am protected by the true and living Jehovah God!"

Every day throughout the remainder of that week the Conchs were sounded; and over that side of the island all their Sacred Men were at work trying to kill me by their arts. Now and again messengers arrived from every quarter of the island, inquiring anxiously after my health, and wondering if I



"I rushed in amongst them."

was not feeling sick, and great excitement prevailed amongst the poor deluded idolaters.

Sabbath dawned upon me peacefully, and I went to that village in more than my usual health and strength. Large numbers assembled, and when I appeared they looked at each other in terror, as if it could not really be I myself still spared and well. Entering into the public ground, I saluted them to this effect, "My love to you all, my friends! I have come again to talk to you about the Jehovah God and His Worship."

The three Sacred Men, on being asked, admitted that they had tried to kill me by Nahak, but had failed; and on being questioned, why they had failed, they gave the acute and subtle reply, that I also was myself a Sacred Man, and that my God being the stronger had protected me from their gods. Addressing the multitude, I answered thus, "Yea, truly; my Jehovah God is stronger than your gods. He protected me, and helped me; for He is the only living and true God, the only God that can hear or answer any prayer from the children of men. Your gods cannot hear prayers, but my God can and will hear and answer you, if you will give heart and life to Him, and love and serve Him only. This is my God, and He is also your friend if you will hear and follow His voice."

Having said this, I sat down on the trunk of a fallen tree, and addressed them, "Come and sit down all around me, and I will talk to you about the love and mercy of my God, and teach you how to worship and please Him."

Two of the Sacred Men then sat down, and all the people gathered round and seated themselves very quietly. I tried to present to them ideas of sin, and of salvation through Jesus Christ, as revealed to us in the Holy Scriptures.

The third Sacred Man, the highest in rank, a man of great stature and uncommon strength, had meantime gone off for his warrior's spear, and returned brandishing it in the air and poising it at me. I said to the people, "Of course he can kill me with his spear, but he undertook to kill me by Nahak or Sorcery, and promised not to use against me any weapons of war; and if you let him kill me now, you will kill your friend, one who lives among you and only tries to do you good, as you all know so well. I know that if you kill me thus, my God will be angry and will punish you."

Thereon I seated myself calmly in the midst of the crowd,

while he leaped about in rage, scolding his brothers and all who were present for listening to me. The other Sacred Men, however, took my side, and, as many of the people also were friendly to me and stood closely packed around me, he did not throw his spear. To allay the tumult and obviate further bloodshed, I offered to leave with my Teachers at once, and, in doing so, I ardently pled with them to live at peace. Though we got safely home, that old Sacred Man seemed still to hunger after my blood. For weeks thereafter, go where I would, he would suddenly appear on the path behind me, poising in his right hand that same Goliath spear. God only kept it from being thrown, and I, using every lawful precaution, had all the same to attend to my work, as if no enemy were there, leaving all other results in the hands of Jesus. This whole incident did, doubtless, shake the prejudices of many as to Sorcery; but few even of converted Natives ever get entirely clear of the dread of Nahak.

CHAPTER XXVII

A PERILOUS PILGRIMAGE

THE other Mission Station, on the south-west side of Tanna, had to be visited by me from time to time. Mr. and Mrs. Mathieson, there, were both in a weak state of health, having a tendency to consumption. On this account they visited Aneityum several times. They were earnestly devoted to their work, and were successful so far as health and the time allowed to them permitted. At this juncture, a message reached me that they were without European food, and a request to send them a little flour if possible. The war made the journey overland impossible. A strong wind and a high sea round the coast rendered it impracticable for my boat to go. The danger to life from the enemy was so great that I could not hire a crew. I pled therefore with Nowar and Manuman, and a few leading men, to take one of their best canoes, and themselves to accompany me. I had a large flat-bottomed pot with a close-fitting lid, and that I pressed full of flour; and, tying the lid firmly down, I fastened it right in the

centre of the canoe, and as far above water-mark as possible. All else that was required we tied around our own persons. Sea and land being as they were, it was a perilous undertaking, which only dire necessity could have justified. They were all good swimmers, but as I could not swim the strongest man was placed behind me, to seize me and swim ashore, if a crash came.

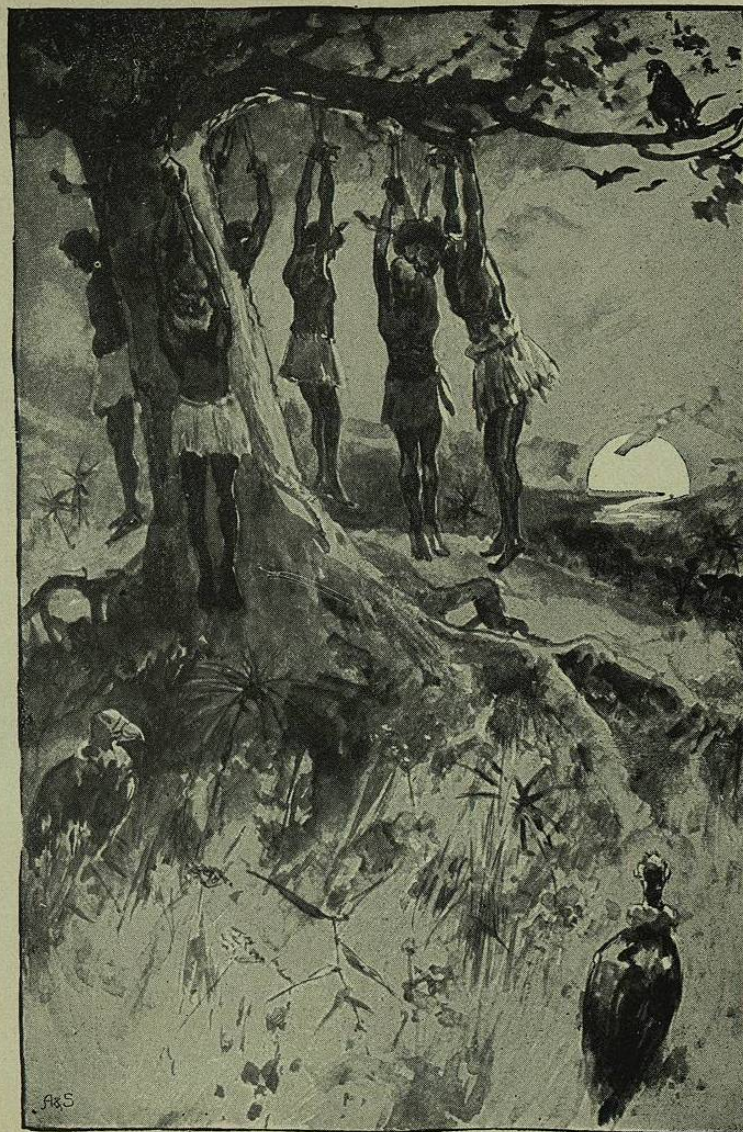
Creeping round near the shore all the way, we had to keep just outside the great breakers on the coral reef, and were all drenched through and through with the foam of an angry surf. We arrived, however, in safety within two miles of our destination, where lived the friends of my canoe's company, but where a very dangerous sea was breaking on the reef. Here they all gave in, and protested that no further could they go; and truly their toil all the way with the paddles had been severe. I appealed to them, that the canoe would for certain be smashed if they tried to get on shore, that the provisions would be lost, and some of us probably drowned. But they turned to the shore, and remained for some time thus, watching the sea. At last their Captain cried, "Missi, hold on! There's a smaller wave coming; we'll ride in now."

My heart rose to the Lord in trembling prayer! The wave came rolling on; every paddle with all their united strength struck into the sea; and next moment our canoe was flying like a sea-gull on the crest of the wave towards the shore. Another instant, and the wave had broken on the reef with a mighty roar, and rushed passed us hissing in clouds of foam. My company were next seen swimming wildly about in the sea, Manuman the one-eyed Sacred Man alone holding on by the canoe, nearly full of water, with me still clinging to the seat of it, and the very next wave likely to devour us. In desperation, I sprang for the reef, and ran for a man half-wading, half-swimming to reach us; and God so ordered it, that just as the next wave broke against the silvery rock of coral, the man caught me and partly swam with me through its surf, partly carried me till I was set safely ashore. Praising God, I looked up and saw all the others nearly as safe as myself, except Manuman, my friend, who was still holding on by the canoe in the face of wind and sea, and bringing it with him. Others ran and swam to his help. The paddles were picked up amid the surf. A powerful fellow came towards me with the pot of

flour on his head, uninjured by water! The Chief who held on by the canoe got severely cut about the feet, and had been badly bruised and knocked about; but all the rest escaped without further harm, and everything that we had was saved. Amongst friends at last, they resolved to await a favourable wind and tide to return to their own homes. Singing in my heart unto God, I hired a man to carry the pot of flour, and soon arrived at the Mission Station.

Supplying the wants of our dear friends, Mr. and Mrs. Mathieson, whom we found as well as could be expected, we had to prepare, after a few hours of rest, to return to our own Station by walking overland through the night. I durst not remain longer away, lest my own house should be plundered and broken into. Though weak in health, my fellow-Missionaries were both full of hope, and zealous in their work, and this somewhat strange visit was a pleasant blink amidst our darkness. Before I had gone far on my return journey, the sun went down, and no Native could be hired to accompany me. They all told me that I would for certain be killed by the way. But I knew that it would be quite dark before I reached the hostile districts, and that the Heathen are great cowards in the dark and never leave their villages at night in the darkness, except in companies for fishing and such-like tasks. I skirted along the sea-shore as fast as I could, walking and running alternately; and, when I got within hearing of voices, I slunk back into the bush till they had safely passed, and then groped my way back near the shore, that being my only guide to find a path.

Having made half the journey, I came to a dangerous path, almost perpendicular, up a great rock round the base of which the sea roared deep. With my heart lifted up to Jesus, I succeeded in climbing it, cautiously grasping roots, and resting by bushes, till I safely reached the top. There, to avoid a village, I had to keep crawling slowly along the bush near the sea, on the top of that great ledge of rock—a feat I could never have accomplished even in daylight without the excitement; but I felt that I was supported and guided in all that life or death journey by my dear Lord Jesus. I had to leave the shore, and follow up the bank of a very deep ravine to a place shallow enough for one to cross, and then through the bush away for the shore again. By holding too much to the



"Their bodies were borne to a sacred tree and hung up by the hands."

right, I missed the point where I had intended to reach it. Small fires were now visible through the bush; I heard the voices of the people talking in one of our most Heathen villages.

Quietly drawing back, I now knew where I was, and easily found my way towards the shore; but on reaching the Great Rock, I could not in the darkness find the path down again: I groped about till I was tired. I feared that I might stumble over and be killed; or, if I delayed till daylight, that the Savages would kill me. I knew that one part of the rock was steep-sloping, with little growth or none thereon, and I searched about to find it, resolved to commend myself to Jesus and slide down thereby, that I might again reach the shore and escape for my life. Thinking I had found this spot, I hurled down several stones and listened for their splash that I might judge whether it would be safe. But the distance was too far for me to hear or judge. At high tide the sea there was deep; but at low tide I could wade out of it and be safe. The darkness made it impossible for me to see anything. I let go my umbrella, shoving it down with considerable force, but neither did it send me back any news.

Feeling sure, however, that this was the place I sought, and knowing that to await the daylight would be certain death, I prayed to my Lord Jesus for help and protection, and resolved to let myself go. First, I fastened all my clothes as tightly as I could, so as not to catch on anything; then I lay down at the top on my back, feet foremost, holding my head downwards on my breast to keep it from striking on the rock; then, after one cry to my Saviour, having let myself down as far as possible by a branch, I at last let go, throwing my arms forward and trying to keep my feet well up. A giddy swirl, as if flying through the air, took possession of me; a few moments seemed an age; I rushed quickly down, and felt no obstruction till my feet struck into the sea below. Adoring and praising my dear Lord Jesus, who had ordered it so, I regained my feet; it was low tide, I had received no injury, I recovered my umbrella, and, wading through, I found the shore path easier and lighter than the bush had been. The very darkness was my safety, preventing the Natives from rambling about. I saw no person to speak to, till I reached a village quite near to my own house, fifteen or twenty miles

from where I had started; here I left the sea path and promised some young men a gift of fish-hooks to guide me the nearest way through the bush to my Mission Station, which they gladly and heartily did. I ran a narrow risk in approaching them; they thought me an enemy, and I arrested their muskets only by a loud cry—

"I am Missi! Don't shoot; my love to you, my friends!"

Praising God for His preserving care, I reached home, and had a long refreshing sleep. The natives, on hearing next day how I had come all the way in the dark, exclaimed—

"Surely any of us would have been killed! Your Jehovah God alone thus protects you and brings you safely home."

With all my heart, I said, "Yes! and He will be your protector and helper too, if only you will obey and trust in Him."

Certainly that night put my faith to the test. Had it not been the assurance that I was engaged in His service, and that in every path of duty He would carry me through or dispose of me therein for His glory, I could never have undertaken either journey. St. Paul's words are true to-day and for ever—"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE PLAGUE OF MEASLES

ABOUT this time I had a never-to-be-forgotten illustration of the infernal spirit that possessed some of the Traders towards these poor Natives. One morning, three or four vessels entered our Harbour and cast anchor in Port Resolution. The captains called on me; and one of them, with manifest delight, exclaimed, "We know how to bring down your proud Tannese now! We'll humble them before you!"

I answered, "Surely you don't mean to attack and destroy these poor people?"

He replied, not abashed but rejoicing, "We have sent the

measles to humble them! That kills them by the score! Four young men have been landed at different ports, ill with measles, and these will soon thin their ranks."

Shocked above measure, I protested solemnly and denounced their conduct and spirit; but my remonstrances only called forth the shameless declaration, "Our watchword is,—Sweep these creatures away and let white men occupy the soil!"

Their malice was further illustrated thus: they induced Kapuku, a young Chief, to go off to one of their vessels, promising him a present. He was the friend and chief supporter of Mr. Mathieson and of his work. Having got him on board, they confined him in the hold amongst natives lying ill with measles. They gave him no food for about four-and-twenty hours; and then, without the promised present, they put him ashore far from his own home. Though weak and excited, he scrambled back to his Tribe in great exhaustion and terror. He informed the Missionary that they had put him down amongst sick people, red and hot with fever, and that he feared their sickness was upon him. I am ashamed to say that these Sandal-wood and other Traders were our own degraded countrymen; and that they deliberately gloried in thus destroying the poor Heathen. A more fiendish spirit could scarcely be imagined; but most of them were horrible drunkards, and their traffic of every kind amongst these Islands was, generally speaking, steeped in human blood.

The measles, thus introduced, became amongst our Islanders the most deadly plague. It spread fearfully, and was accompanied by sore throat and diarrhoea. In some villages, man, woman, and child were stricken, and none could give food or water to the rest. The misery, suffering, and terror were unexampled, the living being afraid sometimes even to bury the dead. Thirteen of my own Mission party died of this disease; and, so terror-stricken were the few who survived, that when the little Mission schooner *John Knox* returned to Tanna, they all packed up and left for their own Aneityum, except my own dear old Abraham.

At first, thinking that all were on the wing, he also had packed his chattels, and was standing beside the others ready to leave with them. I drew near to him, and said, "Abraham,