

## MISCELLANEOUS.

## A RING OF CORAL ROCK.

The following letter from a young missionary in the Society Islands to his father and mother, who reside in Weber County, Utah, will be read with much interest:

OTEPA HAO, October 9th, 1894,  
Tuamotu Isles.

It is with much pleasure that I cast away all thoughts of missionary duty and the responsibilities of my office and calling and say "hello" once more. You cannot imagine how good it feels at this distance from home, 5,500 miles, which is equal to ten times the distance from Utah to England or Germany when we consider mail facilities—and allow one's thoughts to wander where they will in contemplation of home and its associations. It is a luxury which if indulged in too often becomes as productive of injurious results as that of eating too much pie. I have been blessed with wonderful control over myself in this respect thus far, so much so that time has never yet been heavy on my hands or seemed slow in passing, though when I get home it will be the day that I have been looking forward to for years.

Your letters of March 26th, April 26th, May 22nd and June 26th, most of them written over two years after my departure from the land of milk and honey, reached me July 27th, August 30th and September 4th, some of them being 154 days, or over five months, enroute. They were about a month coming 5,000 miles and the other three months coming the remaining 500 miles. When they reached their destination they found themselves outside of the pale of civilization, which is my present residence; a place few white men have ever seen.

The people here have a different language altogether to the Tahitians, though most of them understand some Tahitian. We do our preaching in the Tahitian language, as their language is not a written language and the Bible is translated into the Tahitian. But in conversation we have to understand their unwritten language or else not understand all. Hao lies about 500 miles east of Tahiti and is visited about one or two times a month by some trading sloop, so that we hear from the outside world once in a while.

Hao, like all the rest of the Paumotu isles, is circular in shape. Place a finger ring on the table, think of the space outside the ring as the billowy ocean and the space inside as a lagoon ranging from ten to several hundred feet deep; think of the narrow edge of the ring as land and you have Hao all in a nutshell, the ring of land being from twenty feet to a block wide.

This land (?) is composed entirely of rock; there is not a handful of soil on the island. To be sure there are some sandy places, but it is mostly all coral rock. Coconuts and a few non-food-producing trees grow freely, and the sea of course yields abundantly of fish. The latter and coconuts are the only native foods worth mentioning. By reason however of there being pearl shell in the lagoon, for which the natives dive

(sometimes going as far as 120 feet down) and which brings a good price, they are enabled to buy a little flour, etc., to keep body and soul alive. If you people cannot sit down to the table without having pie, cake, fruit or pudding, etc., cry hard times and actually think you are hard up, were to come down here and see what a native lives on for a month or so, the cry of hard times would be heard of no more; for instance, if you had cooked all your food on a bonfire, as I have done for months and as the poor natives do all the time, you who lie on soft beds, ride in carriages or buggies, street cars and eat pie might well cry hard time and say "we're hard up."

Would you like to know how I live here? Then I will tell you of a few items, though to tell you all would require a book of considerable size. We arise from our bed, which consists of pine boards at 6:30 a.m. and eat a lunch of bread (when we have it; or go without when we haven't it) and hot water or "Mormon tea" as it is known here at 7 a.m., we are at school. We have 10, 15, 20 or 50 pupils, men and women, the latter number when the people are gathered from all parts of the island. We have them commit to memory and explain verses of Scripture, and though you call us heathens we can find and quote more Scripture than you civilized Saints can. We repeat a sentence and they repeat it after us in chorus, this process being carried on until they can repeat the verse themselves. Methinks I hear you whisper, "it must be tiresome;" upon which point I have nothing more to say than the words of Paul that "Tribulation worketh patience." Looking at it in this light, it becomes a haapurua, i. e., a school for us, and if we learn our lessons well we will be rewarded, for Paul further says that "patience worketh experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed." In one hour and a half we are through with school unless they want to stop another hour and talk over Scripture, which is not infrequent. Then if it is my turn to cook (which comes every other day) I put our boy to work (he is the best on the island) and we build a bonfire, bake our bread on some rocks or fry it if we have fish, grease or lard, lay our fish on the burning embers and by 10 or 10:30 a.m., we have dinner. That is French fashion, and we are in France now. Dinner over, there are sick to be visited. There may be only thirty or forty people in the village, yet there is always someone down sick. There have been six deaths here during the last two months, out of a population of about four hundred or thereabouts. Most all of their ills are disorders of the stomach, due to irregular living. We then have a few hours to ourselves, (unless we are interrupted by some native coming in with a manna's "thought" or "question") which we spend in studying the language, reading Scripture and newspapers and letters from home and in hunting new material for sermons. At 3 p.m., we have testimony meeting or school again. We have two of the former and six of the latter per week, four meetings on Sunday and from thirteen to fifteen per

week. Testimony meetings generally last from one and a half to three hours, everyone saying something and all one subject; some opportune and some not. Then supper must be cooked, after which we visit the Saints and the sick, singing and conversing and talking Scripture with them.

Our people are of course slow to learn, but it keeps one hustling to find something new to talk about that is suited to their understanding. Speaking of the sick people reminded me of an incident that occurred several weeks ago, which will serve to illustrate several characteristics of my friends. One of our sisters gave birth to a child and soon after her breast began to gather. I made a poultice of hard tack and condensed milk which we call by the dignified title, "bread and milk poultice," and this I placed upon the afflicted member, leaving some more for future use. A few minutes later my companion (Frank Cutler) passed by and saw that her breast was bare, (their common working dress being a pareu "sheet" tied around the loins). Our suspicions were aroused. So we called next morning and inquired, "was that good medicine?" "Aita," ("no") said her husband, "that wasn't medicine; that was food." "Yes," said his wife, "it was sweet food." By inquiring further they confessed that as soon as I was out of sight they took the poultice from her breast and ate it, and what was left for another poultice also. If a basket of fish is caught and brought in at midnight, they will all get up, make a bonfire and eat raw fish while some is cooking and never rest till all is gone, then go back to bed again. I have made several voyages on schooners the last year or so and upon these occasions I had the opportunity to eat food cooked on a stove, but the opportunity was as much as I could stomach, because these little vessels roll and pitch so much that a few minutes suffices to turn one inside out. It is pretty good to be on land if land is only rock.

But enough of nonsense. I suppose you want to know how I am feeling; I feel thankful to have had the experience through which I have passed. I am proud of the opportunity to be waging war against evil, ignorance and superstition. I often feel to rejoice that I was sent to a heathen country (though I often feel otherwise, too) and by comparing characteristics, traits and customs I am led to think that there are many heathens dwelling under the cloak of civilization. I am in a peculiar country and among a peculiar people. The people here have treated me well and I never think of them without a sigh for them in their straightened circumstances. They do not know what comfort is. We Utah people do not know what poverty is any more than they know what comfort is. The poorest man in Utah is rich compared with them. I am doing as well as I can expect under the circumstances. Nearly two and a half years have passed since I left my Utah home and its dear associations, and my experiences during that interval have been many and varied, but whether riding in the elegant modern railroad car, and dining at fine hotels, or being tossed upon the mighty deep in a little boat or sleeping upon a mat of leaves, I look back to the days spent among my friends in Hooper and elsewhere with fond remembrances and look forward with joy to the day when I