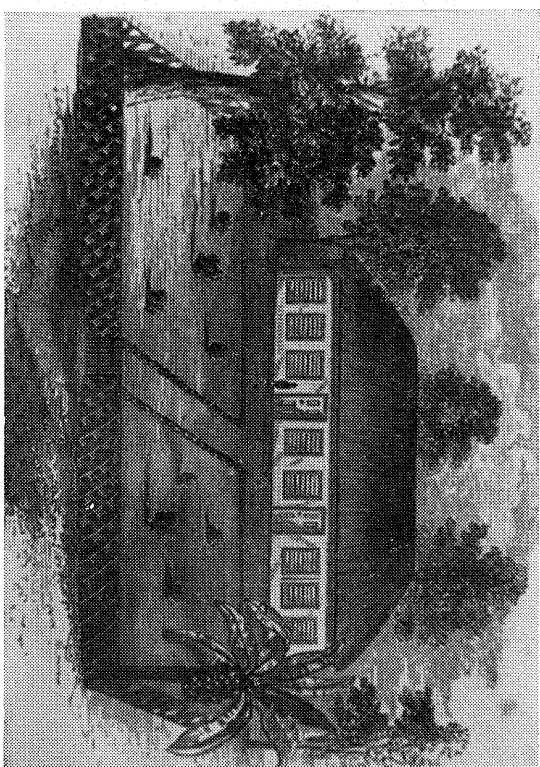


CHAPTER TEN

Tanna, a Life and Death Struggle

PORT RESOLUTION on the south-east of Tanna was named by Captain Cook in 1774. He called it after his ship "Resolution," which found a safe anchorage there. The word resolution means strong purpose or determination. That exactly describes the amazing story of the Polynesian teachers in their first efforts to win Tanna for Christ.

John Williams' last work was to land three Polynesian teachers at Port Resolution on 18 November 1839. They spent a night ashore among the Tannese people and told their friends on the

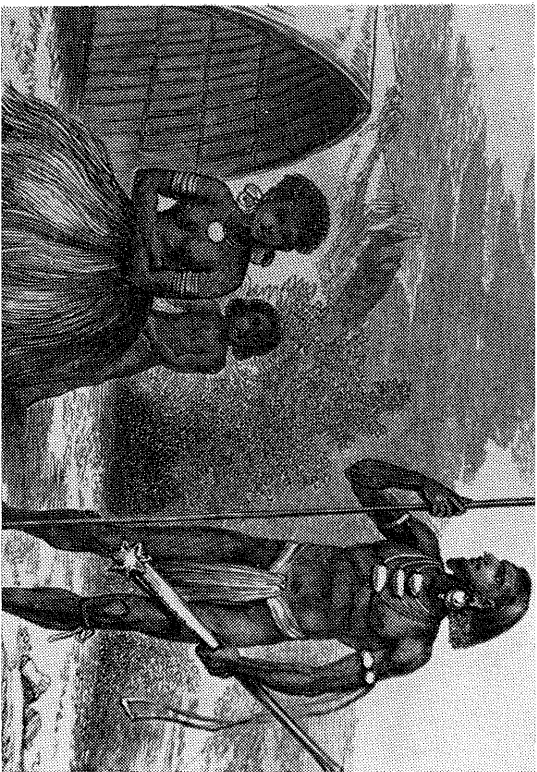


Mission house of the Turners and Nisbets, Port Resolution, Tanna, 1842.

"Camden" next morning that they felt safe to remain there. The "Camden" sailed north to Eromanga where Williams and his young friend Harris were killed.

Polynesian teachers, 1839

The first teachers were three Samoans named Lalolangi, Salamea and Mose. In 1840 two more Samoans were added to the team, Pomare and Vaitofanga. The first teachers were well and happy in their work. All looked hopeful. Then all five teachers took ill, and were soon too weak to care for themselves. The Tanna people had given them a welcome and had begun to listen to the Good News. They showed the Samoans every kindness. After six weeks Salamea and Pomare died. They were buried by their Tannese followers. The other Samoans were too sick to help.



A Tannese family, about 1850.

When the three survivors recovered they found that the Tannese were no longer on their side. The sickness of the Samoans was believed by the Tannese to be because their heathen god Alema was angry with the messengers of the Good News. The Tannese said that Alema was stronger than the Christians' God. That was why the teachers died, they said.

The Rev. A. W. Murray was on board the "Camden" when she called in April 1841. A few people had returned to the side of the teachers. Mr Murray held a meeting with the chiefs who lived in and near Port Resolution. They said that they were still in favour of the worship and wanted the teachers to remain. They would like missionaries to come and live among them.

Turner and Nisbet, 1842

When the "Camden" reached Sydney the Rev. George Turner and Henry Nisbet were awaiting transport to the New Hebrides. After they had spent some months in Samoa the "Camden" brought them to Tanna in June 1842. The missionaries were given a good welcome by the chiefs and the people around Port Resolution. Both were married men from Scotland, working under the LMS. These two missionary families remained only seven months on Tanna. At first they made good progress. After three months they could use the language well enough to get their message to the people.

The heathen priests had great influence on Tanna. As soon as they saw that people were beginning to trust the words of the missionaries and teachers they became jealous and hostile. When the next sickness broke out these priests blamed it upon the servants of God and tried to get them driven off Tanna or killed. Friendly chiefs tried to help the Christians. Opposition grew and all the Christians were threatened. War was declared against them and every day seemed likely to be their last.

The escape to Samoa

Turner and Nisbet had a gun. The Tannese friends asked them to use it in self-defence. The missionaries refused. They decided that they should escape to sea in their boat. This would not only preserve their own lives and the teachers' lives but might remove the cause of the savage opposition to their Tannese followers. They spent a terrible night in their whale-boat in a rough sea.

Next day a whaling ship from Hobart appeared off Port Resolution. Captain Lucas took the whole party to Samoa where they arrived in February 1843.

Tanna was now without Christian teachers. But there were some fruits of that difficult time. In 1845 the LMS in Samoa printed two little books in the language of Port Resolution. These were long thought to be the first Scripture portions in any language of the New Hebrides. They were probably the work of the first Samoan teachers, prepared under the guidance of Turner.

Mrs. Watt of South Tanna wrote in 1884, "The Eastern Island teachers never learned to speak Tannese properly. Even after fourteen years chattering away in this tongue I have difficulty in making out the few sheets of Samoan-Tannese which I have seen." [Agnes C. P. Watt, p. 218].

New Polynesian teachers, 1845

The new LMS ship "John Williams" made her first voyage to the New Hebrides in April 1845. Both A. W. Murray and George Turner were on board. Tanna was much in their thoughts and prayers. At Anetiymn they were cheered to learn that the Tannese were now more favourable to Christianity. As soon as the ship anchored at Port Resolution the missionaries were welcomed both by their old friends and by their former enemies.

The tide turned in favour of the new worship when a sickness carried off many of the heathen who had opposed the Christians. The little group of Tannese believers had kept up their worship on the Lord's Day. A *tapu* was put on the mission property and gardens to protect them and no one dared to break it.

The missionaries had a meeting with the chiefs from near and far. These chiefs united in asking the missionaries to return, or else to leave some teachers on Tanna. Three Rarotongans and four Samoan teachers were landed and given a hearty welcome. They were placed at three separate stations, centred on Port Resolution. But troubles soon broke out more fiercely than before. Mr. Nisbet and Mr. Gill were on the LMS ship when next she called at Tanna in September 1846. They found that for a few months good work had been done by the strong band of teachers. Opposition arose against them when a new epidemic spread on Tanna. The Christians were blamed and plans were made to kill

them. Only the strong support of a chief named Viavia saved them until the danger had passed.

The teachers began their work again. When disease again broke out on Tanna one of the teachers was attacked and clubbed and left for dead. His name was Ioane. He recovered but bore the scars till his death. Then the Tannese tried to burn down the teachers' station.

Murder of Vasa

A few days later teacher Vasa was attacked and killed while he was praying in the bush. Though a number of Polynesian teachers and European missionaries have laid down their lives for the Good News on Tanna, Vasa is the only martyr in the history of the Tanna church who came from beyond the New Hebrides. We honour his memory. The lives of the surviving teachers and their families were saved when a ship called the next day at Port Resolution. The captain agreed to take them all to Aneityum. Thus Tanna was left desolate again.

New beginnings, 1847

Two of the Polynesian teachers were left at Aneityum with instructions to re-occupy Tanna when a chance arose. In March 1847 a chief of Port Resolution sent his son to Aneityum to seek for teachers. The two Polynesian teachers returned to Tanna with him. The LMS ship kept up its visits and found some encouragement in 1848 and 1849. A third teacher was added in 1848. Opposition closed the out-station. All the teachers were brought together at Port Resolution where they planned to build a grass church. But this was forbidden by the heathen.

Smallpox

In May 1852 the work was broken up again. This time the occasion was the visit for three weeks to Port Resolution of the American ship "Edward" with smallpox disease on board. The Polynesian teachers showed kindness to the sick passengers and the crew. They were the first to catch the disease. All three teachers at the head station died, and the wife of a teacher. Only Pita of Samoa was left. He was one of the two teachers who returned to Tanna from Aneityum in March 1847. He was working at a different part of the port.

The disease infected the Tannese people when they began to plunder the property of the dead teachers. Smallpox spread to other places. This angered the heathen against the Christians and four Tanna women who were friendly to the worship were killed.

Teacher Pita borrowed a boat from a trader and escaped with his family to Aneityum. Again the island was without workers. At that time the LMS introduced vaccination for smallpox for all their workers.

Teachers from Aneityum

The next part of the story of Tanna belongs to the outreach of the Aneityumese church. When the LMS ship called in October 1854 they found that the report of the transformation of Aneityum by the Good News had reached Tanna. Two canoe loads of Tannese went to Aneityum to see if the reports were true. They were astonished to find an island full of people living without war, vengeance and murder. The result was that these south Tanna men asked for Aneityumese teachers.

The first two such teachers were placed at Anuikarakaka (Wakaraka), South Tanna, on 14 October 1854. The mission ships "John Williams" and "John Knox" (of the Presbyterian Mission) had work to do in visiting these teachers and keeping the links with their missionaries on Samoa and Aneityum. But from this point onwards the Tanna mission was carried on as the outreach of the Presbyterian Mission and the Aneityumese church. They soon had to face new trials and new setbacks.

Aniwa

In March 1840, on the second voyage of the "Camden" the LMS placed Samoan teachers on the island of Aniwa. They were withdrawn a few years later because of the difficulties. The work began in earnest only when the Presbyterian Church on Aneityum sent its own teachers to Aniwa. This story belongs to chapter twenty-two.

Eromanga and he was weighed down with the task. He knew that the sandalwood trade had made Eromanga a dangerous place for foreign ships. This was what stopped his planned visit of 1830.

Williams did not know that only a few weeks earlier a clash had taken place on the beach at Dillon's Bay. In this clash the son of the chief Auwi Auwi had been killed. The "Camden" was the first mission ship to anchor at Dillon's Bay. The Eromangans had no way of knowing that these Europeans on the mission ship would be any different from the crews of the sandalwood ships.

Williams went ashore in the ship's boat accompanied by a young man named Harris. Harris was not a missionary but a Christian who hoped to prepare for missionary service. Captain Morgan was most careful and watchful. The people on the beach showed signs of friendship by bringing drinking water to Williams. He then persuaded Captain Morgan to let him step ashore. Williams mingled with the Eromangan children as he tried out the Samoan numerals on them. Suddenly there was a shout. Harris was running for the water. Williams was slow to run. Both men were struck down and beaten to death before the eyes of the boat's crew who could do nothing to save them. The bodies of Williams and Harris were taken away and were later eaten.

In Samoa, Mrs. Williams heard the news of her husband's death through a messenger. Before the messenger had a chance to break the sad news Mrs. Williams asked,

"Is all well?"

"Yes, all is well," was the quiet reply.

Mrs. Williams knew exactly what he meant. She had pleaded with her husband, before he left Samoa, not to land on Eromanga. He was only forty-three years old and in the prime of his great powers.

The monument at Apia, Samoa, reads:

"Sacred to the memory of the Rev. John Williams, father of the Samoan and other missions, aged 43 years and 5 months, who was killed by the cruel natives of Eromanga, on the 20th November 1839, while endeavouring to plant the Gospel of Peace on its shores."

The Presbyterian Church in the New Hebrides sees in John Williams the servant of God who longed for the land's salvation. He planned the New Hebrides Mission of the LMS. He sealed

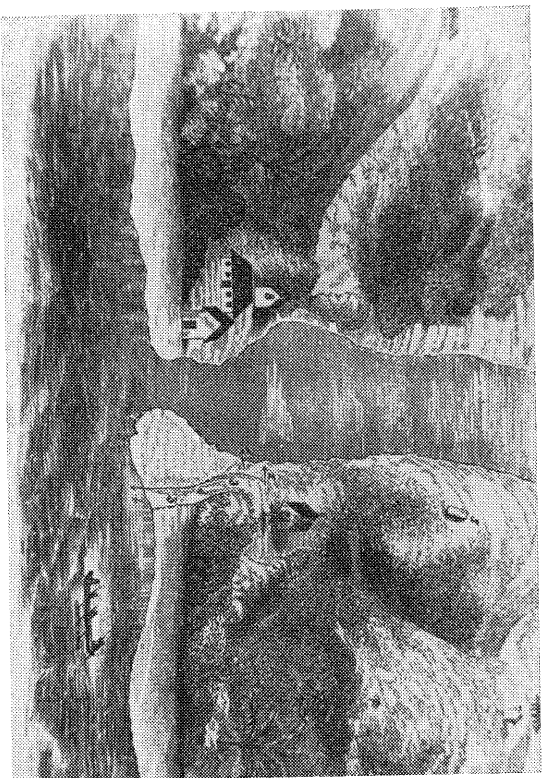
CHAPTER ELEVEN

Eromanga, Island of Blood and Martyrs

AS THE LITTLE Islander plane came in to land on the high ground above Dillon's Bay I was watching through the passenger's window. The afternoon sun lit up the great valley, the bold cliffs and the silver river.

The death of John Williams

Here the "Camden" lay at anchor on the night of 19 November 1839. John Williams could not sleep. He carried a burden for



An early drawing made in 1839, of the scene of John Williams' and James Harris' violent deaths, Dillon's Bay, Eromanga, 1839. Sandalwood traders' buildings on left; teacher's house on right; Rev. G. N. Gordon's cottage and church top right. Figure 2 shows where Harris was killed, fig. 3 the path down which Williams ran, fig. 4 the place where Williams was killed.

this high purpose with his blood. He will never be forgotten by the Christians of the New Hebrides.

The first Samoan teachers

The LMS felt a new concern and compassion for the people of Eromanga. In May 1840, just six months after John Williams' death, they sent the "Camden" back to Eromanga. Mr Heath of the LMS placed two Samoan teachers, Lasalo and Faniela, on Eromanga near to Dillon's Bay.

When next the "Camden" called in 1841, the ship had great difficulty in rescuing these teachers from the tribe which had promised to receive them. This tribe had treated them as captives. They wanted the teachers to die of starvation. God moved a heathen man, named Vorevoro, to feed them secretly in their hut every night for five months. In this way Vorevoro preserved their lives. They were removed by the "Camden" to the Isle of Pines in New Caledonia, where the LMS was opening new work, and were murdered there soon afterwards.

On each trip of the LMS ship to the New Hebrides a visit was made to Eromanga to see if the way was open to re-commence the work. In 1845 the "John Williams" had on board some teachers whom the LMS hoped to settle on Eromanga. They found that the island was still too dangerous. The teachers were settled instead on South Efate.

Eromangans go to Samoa

In 1849 a new and encouraging event took place. Four young men from Dillon's Bay swam out to the "John Williams" while she lay at anchor. They asked to be taken to Samoa for training. Their names were Joe, Mana, Nivave and Nibore. All four were placed in the Teachers' Training Institution at Malua and remained there for nearly three years. The ship returned with them in May 1852. Nivave died on the voyage. He was a quiet youth who seemed in earnest as a Christian.

On arrival home Mana immediately began to speak about Christ to his Eromangan friends who swam out to the ship. He was pointing to his hands and feet as he spoke to them of the crucifixion of Jesus. Mana was thus the first Eromangan to witness to his own people in their language.

The two head men at Dillon's Bay, Naiwan and Auwi Auwi

agreed to take teachers and promised food and protection. They sent two more young men for training in Samoa. Mr. Murray of the LMS was sure that this invitation was due to the presence of the three Eromangans already trained in Samoa.

Firstfruits

On Tuesday 25 May 1852 two married teachers from Rarotonga, Va'a and Akatangi, were welcomed ashore at Dillon's Bay by a crowd of one hundred and fifty Eromangans. They, with Mana, made their station at Dillon's Bay, the home of Mana. Mana at Dillon's Bay and Joe at Elizabeth Bay remained loyal teachers to the end of their lives. Nibore returned to heathenism while still just a youth. Mana and Joe were baptized by Geddie as the firstfruits of Eromanga.

John Geddie's help

John Geddie was on board the ship on this trip around the LMS stations. He watched from the deck, with tears of joy, as the crowd of Eromangans carried the boxes and bundles of their new teachers into the bush.

On the Lord's Day, while the ship was lying at anchor, Geddie preached on board from Numbers 14:21, "But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord." He wrote in his journal, "There is hope for Eromanga when God has pledged his own existence for the evangelization of the nations of the earth . . . I had longed and prayed for the day when the messengers of salvation should land on Eromanga and the time has come at last." [Misi Gete, p. 126, 127].

From this point onwards the Aneityum Presbyterian Church took a share in the mission to Eromanga. Geddie prepared a literacy primer in the Eromangan language for the use of the teachers.

In 1853 the "John Williams" called in October and found the teachers safe but hungry. The teachers were compelled to sell sandalwood to the traders in order to buy food. On this visit the first missionary service was held by Europeans. Geddie and the LMS leaders went inland to the village of Naiwan the high chief of that part of Eromanga who had received the teachers.

When the "John Williams" returned in 1854 she had two new missionaries of the LMS on board for Eromanga. But for reasons

that are not clear they were settled on Mare in the Loyalty Islands. Four more Samoan teachers were placed on Eromanga. There were signs of progress. A church had been built at Dillon's Bay. Sixty-seven people professed to have given up heathenism and were regular attenders at church and day school.

Sickness of LMS teachers

Sickness overcame these devoted Polynesian teachers. Geddie's journal for 24 February 1855 tells the story:

"The schooner "Marian Watson" arrived here from Eromanga. She had on board Isaaka a Samoan teacher his wife and child, all very low with fever and ague. This family with three others was stationed on Eromanga in October last. The whole party were laid down with fever and ague a few weeks after they were left. Before Isaaka left one man, two women, and one child had died. The poor family presented a most heart rending sight when they arrived here." [Misi Gete p. 199].

Three months later on 14 May, Geddie adds:

"The barque "Jane" arrived from Eromanga. She brought from that island Maiti his wife and child, Samoans. They had suffered much from fever and ague and have come here on account of their health. They along with other Samoans were stationed on Eromanga in November last. Of that number one only remains, the others having died or removed." [Misi Gete p. 205, 206].

But the work was felt to justify the next important step.

First missionaries, George and Ellen Gordon

In 1857 helpers came to the New Hebrides Mission from Nova Scotia and England. They were the Rev. George N. Gordon from Prince Edward Island, Canada, and his wife Ellen from England.

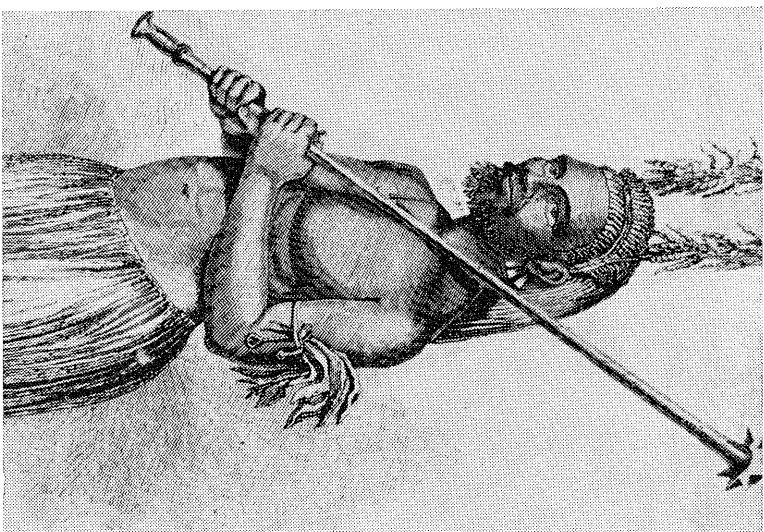
The LMS and Presbyterian missionaries at first thought of placing the Gordons at Port Resolution, Tanna, but decided to try Eromanga. The chiefs of Dillon's Bay pleaded to have missionaries. When the Gordons were landed there John Geddie was present to assist in their settlement with the Presbyterian Mission ship "John Knox. This little ship now made possible the care of the southern islands by the Presbyterian Church on Aneityum. The LMS ship from Samoa and the Melanesian Mission ship from New Zealand continued to call and encourage the workers. From 1857 the supervision of the New Hebrides Mission passed into the hands of the Presbyterian missionary conference.

LMS missionaries were always welcomed to the meetings as partners in the work.

A lesson needs to be drawn here from the unhappy experience of the teachers who worked with the Gordons. Two Rarotongan teachers were placed with them to assist them at Dillon's Bay. They were Taveao and Toka. The following year they asked to be taken away and were settled in the Loyalty Islands by the LMS ship.

Geddie's view of George Gordon and his teachers

After the murder of the Gordons in 1861 Mr. Geddie felt it to be his duty to write to the Missions Committee of the Presbyterian Church in Nova Scotia. He told the committee that Mr. Gordon had adopted strange views about native teachers and had carried on the work without their help. He lived long enough to see his error but not long enough to correct it.



An Aneityumese chief, 1840s.

Aneityum, Foothold for the Church

ON 22 MAY 1941 my wife and I woke to find the Burns Philp steamer "Morinda" anchored in Aneleghat Harbour, Aneityum. This was a pleasant introduction to the land which was to become our home.

A Catalina plane appeared and, after circling, settled on the quiet waters of the harbour. A dinghy came across to the "Morinda" and I heard someone asking for me. He was Mr. Bernard Blackwell, the assistant Resident Commissioner from the British Administration in Vila. After a word of introduction he remarked, "I understand that you are to be stationed on Tongoa?"

There was a pause.

"We should like to place a coast-watching unit there. Would you be willing to take charge of it?"

We did the coast-watching on through the months before and after Pearl Harbour until the first units of the U.S forces arrived in mid-1942. They then took over the job.

"Morinda," Catalina, coast-watching!

What a contrast to the circumstances of the arrival of the first missionaries on the "Camden" exactly one century before us!

The Mission to Ipeke

Aneityum was the last of the five southern islands to receive Polynesian evangelists. After settling Apela and Samuela on Futuna the men on the "Camden" were influenced to settle teachers on Aneityum by the unexpected offer of the Futuna chief, Kautiama. He said he would speak favourably for the Mission to the Aneityumese. Kautiama's allies were on the north side of Aneityum around Ipeke. So the "Camden" made her way to that point and not to the fine harbour of Aneleghat which later became the station of the Geddies, in 1848. Aneleghat had become, much earlier than that, the base for the trading ships and whalers.

The LMS ship reached Aneityum on 30 March 1841. This was her third voyage to Melanesia. The Rev. A. W. Murray was in charge. Many years later Dr. John Inglis told the story of the vital part that three heathen leaders took in the beginning of the mission to Aneityum. Yata was the strong chief of Ipeke. He had a brother Nu-umsi who had gone off on a trading ship — the first of his people ever to do so. The trading ship finally dropped him on Futuna where Nu-umsi had a good friend in the chief of the Imounga people Kautiama. When the "Camden" placed Apela and Samuela on Futuna these two men, Nu-umsi and Kautiama, were keen to travel on the ship to Aneityum. They offered their help in getting the Ipeke people to agree to take teachers. As a result Yata promised protection for the LMS teachers. In this way the mission was established on the northern side of the island.

The first teachers

Mr. Inglis had a copy of the old LMS magazine which showed a picture of that eventful day.

"There is the ship's boat, Captain Morgan at the stern and Mr. Murray in the bow; two strong natives are each carrying one of the chests belonging to the teachers, while the teachers and their wives are wading ashore, and a wondering crowd are standing on the beach giving them a cordial welcome." [Inglis, Bible Illustrations from the New Hebrides p. 246, 247].

Like all of the early teachers, these two couples lived under the peril of sudden and violent death. Nearby was a strong secondary chief named in later years Luka. When he noticed that his young men were paying attention to the worship of the teachers he went with his spear one day to murder the Samoans.

The two Samoans and their wives heard of his evil purpose. They barred their house and took their fears to God in prayer. Luka broke down the door and told them he had come to kill them. The Christians faced him calmly and said that they were not afraid to die, but that God would certainly avenge their deaths. Luka lifted his spear. He attempted to throw it. His finger slipped out of the cord and the spear fell to the ground. Luka seemed unnerved and powerless. The teachers spoke to him about the Lord Jesus and then prayed with him. He left quietly. He was soon regularly attending worship. He was among the first to be baptized by Mr. Inglis in 1854.

As an old couple Luka and his wife went as evangelists to Kwamera, Tanna. The heathen tried to shoot him. A bullet knocked his hat off, another bullet passed through his shirt and others fell short into the ground. But his life was spared and he died on Tanna, faithful to the end. Luka's wife was killed by a Tanna chief's wife who gave her poisonous fish to eat.

The first teachers on Aneityum were Tavita and his wife, and Fotau-yasi and his wife. Tavita and his wife died on Aneityum in planting the Gospel. Fotau-yasi was spared to return to Samoa. On later visits of the "Camden" other teachers were added, Apolo and Simeona, Poti and Apaiaa. They had their full share of difficulties and suffering.

When the "John Williams" called on her first trip, in 1845, things were looking better. Many adults and young folk had been drawn to the worship and eight or ten determined young men had cast in their lot with the Christians. They came daily for Christian teaching. A few had given up heathenism. The chief Yata had kept his promise to protect the teachers but he was still a heathen and a bad man. His covering of a man's wife led to the next incident.

Discouragements

Wumura had early shown his interest in the worship. He was married to a young wife Singonga. Yata wanted her. Wumura feared for his life. In 1845 he asked the LMS missionaries to take him and his wife to Samoa for Christian training. When Wumura returned in 1848 he dared not risk going back to Ipeke. Instead he stayed with the Geddies at Aneigahat. Wumura and his wife proved great helpers to the infant mission. It was from Wumura that Mr. Geddie got some of the most important words for his translations, including the words for sin and soul.

When the "John Williams" called again in 1846 things looked very bad. The Tanna mission had again collapsed and the survivors had taken refuge on Aneityum. The words of the Tannese stirred up the superstitions of the Aneityumese against the Christians. Some of the LMS teachers on Aneityum took ill and some of their wives and children died. The heathen claimed that their own *narrmasses* or spirits of the dead, of whom they were in constant fear, were angry and were fighting against the Christians. God who had no power to help the teachers.

Pita and Simeona stay on

In 1846 the danger was so great that all the teachers asked to be allowed to leave Aneityum and return to Samoa. The missionaries spoke quietly to encourage them. Just as the "John Williams" was about to sail two of the teachers, Pita and Simeona, offered to remain. From these two faithful and brave men the Aneityumese church sprang. Two teachers had been placed on the south side at Aneigahat in 1845, thus opening up a second station. It was here that the two LMS teachers Pita and Simeona made their new beginnings in 1846.

The LMS missionaries invited the local chief and some of his people to come on board the "John Williams." A meeting was then held to decide the future of Christianity on Aneityum. Petero, Simeona and Upokumunu, teachers from Samoa and Rarotonga, acted as interpreters. Should the Christian teachers remain or must they leave? The teachers were willing to risk their lives if the chiefs would pledge protection.

The final decision of the local chief was: "Let the teachers remain; I will do my best to protect their lives so long as they dwell in *my* district; but if they rove abroad into other tribes they will be murdered." [William Gill, *Gems from the Coral Islands* p. 159].

The chief told the missionaries that they should take a lesson from the sandalwood ships and come back more often to encourage their workers. The "John Williams" returned two years later!

In spite of this long absence of the Mission ship the work prospered. A nearby tribe began to listen to the Good News. Some of the Aneigahat people became Christians. The first burials in the ground took place at that time. Previously the bodies of the dead were cast into the sea. Only chiefs were buried in the ground. Thus the time was ripe for a permanent missionary when Geddie and his party reached Aneityum on 29 July 1848. This is the birthday of the New Hebrides Presbyterian Mission.

Tributes to the work of the LMS

Geddie was foremost in saying that the Aneityum mission was built upon the devoted work of the LMS teachers. He told the LMS missionaries, in 1852, when the island was turning to Christ, that

what they then saw was the fruit of the work of the native Christians, both Polynesians and Aneityunese. Richard Lovett, the historian of the LMS, justly claims:

“Humanly speaking, but for the existence of the Samoan Mission, the support and advice rendered by the missionaries resident there, the visits of the the missionary ships of the London Society, and above all the courage and consecration of the native workers trained at Rarotonga and Samoa, the work accomplished by Messrs. Geddie and Inglis and their colleagues and successors in the group would have been much more difficult, even if at that period not impossible.” [History of the LMS, R. Lovett I 406 407].

With Mr. and Mrs. Geddie came Mr. and Mrs. Archibald from Nova Scotia, and the Rev. Thomas Powell and his wife from the Samoa Mission. We shall return to the Aneityum mission later. It is right to say here that for the whole time of Geddie's service in the islands he looked upon the LMS missionaries as true brothers, wise counsellors and affectionate friends. He never forgot his debt to them for the way they welcomed him to Samoa in 1847. It scarcely occurred to him that they were two different missions. They worked as one in harmony, mutual trust, practical aid and common obedience.

Mr. Powell was glad to return to Samoa in 1849 after prolonged illness with malaria. The LMS ship and the LMS teachers gave splendid aid to the Aneityum Mission so long as this was needed. Nowhere in Geddie's journal is there a hint of rivalry, still less of difficulty between the two missions. The LMS missionaries, as the writings of Geddie and Inglis show, were men of unusual gifts, deep humanity, unswerving devotion to Christ and His Church, and unaffected love for the people of the Pacific.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

South Efate, the Memory of the Just

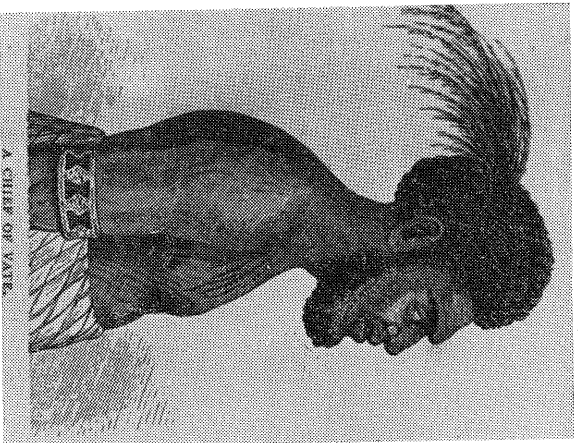
ON 1 MAY 1845 the “John Williams” arrived at Efate from Eromanga with news of Sualo's request for teachers. She anchored near Pango in the lee of the land. Two Samoan teachers, helped by a Maori guide, sought out Sualo. Sualo came on board dressed as a heathen warrior. Pomare, the chief of Erakor, promised to receive and protect the Polynesian teachers. Four teachers were settled, Setefano and Mose at Erakor, and Taavili and Sipi at Pango.

Social conditions

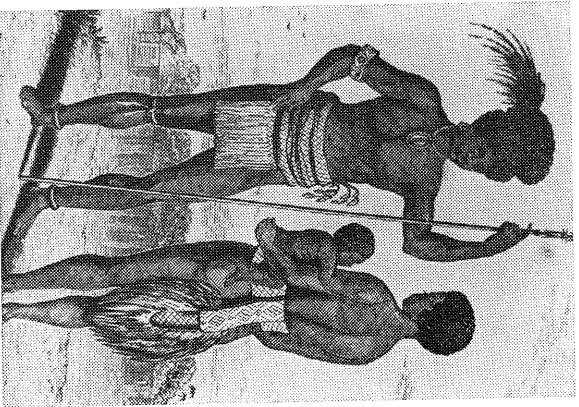
Those were dark days. Inter-tribal wars were going on much of the time. Cannibalism was part of the life of the people both in war and peace. The sick and the aged were buried alive in shallow graves. Their relatives and friends wailed and screamed to drown the groans and cries of the helpless victims. Women worked hard in the gardens and destroyed most of their children before or just after birth. Two or three children were all they wanted. For this or other reasons the large population was already falling steadily before the arrival of the first missionaries. One bush chief, whom Donald Morrison visited in the early 1860's was said to have one hundred and twenty wives. This chief murdered any man who showed the least interest in any of these women.

Efate had also earned a bad name among trading ships. Ships had been captured and crews butchered and eaten. The trading ships had often provoked these actions by their brutalities, robberies and treacheries.

Amid all the deaths and disasters to the mission teachers during the years 1845-1861 Erakor remained the centre of Christian light and witness. Pomare the chief never wavered in



A chief of Efate, 1840s.



An Efate family, 1840s.

South Efate, the Memory of the Just

his faithfulness to his first promise. We shall follow first the story of South Efate, then the story of Mele and Fila, and finally that of West Efate around Havannah Harbour.

Pango and Erakor

When the "John Williams" made its second visit in October 1846 the LMS missionaries Gill and Nisbet were astonished at the signs of progress. Gill's eye-witness account mentions how the two nearer teachers came on board and sobbed with gratitude:

"Praise be to God! Praise be to God for His great love!"
[William Gill, *Gems from the Coral Islands*, p. 64].

Sualo had supported them. He was still a heathen but was keen to see Christianity established. Each teacher used his house as his schoolroom and church. The Lord's Day was observed by many as a day of rest and worship. Daily literacy classes were held for children and adults. More than a hundred people at Pango and at Erakor had put away their heathenism. Some from other villages attended worship. The teachers were trying to discourage the people from eating their victims of war and from burying alive the sick, the aged, and their new-born children.

A service was held on board the ship crowded with Efate people. The chiefs and teachers sat close to the missionaries. The local people asked for more teachers. Four more were settled and were asked to travel about Efate and choose the most likely villages as new stations. A young married couple was placed on Mele. Almost two years passed before the "John Williams" was able to return in July 1848. This delay proved a setback to the work. During the interval three teachers and some members of their families died. A strong heathen reaction set in.

Eratap

Olatapu (Eratapu) had been opened up from Erakor. Mose and Sepanaia were working well there. A Sydney whaler, the "Royal Sovereign," was wrecked on East Efate in May. The Olatapu people pretended to care for the large crew and then killed and ate them. The teachers tried to save the crew. For this and other reasons the village turned against the teachers. Here is the note which the only surviving European crew member handed to Mose in the hope, no doubt, that someone would repay him for saving a white man's life:

"This is to certify that Mose and his partner left Olatapu on the 16th of May; we had to run for our lives to get clear of them. I, Jones was the only one saved out of the crew; they killed them all. Mose, and I, were saved, and I beg of you to give him something. He is a good man. He ventured more than any man would think, and, after all had to run. I hope the Lord will pay him for his trouble with me."

John Jones.

[William Gill, Gems from the Coral Islands p. 80].

The Geddies, 1848

The 1848 visit of the "John Williams" was important for other reasons. The LMS now hoped to settle a missionary on Efate. Geddie and his party were on board for this purpose. Mrs. Geddie has recorded what happened:

"We were all very anxious to learn the state of affairs at this island, and we waited with a great deal of anxiety until we learned from the teachers how things were going on. Their account was far from favorable. . . . This affair (the massacre of the crew of the "Royal Sovereign") as well as several other things, led the brethren, after asking divine assistance, to come to the conclusion that a mission could not be commenced at the present time. We all deeply regretted leaving a place where there appeared to be such scope for missionary labor." [Letters of Charlotte Geddie and Charlotte Geddie Harrington, Truro, Nova Scotia, 1908 p. 19].

And so it came to pass that Aneityum in the far south was the gateway for the Presbyterian Mission in the New Hebrides, and not Efate in the centre of the group.

From bad to worse

Things went from bad to worse on South Efate. The ship returned in September 1849. The LMS missionaries on board learned that Pango was back to heathenism and fighting a bush tribe. The Pango heathen talked of capturing the "John Williams" and looting her.

All the teachers and their wives had been ill, including those on other parts of Efate. Three of them had died and three of their children. The remaining teachers were in such bad health that the ship resolved to remove them all. Only Erakor was left with the veteran teacher Mose, and a new teacher Vaaru. But even at Erakor only Pomare's family and a few stragglers remained loyal to the teachers. The Lord's Day was given up.

The root of all this reaction seems to have been much sickness among both pigs and people for which the heathen blamed the Christians. No classes and public worship were possible. All the teachers were under threats of murder. Their gardens and houses were destroyed. Their lives were saved by their taking refuge in the houses of the chiefs.

Before the "John Williams" sailed away the missionaries asked the friendly chiefs to come on board. The missionaries explained why they must take the sick teachers away and thanked the chiefs for protecting them. The chiefs received gifts in return for their kindness. The missionaries promised to try to bring more teachers to take the places of those who were being removed because of sickness.

Erakor, island of peace

By May 1852, when the "John Williams" called again at Efate, there had been a turn for the better. Mose and Vaaru were well. Erakor was an island of peace amidst warring tribes and violence. About one hundred people were at worship on sabbaths, the word then used for Sundays. Small groups of seekers came in from nearby villages on sabbaths. The teachers had some outstations. Best of all Pango had returned to the worship and as many as two hundred gathered in church. Even Olatapu had a Christian chief named Tailpoa, who protected two boats' crews from being massacred by the murderers of the crew of the "Royal Sovereign." The teachers thought that the visits of the HMS Fly and HMS Havannah had helped to change the mood of the heathen. Both captains had acted wisely with the people.

By October 1853 the progress was continuing, in spite of threats to the lives of the Erakor teachers. Because of these threats they withdrew for two weeks to the Havannah Harbour station of the LMS. More than two hundred and fifty people were at worship on the sabbath at Erakor and the service was quiet and orderly. The Rev. A. W. Murray of the LMS was there to see for himself.

"Here is a congregation of two hundred and fifty already collected, who would receive a missionary with open arms. . . . Their desire for a missionary is very great." [A. W. Murray, Missions in W. Polynesia p. 252].

Pomare and other Erakor men took part in the service. Erakor

was now outwardly Christian. But there would be no baptisms until 1861, by which time the good chief Pomare was dead.

Pango treachery

Pango was a different story. In March 1852, twenty-nine Moso people visited Pango for trade. The Pango people treacherously attacked them when they were off guard and killed twenty-two of the Moso people. Seven escaped by canoe. Twenty-one bodies were distributed among the heathen and eaten. Only one victim was buried. Olatapu was also in disorder. Would the Moso people avenge this crime? They too were listening to the Good News. Their destinies were closely bound up with those of the South Efate tribes.

Sualo leaves for Samoa

By 1854 all seemed lost. Of the LMS teachers on South Efate and Havannah Harbour only one survived and the widow of another. The LMS deputation on the "John Williams" decided to close the work on Efate and removed the two survivors. Even Sualo asked to be taken away, in spite of all his influence and help in the past to his own people. The little companies of Efatese Christians were left like lambs in the midst of wolves. If brave Sualo fled who would be able to stand?

The tide turns

Three years passed. In June 1857 the "John Williams" was back. The missionaries on board were surprised to find the Christians keeping up their worship, observing the sabbath, and longing for the return of teachers. This interval saw the turning of the tide. The three years without any outside influence had shown that the response to the Good News was more than skin deep. The people of South Efate had made up their minds to stand for Christ with or without help from others. The power of God had shown itself in a remarkable way. There was a church at last, and it sprang up from the blood of the Polynesian teachers.

Teachers from Aneityum

When the LMS missionaries called in July 1858 they had a new and important proposal to make. They believed that Aneityumese teachers would be better suited to the climate and should in future staff the Efate Mission. Geddie and Inglis replied

that they had no teachers to send at that time. But by 1860, when next the ship called, she had two Aneityumese teachers on board. Three Rarotongan and their wives had recommenced the work at Erakor in 1858. They were Teamaru, Teautoa and Toma. Teautoa died of fever and his wife died in childbirth. The remaining two Polynesian teachers wanted to leave the work to the Aneityumese. They agreed to stay on with them for one more year. The Aneityumese teachers who thus became the first Presbyterian teachers on Efate were Thevthev and Vatheva with their wives. The date of this new beginning was 18 October 1860. The visitor to Erakor and Pango will stand with respect and admiration before the simple monuments built by these villages to commemorate the coming of the first Polynesian teachers to South Efate. A cross surmounts the memorials and underneath are the words of Proverbs 10.7:

THE MEMORY OF (THE) JUST IS BLESSED.

The church is formed at Erakor

When next the "John Williams" called in 1861 Geddie was on board. He with the LMS missionaries, the Rarotongan teachers, the Aneityumese teachers, and fourteen South Efate converts took the Lord's Supper together for the first time on that island. The date was 13 September 1861. Thus the second island of the Group to have its Christian church was Efate. This church was the fruit of eleven missionary visits by the LMS ship, and the devoted labours, lives and deaths of more than twenty Polynesian teachers, teachers' wives and their little children. The seed sown in weakness was about to be raised in power.

Mele and Fila Islands

TWO VIGOROUS TRUERS lived secure on their small islands in Vila Harbour. They had little intermarriage with the Efate people and maintained their own Polynesian language, culture and vigour.

Even as early as 1870 visiting ships noticed that many of their men had been away in Fiji or Queensland and had guns in their houses, and that their women were shamelessly bold.

First teacher to Mele

When the "John Williams" called on her second visit to Efate in October 1846 among the many who requested teachers was the old chief of Mele named Ngos. The missionaries said that they had no teachers to spare beyond the four who had already been promised. The chief was very sorry about this. So was a young Rarotongan deacon on board, named Tairi. He was about twenty-four years of age. He had been listening to the conversation between his missionary and the Mele chief. He went to his missionary the Rev. William Gill and said,

"My wife and I spent last night in prayer for these people. Will you please consent to our going as teachers with this old chief?"

Tairi was the son of a cannibal warrior of Rarotonga. His father had been among the first to become Christians on that island. Tairi had become a Christian at the age of about eighteen and had later trained as a teacher and served on the island of Mangaia. Tairi returned home, gave up his land and prepared for the work of a pastor. He and his young wife told Mr. Gill that they had said a final farewell to their families. To prove this Tairi's wife brought from her cabin a basket of tapa-cloth mallets. "See, I have prepared this basket of mallets so that I may teach the women to make their own tapa-cloth clothing!"

The missionaries were surprised but still hesitated.

Tairi then said, "My father has already agreed to this. He said to me when I left Rarotonga, 'I, and your fathers before me, have done much service for Satan . . . Go, my son, I give you up. Go, and may you be a good warrior in the service of Jesus Christ.'"

Gill and Nisbet felt that they could no longer withhold their consent.

Death of Tairi and his wife

Tairi and his wife were taken to the little island of Mele. A strange thing happened on the beach when they arrived. The son of the chief Ngos took the hands of Tairi and his wife and pretended to eat them. He was only joking, and he reassured them saying, "Yu no frai! Mifala no save kakai yu!" (Don't be frightened! We're not going to eat you!)

The work on Mele island began well. Soon a company of Mele people gathered daily for teaching, and every sabbath for worship. Then Tairi caught malaria. In May 1847 he died, leaving a widow who was waiting for the birth of their first child. Tairi had been on Mele seven months. Before Tairi's wife could join another station where Polynesian teachers would take care of her, the people of Mele said she must be given to the chief as one of his wives. She continued to refuse. They came to take her by force. She ran to the sea and was drowned in the narrow strait between Mele island and the mainland. [See William Gill, *Gems from the Coral Islands* p. 69-76 for facts of Tairi and his wife].

We know little about the threats, injuries and sufferings of the wives of the Polynesian teachers. After a long period of malaria a woman was often too weak to give birth to her child. This was a frequent cause of death among the heroic Polynesian wives.

A Mele war-party

A reaction against the Good News seems to have followed this tragedy. The Mele people decided to kill the Polynesian teachers at Havannah Harbour and stop the spread of their message.

Thirty Mele warriors arrived at the teachers' house and were joined by some local heathen. They watched day and night for a chance to kill the teachers. All this time the teachers were friendly and continued to feed the Mele men. Then the warriors

came and slept in the teachers' house with their axes ready for use. The next evening at the time of family prayer these warriors, each with his axe ready, sat down beside the teachers. One of the warriors, with his axe over his shoulder, sat behind the teacher who was leading the worship. The teacher guessed his purpose and quietly removed the man's axe. The warrior quickly grabbed it again.

The teachers were thoroughly alarmed. They overheard what the heathen were saying in the Mele language. The Polynesian teacher said to his friends, "Keep your eyes open during prayer!"

As worship went on the heathen suddenly raised their axes to kill the teachers. But they were unable to strike. Their hands trembled and their courage failed. This happened not once, but several times. The teacher suddenly stopped in the midst of worship and ordered the men out of his house. At first they refused to leave. The teachers rose to show their authority. Suddenly the thirty warriors bolted out of the door to their canoes. They escaped that night and were seen no more. God had restrained them from their murderous plan.

A Fila war-party

When the thirty warriors returned to Mele they were unable to explain their failure. The Fila islanders heard what had happened and laughed at them. The Fila warriors then fitted out a war-party of sixty strong men in six canoes. They set out for Havannah Harbour sure of success, twirling their paddles and waving their weapons in great excitement. About two-thirds of the distance had been covered when a storm arose at sea and drove the canoes on a rocky headland near the entrance to the harbour. The Fila warriors barely escaped with their lives.

The Polynesian teachers learned what had happened and declared, "God alone saved us." The Mele and Fila people, and all the tribes on Efate who heard about these events, recognised that they were proof of the power of the Christians' God.

Almost thirty years would pass before the Good News would be welcomed by the people of Fila island. Not for forty years would Mele be opened to the worship.

The Empty Houses at Havannah Harbour

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

IN 1850 THE Rev. John Inglis travelled through the New Hebrides on HMS "Havannah." As this ship of war lay in the lovely harbour which now bears the ship's name, Inglis noticed the empty white-washed houses at Samoa Point and the rotting canoes of the Polynesian teachers on the beach. The teachers had died of malaria. The story of the LMS mission to West Efate is one of almost total tragedy, but of heroic and quiet loyalty to Christ, in life and in death.

When the "John Williams" placed four new teachers on Efate, at Erakor, in October 1846, they were instructed by the missionaries, Gill and Nisbet, to explore the whole of Efate and find the best places for new stations. They seem to have settled on Havannah Harbour as the ideal centre for extension of the Good News. They formed two stations which were, I judge, at Samoa Point and at Moso.

The re-arrangement of teachers brought Sipi, one of the first four teachers of 1845, and another teacher into the team at Havannah Harbour. Sipi's friend died, probably of malaria, and Sipi was very ill with the same disease. He was weak from his illness and all alone when some of the villagers came and killed him with heavy blows. They later told the LMS missionaries that this was their local custom where a sick person became delirious.

Mrs. Geddie says that in 1848, when the ship again called, they found that five of the nine teachers had died of fever. Three more teachers were left on West Efate "where the people received the teachers with apparent pleasure."

Tongalulu goes to Samoa

When the "John Williams" returned in September 1849 the disasters at South and West Efate compelled the Mission to

withdraw all remaining workers, leaving only one station open, at Erakor. This decision closed Havannah Harbour. But fortunately a chief, Tongalulu, of Havannah Harbour, with another man, asked to be taken to Samoa for training. This was done. They were brought back in the "John Williams" in 1852. The wind-makers among the heathen claimed that they had prevented the ship from ever coming back. The people of Tongalulu's village had already held his burial feast. There was great excitement when he stepped ashore, and the ship and Mission were welcomed back to Sema.

The people asked for teachers to come again and offered two more of their young men for training in Samoa by the LMS. Then followed the massacre of the Moso people at Pango. This may have had something to do with the later massacre of teachers on Lelepa. In the meantime, however, the Christian worshippers had grown in numbers and strength in the villages around Havannah Harbour. The nearby heathen were less fierce. A church had been built. Regular services were well attended. Some of the people were holding family worship in their homes. The teachers had pushed out into heathen tribes in the mountains and were always listened to and well received there.

The martyrs of Lelepa Island

In October 1853 the LMS ship returned to open up the Harbour with fresh Polynesian teachers. Out of all the possible places they chose the small island of Lelepa as the most promising station. This was done partly because Lelepa appeared to be more healthy than the mainland where the earlier teachers had died of fever. The LMS had received invitations from two of the Lelepa chiefs, one of whom was Marifatu. Amidst great excitement two teachers and their wives and the son of one of the couples were landed. The Rev. A. W. Murray of the LMS was an eye-witness.

"When we took the teachers on shore, the joy of the people seemed to know no bounds. Men, women and children crowded around us. . . . We never saw teachers . . . meet with such an enthusiastic reception." [A. W. Murray, Miss. in W. Polynesia p. 254, 255].

The LMS missionaries hoped that these two new teachers would be able to care for the growing work at Samoa Point and Sema, and supervise the many new opportunities which were arising in West Efate.

A young man from this village was brought back on this trip after training in Samoa. This was felt to be a hopeful sign. Geddie was present on this occasion and wrote freely of the welcome given to the LMS teachers. Nineteen days later the teachers and their wives were murdered and eaten. The little boy was saved because the people wanted to keep him. He kept crying for his parents. So the villagers tied a stone to his neck and dropped him into the sea. The martyred teachers' names were Kavavili and Pikika. The LMS missionaries heard this tragic news when they returned in October 1854. No one could find any clear explanation for the change in the hearts of the people of Lelepa.

Very soon after the murder of the teachers a sickness broke out on Lelepa Island and took about one hundred and fifty of the population of one thousand. The disease spread to the mainland and struck down great numbers of people. When Peter Milne came to Nguna in 1870 the West Efate heathen were still talking about this sickness as a judgement upon the people who killed and ate the teachers, the servants of the living God.

The Polynesian teachers were always ready to face death. But it was malaria which destroyed the Havannah Harbour stations of the LMS. In later years the teachers were supplied with quinine. Mr. Milne found the later LMS teachers unable or unwilling to look after their health. He was not the kind of man to complain, but he records that they were a great burden to him and to Mrs. Milne. [Peter Milne of Nguna p. 119].

As one walks today along the soft white sand of Samoa Point — so named for the early Polynesian teachers — and looks across to the progressive Lelepa community at the entrance to the Harbour one joins hands with these devoted men and women who left their homes never to return. Their dust lies in the islands as the memorial of their faithful labours.

The LMS on Epi and Santo

THE ANEITYUM CHURCH sent out its first missionary teachers in 1853. From 1853 to 1860 it grew in vision and obedience and sent teachers to all the southern islands. In 1860 two couples joined forces with the Rarotongans at South Efate. They saw the Efate church take visible shape in 1861.

The LMS work in New Caledonia was facing opposition from the French authorities. The leaders of the Samoa and Loyalty Islands missions of the LMS turned their thoughts to further expansion in the islands of the New Hebrides, north of Efate. Geddie shared this vision. Together they planned a voyage of outreach in the "John Williams." Geddie's companion was the veteran LMS missionary A. W. Murray. They were like brothers.

Team-work in South Efate

Before leaving Efate the missionaries divided the four teachers into two teams of two each. One Rarotongan and one Aneityumese were settled at each centre, Erakor and Pango. Erakor was strong and almost wholly Christian. Pango was heathen, except for four men and two women who had kept up their worship in the face of the chiefs and threats of violence. The chiefs now agreed to the two teachers recommending the work in Pango. At Erakor were placed Toma of Rarotonga and Vether (Vathe) of Aneityum. Tokarua of Rarotonga and Theytvey of Aneityum went to Pango. This was a wise and far-sighted plan of work.

The missionaries saw that the time had come for a permanent mission station with a European missionary. The people were ready for the translation of the Scriptures, for training as teachers, and for outreach to the bush villages of Efate. In 1864 the first missionary couple, Donald and Mrs. Morrison of Canada arrived among them.

The Mission to Epi

On Efate Messrs. Geddie and Murray met an Epi man who

LMS on Epi and Santo

wanted a passage back to his island. He was willing to guide the missionaries to his own tribal area. His name was Atau and he was accompanied by his wife. The "John Williams" anchored off Epi at a place which Atau knew and near a village called Putviale. My friend Samuel Aute tells me that this village was close to Votelo, South Epi.

Two Epi chiefs, Malanga and Faaruu, gave the visitors a good welcome. The chiefs were willing to receive and protect teachers. That night the teachers slept ashore and felt quite safe. They said that they were happy to remain on Epi. Hundreds of Epi people, without weapons and under the orderly control of the chiefs, carried the boxes of the teachers inland to their village. The teachers' names were Iro and Pipi. Both were married men and both came from Rarotonga. Before the missionaries parted from the teachers a hymn was sung in Rarotongan:

"Our home is in heaven; our home is not here."

Then prayer was offered in Samoan. They parted never to meet again, dying on Epi probably of malaria.

Ambrym

The "John Williams" coasted along the south side of Ambrym seeking contact with the people. Two Ambrym men came on board and agreed to go with the missionaries and become friends of men who would later go to Ambrym as teachers. The New Hebrides Mission had the vision of the Loyalty Islands churches sending teachers to Ambrym. But little came of this plan.

Malekula

Then the ship sailed slowly up the coast of Malekula and met great numbers of canoes. Friendly people urged the missionaries to go ashore with them. The missionaries wanted some Malekula men to come on board, as the two Ambrym men had done. None would do so. So the "John Williams" sailed for S. W. Santo and anchored in the great bay beyond Cape Lisburn.

The Mission to Santo

That night two couples from Rarotonga and one couple from Erakor slept ashore. They were the first Christian teachers to begin to evangelize Santo. The Rarotongans were Lameka and Vaitali. The Erakor teacher was Taniela. The Rev. A. W. Murray

walked about four miles inland and was astonished to see the large, orderly "town" called Popoa. Its fine thatched houses had roofs which sloped right down to the ground, as the Santo bush houses do to this day.

Traders had given Santo a bad name for sickness. The teachers were supplied with quinine. The local chiefs, Naroï, Lepas and Meli, promised their protection and support to the teachers. This important day, 23 September 1861, is the date of the coming of the Good News to the Southern Land of the Holy Spirit, as Quiros had called the island in 1606.

Within one year death had sealed in silence this bold venture of faith. A minute of the New Hebrides mission conference of 10 October 1862 reads:

"That this meeting feels under a deep obligation to Captain Burns and those in his employ for the removal of the survivors of the Santo Mission."

Which of the six pioneer men and women died we do not know. Their names are not recorded. But Santo was not forgotten. In 1870 another attempt was made at the same place, under the Rev. John Goodwill of Canada.

Partners in Mission

The Presbyterian Mission and the LMS agreed, in October 1862, to share the responsibility for the evangelization of the New Hebrides. The Presbyterian Mission would supply teachers for the islands from Aneityum to Efate. The LMS would supply teachers for the islands north of Efate. The LMS teachers were to come from the Loyalty Islands Mission.

Difficulties seem to have arisen in making good this plan. In 1863 the Presbyterian Mission conference asked the LMS for as many as twelve Polynesian teachers, preferring younger men. They hoped to place them on "the smaller islands of the Group, or on any large island that may be occupied by a missionary." Both Milne and Goodwill had the help of such men in 1871.

Eyes of LMS now on New Guinea

Meanwhile the eyes of the LMS were turned to further fields. In 1864 the thoughts of the Loyalty Islands missionaries were laid before the Presbyterian brethren in the New Hebrides for their

opinion and guidance. This is how the New Hebrides Mission replied to the LMS:

"We think it would be extremely advisable to open up a mission to New Guinea beginning in Torres Straits . . . But we think the Loyalty Islands far too distant to be the basis of operations for carrying on such a mission . . . We think also that the mere fact of the Samoan and Rarotongan teachers being shut out from the Loyalty Islands is not a sufficient ground for leaving the New Hebrides group and opening a new mission at such a distance. We are satisfied that . . . all the younger teachers may soon be advantageously and safely settled on the New Hebrides. This is a large and important group, a great amount of preparatory work has been accomplished and the prospects of the mission are on the whole highly encouraging at present, more so than they have been for many years . . . Therefore, the more speedily and energetically that efforts can be brought to bear on this group the more will the interests of the mission be promoted." [New Heb. miss conf. Minute of 23 Nov. 1864].

In 1864 the first large Presbyterian Mission ship, the "Day-spring," arrived in the group to the delight and relief of all the mission staff. They knew that at last they had the means of regular supervision of lonely teachers and isolated stations. But tragedy had struck the LMS. The faithful "John Williams" was a total wreck on Niue Island. Her graceful lines would be seen no more, though her flag would soon fly on a second ship of the same name.

Last of the LMS teachers

The loyal and unwearied help of the LMS teachers in the evangelization of the New Hebrides was soon to close. The last LMS couple to leave the group seem to have been Ta and Wai of Rarotonga who came to Mr. Milne in 1871 and opened up Mataso to the Gospel. They returned home early in 1883 after influencing the whole of the Namakuran area, especially Mataso, Makura and the Makuran side of Emae.

Our story now turns back to Aneityum and to the coming there of the first Presbyterian missionary, John Geddie.