

the inhabitants of these islands were talked of over the whole world for their treachery, cruelty, and murders; and that the Queen would no longer allow them to murder or injure her subjects, who were living peaceably among them either as Missionaries or Traders. She would send a Ship of War every year to inquire into their conduct, and if any white man injured any Native they were to tell the Captain of the Man-of-war, and the white man would be punished as fast as the black man."

After spending much time, and using peaceably every means in his power in trying to get the guilty parties on Tanna, and not succeeding, he shelled two villages,—having the day before informed the Natives that he would do so, and advising to have all women, children, and sick removed, which in fact they did. Indeed nearly the whole of the inhabitants, young and old, went to Nowar's land, where they were instructed they would be safe, while they witnessed what a Man-of-war could do in punishing murderers. But before the hour approached, a foolish host of Tannese warriors had assembled on the beach, painted and armed and determined to fight the Man-of-war! And the Chief of a village on the other side of the bay was at that moment assembled with his men on the high ground within our view, and dancing to a war song in defiance.

The Commodore caused a shell to strike the hill and explode with terrific fury just underneath the dancers. The earth and the bush were torn and thrown into the air above and around them; and next moment the whole host were seen disappearing over the brow of the hill. Two shots were sent over the heads of the warriors on the shore, with terrific noise and uproar; in an instant, every man was making haste for Nowar's land, the place of refuge. The Commodore then shelled the villages, and destroyed their property. Beyond what I have here recorded, absolutely nothing was done.

We return then for a moment to Sydney. The public excitement made it impossible for me to open my lips in the promotion of our Mission. The Rev. Drs. Dunmore Lang and Steel, along with Professor Smith of the University, waited on the Commodore, and got an independent version of the facts. They then called a meeting on the affair by public advertisement. Without being made acquainted with the

results of their investigations, I was called upon to give my own account of the *Curacao's* visit and of the connection of the Missionaries therewith. They then submitted the Commodore's statement, given by him in writing. He exonerated the Missionaries from every shadow of blame and from all responsibility. In the interests of mercy as well as justice, and to save life, they had acted as his interpreters; and there all that they had to do with the *Curacao* began and ended. All this was published in the Newspapers next day, along with the speeches of the three deputies. The excitement began to subside. But the poison had been lodged in many hearts, and the ejection of it was a slow and difficult process.

Feeling absolutely conscious that I had only done my Christian duty, I left all results in the hands of my Lord Jesus, and pressed forward in His blessed work. But more than one dear personal friend had to be sacrificed over this painful affair. A Presbyterian Minister, and a godly elder and his wife, all most excellent and well-beloved, at whose houses I had been received as a brother, intimated to me that owing to this case of the *Curacao* their friendship and mine must entirely cease in this world. And it did cease; but my esteem never changed. I had learned not to think unkindly of friends, even when they manifestly misunderstood my actions. Nor would these things merit being recorded here, were it not that they may be at once a beacon and a guide. God's people are still belied. And the mob is still as ready as ever to cry, "Crucify! Crucify!"

CHAPTER LVII

A PLEA FOR TANNA

EVERYTHING having been at length arranged for in the Colonies, in connection with the Mission and *Dayspring*, as far as could possibly be,—and I having been adopted by the Victorian Assembly of 1866, as the first Missionary from the Presbyterian Church of Australia to the New Hebrides,—we sailed for the Islands on the 8th August of that year. Besides

my wife and child, the following accompanied us to the field: Reva Copeland, Cosh, and M'Nair, along with their respective wives. On 20th August we reached Aneityum; and, having landed some of our friends, we sailed Northwards, as far as Efate, to let the new Missionaries see all the Islands open for occupation, and to bring all our Missionaries back to the annual meeting, where the permanent settlements would be finally agreed upon.

While staying at Aneityum, I learned with as deep emotion as man ever felt for man, that noble old Abraham, the sharer of my Tannese trials, had during the interval peacefully fallen asleep in Jesus. He left for me his silver watch—one which I had myself sent to the dear soul from Sydney, and which he greatly prized. In his dying hour he said, "Give it to Missi, my own Missi Paton; and tell him that I go to Jesus, where Time is dead."

I learned also, and truly human-hearted readers will need no apology for introducing this news in so grave a story—that my faithful dog *Clutha*, entrusted to the care of a kindly Native to be kept for my return, had, despite all coaxing, grown weary of heart amongst all these dark faces, and fallen asleep too, truly not unworthy of a grateful tear!

At our annual Synod, after much prayerful deliberation and the careful weighing of every vital circumstance, I was constrained by the united voice of my brethren not to return to Tanna, but to settle on the adjoining island of Aniwa (= A-neé-wa). It was even hoped that thereby Tanna might eventually be the more surely reached and evangelised.

By the new Missionaries all the other old Stations were re-occupied and some fresh Islands were entered upon in the name of Jesus. As we moved about with our *Dayspring*, and planted the Missionaries here and there, nothing could repress the wonder of Natives.

"How is this?" they cried; "We slew or drove them all away! We plundered their houses and robbed them. Had we been so treated, nothing would have made us return. But they come back with a beautiful new ship, and with more and more Missionaries. And is it to trade and to get money, like the other white men? No! no! But to tell us of their Jehovah God and of His Son Jesus. If their God makes them do all that, we may well worship Him too."



"At every turn I expected he would dash himself and me against the great forest trees."

In this way, island after island was opened up to receive the Missionary, and their Chiefs bound themselves to protect and cherish him, before they knew anything whatever of the Gospel, beyond what they saw in the disposition and character of its Preachers or heard rumoured regarding its fruits on other Islands. Imagine *Cannibals* found thus prepared to welcome the Missionary, and to make not only his property but his life comparatively safe. The Isles "wait" for Christ.

On our way to Aniwa, the *Dayspring* had to call at Tanna. By stress of weather we lay several days in Port Resolution. And there many memories were again revived—wounds that after five-and-twenty years, when I now write, still bleed afresh! Nowar, the old Chief, unstable but friendly, was determined to keep us there by force or by fraud. The Captain told him that the council of the Missionaries had forbidden him to land our boxes at Tanna.

"Don't land them," said the wily Chief, "just throw them over; my men and I will catch everything before it reaches the water, and carry them all safely ashore!"

The Captain said he durst not. "Then," persisted Nowar, "just point them out to us; you will have no further trouble; we will manage everything for Missi."

They were in distress when he refused; and poor old Nowar tried another tack. Suspecting that my dear wife was afraid of them, he got us on shore to see his extensive plantations. Turning eagerly to her, he said, leaving me to interpret, "Plenty of food! While I have a yam or a banana, you shall not want."

She answered, "I fear not any lack of food."

Pointing to his warriors, he cried, "We are many! We are strong! We can always protect you."

"I am not afraid," she calmly replied.

He then led us to that chestnut-tree, in the branches of which I had sat during a lonely and memorable night, when all hope had perished of any earthly deliverance, and said to her with a manifest touch of genuine emotion, "The God who protected Missi there will always protect you."

She told him that she had no fear of that kind, but explained to him that we must for the present go to Aniwa, but would return to Tanna, if the Lord opened up our way.

Nowar, Arkurat, and the rest, seemed to be genuinely grieved, and it touched my soul to the quick.

A beautiful incident was the outcome, as we learned only in long after years. There was at that time an Aniwan Chief on Tanna, visiting friends. He was one of their great Sacred Men. He and his people had been promised a passage home in the *Dayspring*, with their canoes in tow. When old Nowar saw that he could not keep us with himself, he went to this Aniwan Chief, and took the white shells, the insignia of Chieftainship, from his own arm, and bound them on the Sacred Man, saying, "By these you promise to protect my Missi and his wife and child on Aniwa. Let no evil befall them; or, by this pledge, I and my people will revenge it."

In a future crisis, this probably saved our lives, as shall be afterwards related. After all, a bit of the Christ-Spirit had found its way into that old Cannibal's soul! And the same Christ-Spirit in me yearned more strongly still, and made it a positive pain to pass on to another Island, and leave him in that dim-groping twilight of the soul.

CHAPTER LVIII

OUR NEW HOME ON ANIWA

ANIWA became my Mission Home in November 1866; and for the next fifteen years it was the heart and centre of my personal labours in the Heathen World. Since 1881, alas! my too frequent deputation pilgrimages among Churches in Great Britain and in the Colonies have rendered my visits to Aniwa but few and far between. God never guided me back to Tanna; but others, my dear friends, have seen His Kingdom planted and beginning to grow amongst that slowly relenting race. Aniwa was to be the land wherein my past years of toil and patience and faith were to see their fruits ripening at length. I claimed Aniwa for Jesus, and by the grace of God Aniwa now worships at the Saviour's feet.

The Island of Aniwa is one of the smaller isles of the New Hebrides. It measures scarcely seven miles by two, and is everywhere girt round with a belt of coral reef. The sea

breaks thereon heavily, with thundering roar, and the white surf rolls in furious and far. But there are days of calm, when all the sea is glass, and the spray on the reef is only a fringe of silver.

Aniwa, having no hills to attract and condense the clouds, suffers badly for lack of genial rains; and the heavy rains of hurricane and tempest seem to disappear as if by magic through the light soil and porous rock. The moist atmosphere and the heavy dews, however, keep the Island covered with green, while large and fruitful trees draw wondrous nourishment from their rocky beds.

Aniwa has no harbour, or safe anchorage of any kind for ships; though, in certain winds, they have been seen at anchor on the outer edge of the reef, always a perilous haven! There is one crack in the coral belt, through which a boat can safely run to shore; but the little wharf, built there of the largest coral blocks that could be rolled together, has been once and again swept clean-off by the hurricane, leaving "not a wrack behind."

When we landed, the Natives received us kindly. They and the Aneityumese Teachers led us to a temporary home, prepared for our abode. It was a large Native Hut. Walls and roof consisted of sugar-cane leaf and reeds, intertwined on a strong wooden frame. It had neither doors nor windows, but open spaces instead of these. The earthen floor alone looked beautiful, covered thick with white coral broken small. It had only one apartment; and that, meantime, had to serve also for Church and School and Public Hall. We screened off a little portion, and behind that screen planted our bed, and stored our valuables. All the Natives within reach assembled to watch us taking our food! A box at first served for a chair, the lid of another box was our table, our cooking was all done in the open air under a large tree, and we got along with amazing comfort. But the house was under the shelter of a coral rock, and we saw at a glance that at certain seasons it would prove a very hotbed of fever and ague. We were, however, only too thankful to enter it, till a better could be built, and on a breezier site.

The Aniwas were not so violently dishonourable as the Tannese. But they had the knack of asking in a rather menacing manner whatever they coveted; and the tomahawk

was sometimes swung to enforce an appeal. We strove to get along quietly and kindly, in the hope that when we knew their language, and could teach them the principles of Jesus, they would be saved, and life and property would be secure. But the rumour of the *Curacoa's* visit and her punishment of murder and robbery did more, by God's blessing, to protect us during those Heathen days than all other influences combined. The savage Cannibal was heard to whisper to his bloodthirsty mates, "not to murder or to steal, for the Man-of-war that punished Tanna would blow up their little Island!"

Sorrowful experience on Tanna had taught us to seek the site for our Aniwan house on the highest ground, and away from the malarial influences near the shore. There was one charming mound, covered with trees, whose roots ran down into the crevices of coral, and from which Tanna and Erromanga are clearly seen. But there the Natives for some superstitious reason forbade us to build, and we were constrained to take another rising ground somewhat nearer the shore. In the end, this turned out to be the very best site on the island for us, central and suitable every way. But we afterwards learned that perhaps superstition also led them to sell us this site, in the malicious hope that it would prove our ruin. The mounds on the top, which had to be cleared away, contained the bones and refuse of their Cannibal feasts for ages. None but their Sacred Men durst touch them; and the Natives watched us hewing and digging, certain that their gods would strike us dead! That failing, their thoughts may probably have been turned to reflect that after all the Jehovah God was stronger than they.

In levelling the site, and gently sloping the sides of the ground for good drainage purposes, I had gathered together two large baskets of human bones. I said to a Chief in Tannese, "How do these bones come to be here?"

And he replied, with a shrug worthy of a cynical Frenchman, "Ah, we are not Tanna-men! We don't eat the bones!"

CHAPTER LIX

HOUSE-BUILDING FOR GOD

THE site being now cleared, we questioned whether to build only a temporary home, hoping to return to dear old Tanna as soon as possible, or, though the labour would be vastly greater, a substantial house—for the comfort of our successors, if not of ourselves. We decided that, as this was work for God, we would make it the very best we could. We planned two central rooms, sixteen feet by sixteen, with a five feet wide lobby between, so that other rooms could be added when required. About a quarter of a mile from the sea, and thirty-five feet above its level, I laid the foundations of the house. Coral blocks raised the wall about three feet high all round. Air passages carried sweeping currents underneath each room, and greatly lessened the risk of fever and ague. A wide trench was dug all round, and filled up as a drain with broken coral. At back and front, the verandah stretched five feet wide; and pantry, bath-room, and tool-house were partitioned off under the verandah behind. The windows sent to me had hinges; I added two feet to each, with wood from Mission-boxes, and made them French door-windows, opening from each room to the verandah. And so we had, by God's blessing, a healthy spot to live in, if not exactly a thing of beauty!

The Mission House, as ultimately finished, had six rooms, three on each side of the lobby, and measured ninety feet in length, surrounded by a verandah, one hundred feet by five, which kept everything shaded and cool. Underneath two rooms a cellar was dug eight feet deep, and shelved all round for a store. In more than one terrific hurricane that cellar saved our lives,—all crushing into it when trees and houses were being tossed like feathers on the wings of the wind. Altogether, the house at Aniwa has proved one of the healthiest and most commodious of any that have been planted by Christian hands on the New Hebrides. In selecting site and in building "the good hand of our God was upon us for good."

I built also two small Orphanages, almost as inevitably

necessary as the Missionary's own house. They stood on a line with the front of my own dwelling, one for girls, the other for boys, and we had them constantly under our own eyes. The orphans were practically boarded at the Mission premises, and adopted by the Missionaries. Their clothing was a heavy drain upon our resources; and every odd and curious article that came in any of the boxes or parcels was utilised. We trained these young people for Jesus. And at this day many of the best of our Native Teachers, and most devoted Christian helpers, are amongst those who would probably have perished but for these Orphanages.

Every day after dinner we set the bell a-ringing—intimating, from our first arrival on Aniwa, readiness to give advice or medicine to all who were sick. We spoke to them, so soon as we had learned, a few words about Jesus. The weak received a cup of tea and a piece of bread. The demand was sometimes great, especially when epidemics befell them. But some rather fled from us as the cause of their sickness, and sought refuge from our presence in remotest corners, or rushed off at our approach and concealed themselves in the bush. They were but children, and full of superstition; and we had to win them by kindly patience, never losing faith in them and hope for them, any more than the Lord did with us!

Our learning the language on Aniwa was marked by similar incidents to those of Tanna, related in a preceding chapter; though a few of them could understand my Tannese, and that greatly helped me. One day a man, after carefully examining some article, turned to his neighbour and said, "Taha tinei?"

I inferred that he was asking, "What is this?" Pointing to another article, I repeated their words; they smiled at each other, and gave me its name.

On another occasion, a man said to his companion, looking toward me, "Taha neigo?" Concluding that he was asking my name, I pointed towards him, and repeated the words, and they at once gave me their names.

Readers would be surprised to discover how much you can readily learn of any language, with these two short questions constantly on your lips, and with people ready at every turn to answer—"What's this?" "What's your name?" Every word was at once written down, spelled phonetically and arranged in alphabetic order, and a note appended as to the

circumstances in which it was used. By frequent comparison of these notes, and by careful daily and even hourly imitation of all their sounds, we were able in a measure to understand each other before we had gone far in the house-building operations, during which some of them were constantly beside me.

One incident of that time was very memorable, and God turned it to good account for higher ends. I often tell it as "the miracle of the speaking bit of wood"; and it has happened to other Missionaries exactly as to myself. While working at the house, I required some nails and tools. Lifting a piece of planed wood, I pencilled a few words on it, and requested our old Chief to carry it to Mrs. Paton, and she would send what I wanted. In blank wonder, he innocently stared at me, and said, "But what do you want?"

I replied, "The wood will tell her." He looked rather angry, thinking that I befooled him, and retorted, "Who ever heard of wood speaking?"

By hard pleading I succeeded in persuading him to go. He was amazed to see her looking at the wood and then fetching the needed articles. He brought back the bit of wood, and eagerly made signs for an explanation. Chiefly in broken Tannese I read to him the words, and informed him that in the same way God spoke to us through His Book. The will of God was written there, and by and bye, when he learned to read, he would hear God *speaking* to him from its page, as Mrs. Paton heard me from the bit of wood.

A great desire was thus awakened in the poor man's soul to see the very Word of God printed in his own language. He helped me to learn words and master ideas with growing enthusiasm. And when my work of translating portions of Holy Scripture began, his delight was unbounded and his help invaluable. The miracle of a speaking page was not less wonderful than that of speaking wood!

One day, while building the house, an old Inland Chief and his three sons came to see us. Everything was to them full of wonder. After returning home one of the sons fell sick, and the father at once blamed us and the Worship, declaring that if the lad died we all should be murdered in revenge. By God's blessing, and by our careful nursing and suitable medicine, he recovered and was spared. The old Chief superstitiously wheeled round almost to another extreme.

He became not only friendly, but devoted to us. He attended the Sabbath Services, and listened to the Aneityumese Teachers, and to my first attempts, partly in Tannese, translated by the orator Taia or the Chief Namakel, and explained in our hearing to the people in their mother tongue.

But on the heels of this, another calamity overtook us. So soon as two rooms of the Mission House were roofed in, I hired the stoutest of the young men to carry our boxes thither. Two of them started off with a heavy box suspended on a pole from shoulder to shoulder, their usual custom. They were shortly after attacked with vomiting of blood; and one of them, an Erromangan, actually died. The father of the other swore that, if his son did not get better, every soul at the Mission House should be slain in revenge. But God mercifully restored him.

As the boat-landing was nearly three-quarters of a mile distant, and such a calamity recurring would be not only sorrowful in itself but perilous in the extreme for us all, I steeped my wits, and with such crude materials as were at hand, I manufactured not only a hand-barrow, but a wheelbarrow, for the pressing emergencies of the time. In due course, I procured a more orthodox hand-cart from the Colonies, and coaxed and bribed the Natives to assist me in making a road for it. Perhaps the ghost of *Macadam* would shudder at the appearance of that road, but it has proved immensely useful ever since.

CHAPTER LX

A CITY OF GOD

WHEN, in the course of years, everything had been completed to our taste, we lived practically in the midst of a beautiful Village,—the Church, the School, the Orphanage, the Smithy and Joiner's Shop, the Printing Office, the Banana and Yam House, the Cook House, etc.; all very humble indeed, but all standing sturdily up there among the orange-trees, and preaching the Gospel of a higher civilisation and of a better life for *Asiwa*. The little road leading to each door was laid with

the white coral broken small. The fence around all shone fresh and clean with new paint. Order and taste were seen to be laws in the white man's New Life; and several of the Natives began diligently to follow our example.

Many and strange were the arts which I had to try to practise, such as handling the adze, the mysteries of tenon and mortise, and other feats of skill. If a Native wanted a fish-hook, or a piece of red calico to bind his long whip-cord hair, he would carry me a block of coral or fetch me a beam; but continuous daily toil seemed to him a mean existence. The women were tempted, by calico and beads for pay, to assist in preparing the sugar-cane leaf for thatch, gathering it in the plantations, and tying it over reeds four or six feet long with strips of bark of pandanus leaf, leaving a long fringe hanging over on one side. How differently they acted when the Gospel began to touch their hearts! They built their Church and their School then, by their own free toil, rejoicing to labour without money or price; and they have ever since kept them in good repair, for the service of the Lord, by their voluntary offerings of wood and sugar-cane leaf and coral-lime.

The roof was firmly tied on and nailed; thereon were laid the reeds, fringed with sugar-cane leaf, row after row tied firmly to the wood; the ridge was bound down by cocoa-nut leaves, dexterously plaited from side to side and skewered to the ridge pole with hard wooden pins; and over all, a fresh storm-roof was laid on yearly for the hurricane months, composed of folded cocoa-nut leaves, held down with planks of wood, and bound to the frame-work below—which, however, had to be removed again in April to save the sugar-cane leaf from rotting beneath it. There you were snugly covered in, and your thatching good to last from eight years to ten; that is, provided you were not caught in the sweep of the hurricane, before which trees went flying like straws, huts disappeared like autumn leaves, and your Mission House, if left standing at all, was probably swept bare alike of roof and thatch at a single stroke! Well for you at such times if you have a good barometer indicating the approach of the storm; and better still, a large cellar like ours, four-and-twenty feet by sixteen, built round with solid coral blocks,—where goods may be stored, and whereinto also all your household may creep for