

# THE DESERET WEEKLY.

Truth and Liberty.

No. 1.

SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH, DECEMBER 21, 1895.

VOL. LII.

## JENSON'S TRAVELS.

### LETTER NO. XXVIII.

Saturday, August 24th. In company with Eders Alfred M. Durham and Charles E. Jensen, I left the mission house at Mua and went by boat and on foot to the capital Nukualofa, distant six miles, where we called on the Rev. J. B. Watkin, who stands at the head of the "Free Church of Tonga." He received us kindly and gave us some important information in regard to the Wesleyan missionary operations on the Tongan Islands and the origin of the "Free Church." He also showed us through the king's palace and the royal Church edifice which lies adjacent to the palace and Mr. Watkin's own fine two-story residence. Mr. Watkins has befriended the Elders on different occasions, and has made them a present of several Bibles in the Tongan language. From him and other reliable sources I have gleaned the following:

The Tongan Islands were first discovered in 1643, by the great Dutch explorer, Jansen Tasman, who gave the principal islands Dutch names. Thus he named Tongatabu the principal island Amsterdam Island. Captain James Cook visited the islands in 1777; and he was so pleased with the treatment he received at the hands of the natives that he named the group the "Friendly Islands," which, however, subsequent events showed to be an inappropriate title, as the Tongans proved anything but friendly to the whites; and it was learned that they had even planned the massacre of Captain Cook and all his men for the sake of spoil; but he sailed away before the time set for his execution arrived. The first permanent white man who located at Tonga was an escaped Sydney convict named Morgan, who lived happily with and was respected by the natives till the mission vessel The Duft, arrived from Tahiti with ten missionaries of the London Missionary Society. These first missionaries to Tongatabu had a hard time of it, and during the civil war which raged at that period on the islands, three of these were murdered; and the others, after being plundered of their property saved themselves by flight to the western district of the island, from whence they were at length, (in 1800) removed to Australia by the captain of a merchant man, who touched at Tonga, on his voyage from the Society Islands to Port Jackson. Nothing further was attempted by way of Christianizing the Tongans until 1822 when the first Wesleyan missionaries, the Rev. Walter Lawry arrived at Tongatabu. He landed August 16th 1822, together with his family; but domestic circumstances

necessitated his removal in the latter part of 1823. During his short sojourn he had received much kindness from the chiefs of Mua, where he had located himself, but made no converts. Two years later two Christian natives from the island of Tahiti landed in Tonga and located at Nukualofa where they immediately commenced preaching; a place of worship was soon erected at which about three hundred people assembled to take part in Christian services on the Sabbath. The king Tubou gave his personal support to the work. In June 1826, two other Wesleyan missionaries arrived from England and located at Hihifo, on Tongatabu, where they built a wooden house and commenced to study the language and teach the people, working entirely independent of the Tahitian teachers. The names of the two missionaries were John Thomas and John Hutchinson. Two other Wesleyan missionaries came in 1828, who worked in unison with the Tahitian natives, and from this united effort the cause proved a success. The staff of missionaries was further increased in 1829, when the Wesleyans had thirty-one regular Church members on the islands which in 1834 had increased to 7451, including the membership on the Haapa and Vavau islands, where a successful mission had been opened in 1830, and in the Vavau groups, where the first native Christians commenced operations in 1831; white missionaries came later. The first French Catholic missionaries arrived at Tongatabu in 1842 and located at the heathen fortress of Bea from whence they extended their operations to Mua, which is still a Catholic stronghold. The Wesleyans accused the Catholics of making common cause with the heathen part of the Tongan population, and of other crooked work; and the consequence was a bitter feeling between the Romans and the Protestants which still exists. But the Wesleyans kept the upper hand, and in 1865 there were 169 protestant places of worship in the Tongan kingdom connected with which were 24 European and native ministers, and a total membership of 9822. The late King George, who (as the former king of Haapai and Vavau) became king of all the Friendly Islands in 1845 and reigned until his demise in 1893, was the great patron of the Wesleyan cause. By his aid Tonga was Christianized; he gave the Wesleyans land and privileges, and made his people follow the faith of the Methodists. Among the Wesleyan ministers who gained great influence among the natives, was a Mr. S. W. Baker. He arrived on the islands in 1860, and subsequently became the presiding Wesleyan were. The mission being in a flourishing condition, and the natives contribut-

ing very liberally toward supporting the church, a petition was drawn up asking the New South Wales and Cucusland (Wesleyan) conference that Tonga be given a more independent position or a separate conference organization; but instead of granting the petition, the conference recalled Mr. Baker as the head of the Tongan mission, and he consequently left the islands in 1880. This action, which was considered unjust, displeased King George and his people very much; and the king advised his subjects to cease contributing of their means toward the Wesleyan Church; and he also offered the Prissier ship of the kingdom to Mr. Baker, if he would return to the islands. Mr. Baker responded; resigned his position as a Wesleyan missionary, and returned to Tonga in 1881 to enter upon his new duties as Premier. In his calling, as such during the following ten years, he was eminently successful; and the laws which he issued to be enacted and the improvements which were made under his advice and direction will ever make him live in history as one of the most remarkable and influential men who ever figured in the affairs of the South Pacific Islands. Under his protection and influence, also, the Wesleyans of Tonga broke entirely off from the parent church, and established themselves as the "Free Church of Tonga," with the Rev. J. B. Watkin, formerly a regular Wesleyan minister, at its head. This was done in 1885. But as the old church held leases to the church edifices and refused to give them up, the Free Church found itself obliged to erect new meeting houses and chapels all over the islands; and thus we find today duplicate Protestant houses of worship in all important villages and towns in the kingdom even in places where there is not church going members enough to half fill one. Mr. Watkin claims that seven-eighths of the inhabitants of the islands are members of the Free Church leaving only between two and three thousand for the Catholic and regular Wesleyan membership. He also told us that since the secession in 1885 the Free Church had built 130 houses of worship on the islands without the least assistance from any outside source. To the Wesleyans of the old school belong the credit of translating the Bible into the Tongan language, it was printed at London, England, and several editions have already been published. The Wesleyans have also published several school books in the Tongan language, and introduced a splendid school system throughout the kingdom. The Free Church is now publishing a periodical in native, entitled "Hoe Jiaji Tauataina" (The Free Church,) edited by the Rev. J. B. Watkin. It is printed in Auckland,