

JENSON'S TRAVELS.

LETTER NO. XXXI.

Wednesday, September 11th, 1895. This is my second Wednesday this week. I spent the day at Fagalu, Samoa, culling historical data from the mission records being assisted by Elder William G. Sears, the secretary of the mission.

Thursday, September 12th. I continued my labors of yesterday, and also visited the private graveyard, located on a hill about three hundred yards southeast of the mission house, where the earthly remains of Elder Ransom M. Stevens, Sister Ella A. Moody and three children of Elder Thomas H. Hilton and wife, are deposited. Elder Stevens died April 28th, 1894; Sister Moody, May 24th, 1895. Elder Stevens is buried in the grave that was formerly occupied by the remains of Sister Kate E. Merrill, who died in 1891, but whose remains were taken home by her husband, when he returned from his mission in 1894. Sister Merrill was the first of our missionaries who died in Samoa. Compared to time and number, the Samoan mission history records more deaths among our missionaries than any other mission we have so far established as a Church—one Elder, two missionary sisters and three children, in seven years, out of eighty missionaries who, since 1888, have been sent from Zion to labor in Samoa and Tonga.

The Samoan mission embraces two important groups of the South Pacific Islands, namely: Samoa, or the Navigator Islands, and Tonga, or the Friendly Islands. At present, 33 Elders from Zion are laboring as missionaries on the two groups, 10 wit: 23 in Samoa and 10 in Tonga. Of those engaged in the ministry in Samoa, 11 are laboring on the island of Upolu; 6 on Savaii and 6 on Tutuila. There are 11 regularly organized branches of the Church, which also constitute that many permanent missionary stations, at each of which two Elders are located, except at headquarters at Fagali, where there are at present three, including the president of the mission. At all these stations or branches, regular Sabbath meetings, and in some, Sunday schools are held, presided over and conducted by the Elders who, however, are assisted by native Saints. According to the statistical report for 1894, there were at the beginning of the present year, 263 native Saints in the mission, namely: 147 males and 116 females. Of the native brethren, 25 held the Priesthood; 4 of them being Elders, 2 Priest, 13 Teachers and 6 Deacons. Of the total number of native Saints mentioned, 97 were on the island of Upolu; 84 on Tutuila and Aumu; 71 on Savaii, and 11 in Tonga. To this might consistently be added 107 children belonging to members of the Church, namely: 42 on Upolu; 27 on Tutuila; 32 on Savaii, and 6 in Tonga. Since the mission was first established in Samoa, in 1888, all the villages on the three principal islands (Upolu, Savaii and Tutuila) have been visited, most of them many times. Tracts have also been distributed in all the villages and meetings held in nearly all. The Elders stationed at the respective branches in Samoa, do not confine their labors, by any means, to the particular village in which the meeting house or their headquarters are located, but extend their operations to the surrounding country.

Thus every village on the three islands named, are included in some one of the missionary circuits. As a rule the natives are kind and hospitable to the Elders as they travel among them. When visiting in the outlying villages, they are always invited in and treated to food and lodging, the best the people have, free of charge. When at their regular stations, the Elders make their home in the respective meeting houses, which are generally partitioned off into two rooms, the smaller of which is occupied by the Elders as a private apartment, and the larger one reserved for meeting purposes. When at their stations the natives always bring them the necessary food, which generally consists of taro, bread fruit, bananas, yams, fish, oranges and other kinds of fruits. The Elders have learned from long experience, that this kind of diet is healthier and better for them while in the tropics, than imported or foreign food. In traveling around on the different islands, the brethren generally travel on foot; occasionally also in small boats along the coasts, but the latter mode is fraught with considerable danger, and has of late years been discouraged. In going from island to island, passages are often obtained on trading schooners and other small crafts, free of charge; at other times they have to pay. There are no inter island steamship accommodation in Samoa. The white traders, most of whom have married Samoan wives, are generally good to the Elders, and have shown them numerous acts of kindness. The Germans constitute the bulk of the white population in Samoa. After them the English and Americans rank as to number, and there are also a few Scandinavians. Seven white men are among those baptized in Samoa. In this connection I may also state that from 1888, when the mission was first opened, till the close of 1894, 342 persons were baptized in the Samoan mission, namely: 37 on the island of Aumu; 103 on Tutuila; 111 in Upolu; 78 on Savaii, and 13 in the Tongan part of the mission. Of this number, 57 have been excommunicated and 22 are dead.

The natives of Samoa are a fine race of people physically, and as fair skinned as the natives of Hawaii and Tonga. But while the Tongans are compelled by law to cover their bodies from shoulder to knee, no such law exists in Samoa. Hence, the natives, on ordinary occasions, confine their clothing to their vale vale, or waist cloth. On Sundays, however, the men wear a shirt, and the women a sort of sash in addition to the vale vale.

The opportunities of obtaining a livelihood in native style in Samoa, are very good. It requires next to no effort at all to obtain the necessary food. Taro or kalo, grows with but a very little help, in the shape of cultivation, and this is the staple article of food on the group. Bread fruit is picked from the trees as it ripens, for several months during the year, and the cocoanut is always to be had. Its flesh is used by the natives in the preparation of many of their "rare dishes." When the bread fruit is out of season, and the people have neglected to plant taro, they are sometimes compelled to subsist, for months together, on bananas. At different times in past years, when the islands have been visited by hurricanes, which have blown down all the bread fruit and cocoanuts and often pulled up

or broken down the trees themselves, the people have been reduced to a point of starvation, until they could plant and reap bananas, or until the next crop of bread fruit would ripen. The group of Manua is an exception to this. There the people always keep a year's supply on hand, and by this precaution have always escaped famine.

On the same principle that food is obtained so easy on Samoa, the natives also desire to secure salvation on as easy terms as possible. Hence, our Elders, with their practical religion and their "faith and works" doctrines, have a hard time of making converts. The sectarian "way to heaven" by faith alone is, as a rule, much preferred by the South Sea Islanders.

From a Samoan geography, published in 1887, and from many other sources, I glean the following: The Samoan group is situated between south latitude 13° 30' and 14° 20', and west longitude 169° 24' and 172° 45'. There are ten inhabited islands in the group, and a number of very small islets not inhabited. The distance from the Manua group, which is situated the farthest east, to the westernmost point of Savaii, the west island, is 265 miles. The names on the east are: Tau, Olosega, Ofu, Aunu'u, Tutuila, Nuutell, Upolu, Manona, Apolima and Savaii. The three first named constitute the Manua group, which have a separate and distinct government of their own. The total area of all the islands is 1,650 square miles, and the number of inhabitants 34,000. The three islands, Upolu, Savaii and Tutuila, are by far the largest and most important, and contains the great bulk of the inhabitants. Samoa may be regarded as one of the loveliest, most agreeable and productive of all the South Sea groups. The fertility of the soil is such that the cultivation of tropical plants yields abundant returns, and the means of subsistence are perhaps more easily obtained here than in any other part of the world. All the islands belonging to the Samoan group are volcanic, and their appearance are enchanting in many places, where the fine, fertile plains extend to the foot of the wooded hills. The Samoan Island are quite subject to hurricanes, being situated so near equator, where the disastrous storms are frequent. In April 1850, the capital (Apia) was almost entirely destroyed by one, and the terrible storm of March 15th and 16th, 1889, by which seven American and German men-of-war were either totally or partly destroyed, is a circumstance still fresh in the memory of newspaper readers. Earthquakes are also frequent in Samoa, but not very severe; and they do little damage owing to the elasticity and strength of the native dwellings, which are entirely constructed of posts and light rafters securely lashed together.

The Samoans are classed among the fairest of all the Polynesian races; and although not so much advanced in the arts and manufactures as some of their neighbors, surpass them all in many of the characteristics of a race civilization. Captain Erskine, of Pacific navigation fame, remarks that they carry their habits of cleanliness and decency to a higher point than the most fastidious of civilized nations. Their public meetings and discussions are carried on with a dignity and forbearance which Europeans never equal; while even in the heat of war, they have shown them-