

LETTER NO. XX.

Friday July 19th. As a further reward from our searches in the Honolulu library yesterday we found the following historical letter published as an editorial in the Pacific Commercial Advertiser of October 24th, 1861.

MORE ABOUT THE MORMONS.

LETTER FROM CAPTAIN WALTER M. GIBSON.

We have been furnished by His Ex. R. C. Wyllie, to whom it was addressed, with the following letter from Captain Gibson, which will be read with interest at this time, as it throws some light on the doings and plans of the Mormons. It is dated,

WAILUKU Oct. 18, 1861.

My Dear Sir:—I duly received your note of the 15th instant and hasten to present you with farther information as promised.

The meeting of native Mormons held at this place, and commencing the 6th of this month, was a regular semi-annual conference, such as has been regularly held on these islands, at different places during the past eleven years. During the conference just preceding this, held on the 6th of April last, about 1,200 of the Mormon faith were assembled together and Mr. Havekost, resident of this place, informs me that as many as 3,000 Mormons have assembled together at Wailuku, and inasmuch as this occurrence did not attract any special public attention, I must attribute the particular attention awakened by this late conference to my participation in it.

In 1850 Mormon Elders from Utah first came to this kingdom. They were poor young men who mostly worked their passage as sailors to get here. Some had means at home like Mr. G. Q. Cannon and others well known here; but they all came without purse or script to preach the true Gospel of Jesus Christ, as they believed. Notwithstanding their utter destitution of all external means of influence, they succeeded in baptizing a large portion of the natives, and of the most intelligent ones, to their faith. According to their records, they had baptized up to 1857 about 7,000 adults on these islands. The threatenings of war in Utah in 1857 induced every white Mormon Elder to return home. The native church was left to its own guidance. The Utah Elders invariably told the natives that they did not come to establish themselves here, like the missionaries, but simply to teach them what they felt to be the truth, and then go their way to teach others. Of course the absence of the white teachers caused much neglect and falling off in the organization; and when I enquired concerning the Mormons, during my stay at Honolulu, I was invariably told that such a church had ceased to exist in this kingdom. One official, and generally well informed gentleman, was positive in assuring me that not a single meeting of Mormons was now held anywhere on the Hawaiian Islands. I knew this to be incorrect, but did not suppose that there were any considerable numbers professing this faith until I came to this island. Now, I had not formed any intention of getting up any special meeting of this people; but when I was at Lahaina, numbers of the intelligent and influential natives residing at Wailuku, Kula and other places, came to Lahaina to solicit me to attend their regular conference meeting, commencing on the 6th, which I did, and took a more active part in it than I had ever contemplated. I will now present you with some portion of the information obtained during this conference, and in the course of my own investigations and those of others with me.

The largest number attending this conference at any time was about 1,000, of which 800 were Mormons.

On Kauai, there are nine branches of the church and 462 adult members.

On Oahu, there are seven branches of the church and 570 adult members.

On Molokai, there are two branches of the church, and 263 adult members.

On Maui, there are eleven branches of the church, and 1,485 adult members.

On Hawaii, there are five branches of the church, and about 800 adult members—but this report is not positive.

On Lauai, there is one branch and 185 adult members.

This amounts to a total of 3,580 adults; and add to these unbaptized minors, which designation does not include little children, the whole force of the church will amount to 4,500 persons above seven years of age. Within two months just past, about 200 have been baptized on Hawaii, 76 on Kauai, and 46 were baptized during the holding of the conference at this place. The most of these new recruits come out of the missionary churches, and eight or nine out of the Catholic church.

I will mention a few facts in relation to the branch on Lauai. With the 185 adult members, there are 82 children, and all with three exceptions born on Lauai since the establishment of the church there in 1855. These children are the offspring of twenty-seven marriages. One native Mormon, called Pelio, has eight children by the wife now living with him, another, Upai, has seven; another, Keawiamihii, has five; and so on down to a single baby; and they are all hearty, healthy children, such as are not seen elsewhere on these islands. The church has been clubbing together a little means, and has hoped to buy a body of land on this island, from the government or from the chief Haalelea. The latter agreed to sell them the Palauai district for the moderate sum of \$500 in order to befriend the poor church. However, this Palauai is mostly untillable lava, and consequently would not be as advantageous as might at first be supposed from its extent. Furthermore, there is not a single stream or spring in the district, and it is with much difficulty that the people manage to get enough of drinking water. Sometimes they have brought water from Lahaina, and lugged it four miles from the beach to their homes in Palawai valley. But with all these disadvantages they have been particularly healthy, and all the church would rejoice if they could be gathered together on Lauai. In that case with a large force or labor, I think the water could be brought profitably, to irrigate the valley, from a little stream near the north western extremity of the island—but I cannot be positive about the practicability of this undertaking. At any rate some water for various purposes, though not very good, can be obtained by blasting out rock in the mountain. The poor Mormons get about six gallons of water from a few hollows in rocks, which are

dry during the day, but exude this much during the night, and this is the chief drinking supply for all this people. But they have large numbers of goats and use some milk, and eat fresh goat's meat and mutton, with sweet potatoes, instead of exclusive poi and salt fish.

I design to submit a proposition to the government in relation to the settlement of a large portion of his majesty's Mormon subjects upon Lauai, after certain tests have been made for a supply of water. It is my intention to visit Lauai next week. I have been there once before.

Your Excellency makes some remarks relative to a supposed intention of persuading His Majesty's subjects to emigrate to other islands of the Pacific or Indian oceans. The very reverse of this has occupied my mind. I have supposed that many thousands of Polynesians and Malaysians might be induced to emigrate to this group, and this is a matter which I know could be accomplished, if it was deemed desirable. My chief exhortations to the natives have been with a view to inspire them with a hope of national life. I tell the most intelligent again and again, to combat the despair that the dooming voice of the most of the foreigners would inspire them with. I am positive that in the Mormon organization there is to be met with the most of this national hope, the strongest attachment to the king, and the most ardent desire for perpetuation of a native Hawaiian dynasty. At the request of the Mormons, I furnished them with a design for a church emblem or banner for their festive occasions, and I gave them the simple design of eight stars in a circle, for the group, and the word *ola, life*, in the centre.

I send you a copy of the religious principles that have been substantially taught to His Majesty's subjects, now called Mormons. This only differs from the teaching in Utah, it being deficient in the inculcation of polygamy. I do not believe that this doctrine has ever been preached to the natives of these islands. It is never taught in Europe, nor in any other country outside of Utah; and furthermore, according to the principles of Mormonism, it never is to be taught or permitted to be practiced anywhere outside the precincts of the Zion of the church, and there only by a certain order of the Priesthood.

I shall not trespass more on your attention at this time; but I shall be ready to furnish you with any information relative to my movements and observations on these islands. I will venture to say on this occasion that no other stranger who ever entered His Majesty's dominion could have formed a more lively regard for his person, a stronger sympathy with the maintenance of his sovereignty, or a more ardent hope for the perpetuation and prosperity of his race and dynasty. This I have felt, and this I have uttered, and I am seeking no personal advantage here. My heart is with the Oceanic races. I was born on the ocean, and I have felt a sort of brotherhood with islanders, especially with the royal Malay, and his kindred who reign and live here. I can afford to be misunderstood, condemned or despised, for I have a heart and purpose to abide my time. I care for no creeds but for humanity, and love to work for those that are despised and have no friends.

My dear daughter, who is determined to share her father's labors and wander-