

The above are all the important facts relative to this tragical affair, both to the natives and ourselves. I feel little disposed to cast blame any where, but it must be apparent that if the precautions directed in the orders given for the conduct of the officers on boat duty had been adhered to, this misfortune would not have occurred. It is therefore to be regretted, that a strict regard had not been paid to these orders, and that care and watchfulness to preserve and keep all on their guard had not been constantly manifested. It is difficult to imagine how some of the officers should, in spite of all warnings, have indulged an over-confidence in the peaceable disposition and good intentions of the natives; and it is still more surprising that this should have been the case with Lieutenant Alden, who had charge of the party for the time being, and who had frequently expressed himself satisfied, and had also warned others, that the natives of Malolo were not to be trusted. This opinion was not adopted by him without good grounds; for on his former visit, about six weeks before, they had shown a disposition to cut off the launch and first cutter, of which he was then in charge. There was no absolute necessity for obtaining provisions, and still less for his allowing Lieutenant Underwood to remain an hour and a half on shore, chaffering for two or three pigs, when they knew the tender was in sight, and that she would reach the place of rendezvous before night.

The whole of this afflicting tragedy I cannot but believe grew out of a want of proper care and watchfulness over the hostage, after he had shown a disposition to escape, and a heedlessness that it is impossible to look at without astonishment. The hostage certainly would never have attempted to escape, had there been a proper guard kept over him while in the boat; and from the evidence of all those who were on shore, it appears certain that no disturbance took place until the escape was made.

I am well aware, that all the officers and men present were not at the time satisfied with the punishment inflicted. Many of them even thought that all in any way concerned in the murder ought to have been put to death.

But I felt then as I do now, that the punishment was sufficient and effectual, while it was accompanied, as far as it could be, with mercy. Some, no doubt, will look upon it as unnecessarily severe; but if they duly considered the wanton murders that have been committed on the whites in this group of islands, merely to gratify the desire of plunder or the horrid appetite for cannibal repasts, they would scarcely think the punishment too severe.

The warriors of this island were looked upon as a nest of pirates