

MISCELLANEOUS.

Written for this Paper.

JENSON'S TRAVELS.

LETTER NO. LIII.

Sunday, March 1st. We attended three general meetings, one Gospel school and a Priesthood meeting with the Saints on Takaroa. We also partook of the Sacrament, using sprouting coconut meat instead of bread and coconut milk instead of wine or water. The Saints in this mission are "great" meeting goers. In most of the branches they hold three general meetings and a Gospel school every Sunday. The general meetings are usually commenced at 6 and 10 a. m. and 3 p. m. Then Gospel schools are held again Monday evenings; testimony meetings and Gospel schools Tuesday afternoon and evenings; general meetings and Gospel schools on Wednesdays; sisters' meetings on Thursday afternoons and Gospel schools Friday afternoons and evenings. The Elders have tried to cut down the number of meetings, but the natives object, it having become an old habit with them to hold meetings and schools in that order. The exercises in the Gospel schools generally consist in questions and answers on Gospel subjects, Bible and Church history, etc. The one conducting the school gives the questions out to the several students on a previous school to be answered in the next. These schools are generally interesting and lively, as they stimulate the minds and energies of the natives who are very anxious to excel in giving correct answers. The Elders from Zion, whenever they are present, usually conduct these schools.

Monday, March 2nd. We spent most of the day culling historical items from some native-kept books, but they contained only a very little which could be of any use to us whatever. As the schooner Hitinui, one of Brother Mapuki's vessels, is about to start for Tahiti, I decided to avail myself of the opportunity of returning with it, and delegate the remainder of my historical labors to Elder Cutler. I had learned that if I did not take advantage of this chance, I might be compelled to stay on the Tuamotu Islands for months, and still not be able to visit many of the islands. The natives were making preparations all day for going "inside" (into the lagoon) to fish for mother of pearl shells.

On the lagoon side of the reef are caverns and cavities in which the large pearl oysters breed. Attached to the rock by their powerful beard at depths of five to fifteen fathoms they adhere so firmly that a stout knife is often needed to sever their hold. The pearl shell is itself valuable, and occasionally a rich pearl is found within. That for which her Majesty (Queen Victoria of England) is said to have paid 6,000 pounds sterling to Storr and Mortimer, came from one of the Tuamotu lagoons.

The earliest records of Spanish conquest in the Pacific are connected with the Pearl Islands in the Bay of Panama. In 1517, only four years after De Balboa first sighted the great sea, Ponce De Leon caused timber to be carried across the Isthmus of Panama and built a small craft with which to make the conquest

of the Pearl islands. The natives were cruelly treated and forced to give up 800 ounces of pearls found in their possession. They were further ordered to pay a yearly tribute of the same quantity. Of course this payment was impossible, as those found in their possession were the accumulated treasure for many years.

Pearl shell in large quantities and of considerable value has always been and is still a product of the Pacific lagoons. About fifty years ago Commodore Wilkes, in the account of his exploring expedition refers to the large quantity sent from the Tuamotus, north then only \$45 or \$50 per ton. Pearl shell is now in use for purposes then unknown, and the price ranges from \$300 to \$500 per ton, while larger quantities than ever are demanded. The great difficulty is to get good divers. The diving dress has been tried by Europeans, but the uneven rocky bottom and the oyster's habit of breeding in caverns or hollows, renders the dress unsuitable. Native divers who use no dress or protection around their bodies, are indispensable. Their skill is proverbial. They work hard, but require long rests at intervals, and cannot stand the work of diving for more than a few years altogether.

Tuesday, March 3rd. Most of the natives left the village in boats for the lagoon inside the island to dive for shells, orders having just been received from the government to open the lagoon for shell fishing. Only five adult members of the Church were left in the village, though a few returned again in the evening to remain over night. I spent most of the day measuring off the village and making a plan of it. I also measured the meeting house, etc., and finished up my historical labors on Takaroa.

Wednesday, March 4th. We arose early and made ready for my departure. About 7 o'clock a. m., we attended a general meeting with the remaining Saints, at which a native brother and myself were the speakers. After this I called on some of the Saints to say good-bye, among whom were Brother Maruaki and wife who gave me two fine pairs of shells and a small pearl. Another brother and Mapuhi's wife also made me presents. We next called on the French gendarme whom I had neglected to see before. He said jokingly that he was about to have me arrested as a spy when he saw me the day before "surveying" the town plot. A gendarme on the Tuamotus is a sort of a government policeman and general representative. There is usually one of them on every island of importance, and they feel terribly slighted if every white visitor don't call on them almost the first time after their arrival.

At 9:30 a. m., I gave the parting hand to Brother Cutler (who expects to remain on the island for a little while and then proceed to Paiaie, where the April conference is to be held) and boarded the little schooner Hitinui, which immediately left her moorings, spread her sails and went to sea. The wind blowing briskly from the east we made splendid progress, and by noon we were sailing close to the southeast coast of Takapoto. By the island, the wind died out and it commenced to rain most violently which drove all hands, except

the man at the helm down into the small, low and sickly smelling cabin which swarmed with ants, cockroaches and other vermin. With the insects crawling all over me, and scarcely getting a breath of fresh air, except when I came out to vomit, which I did quite frequently, I spent one of the most miserable nights of my life. I had been waiting for the break of day for some time when the man at the helm called out 12 o'clock midnight.

Thursday, March 5th. Morning dawned at last, but the rain continued to descend in torrents; it was nearly 10 o'clock a. m. when it ceased and thus made it possible for us to emerge from our uncomfortable positions in the cabin. I was the only passenger on board. The crew consisted of four men, all natives, namely, Tapu, the supercargo, a half-caste and a member of the Church, who can speak a little English, his father being an Englishman. Teiho, the captain Moe a fat man and Teuru, a young man. The last three were Josephites, the last man being an "Elder" in that organization. He snored most awfully during the night, so I named him in the morning the champion snorer of the Pacific. I spent the day learning Tahitian words from the sailors, showing them my photographs and album of views, and trying to explain to them by signs and diagrams the difference between the true Church and the Josephites. At 11 a. m., a good breeze sprang up, and soon afterwards we sighted the island of Aratika which lies about sixty-five miles southwest of Takaroa. The island is twenty miles long by thirteen broad, but has less than twenty inhabitants, most of whom are members of the Church. The only village is situated on the northeast portion of the island. By 1 o'clock p. m., we were sailing north of the northeasternmost motu of the island, and it took us till 5 o'clock to clear the other end. Being on the leeward side of the island, we hugged its shore very close; and in rounding one point we were only 100 yards off the breakers on the coral reef or about 200 yards from the shore. Continuing our southwesterly course we saw the island of Fakarava at 10 p. m., and a little later we sailed through a wide passage into the lagoon, and came to anchorage off Rotoava, the main village of the island at 11:30.

Friday, March 6th. We landed at Rotoava early in the morning, and I first called on an English trader by the name of George S. Smith, who has a native wife and family, and next on the great governor of the principal part of all the Tuamotu islands. His name is E. A. Martin, and he is the same one who caused all the late troubles for our Elders and forbid them to preach. I presented my professional card, which perhaps caused him to treat me respectfully, though he had no doubt been informed before I called that I was a Mormon Elder. Having only Tapu of the Hitinui crew for interpreter, and he losing his wonted courage in the presence of so great a dignitary as the governor, I could only tell his excellency where I came from and where I was going. He thanked me for calling on him, and I withdrew. He is rather a short and insignificant looking man, appears very conceited and capable of acting very small if he is crossed. How I wished I could have talked with him; but his language was French and mine English.