

THE POLYNESIAN.

Vita sine virtute atque eruditione nullius proli est.

SATURDAY, AUG. 1, 1840.

GLEANINGS FROM THE EDITOR'S NOTE
BOOK.—HAWAII. No. 2.

Travelers have differed greatly in their estimates of the elevation of Mauna Kea. Some raising it even to 18,000 feet, while others reduce it to 13,645. Capt. Wendt, in 1831, makes it 14,055 feet. Considerable discrepancy seems to exist in regard to Mr. Douglas's measurements. In a letter to a friend in London, dated May 6, 1831, and published with his journal, he gives Mauna Kea an altitude of 13,851 feet. Mauna Loa 13,517 feet. The editors of the Hawaiian Spectator, volume I, No. II, page 98, quote Douglas as 13,764 feet for Mauna Kea, 13,470 feet for Mauna Loa. "The Prussian Chart," published at Potsdam, 1839, citing Douglas as authority makes Mauna Kea 13,645 feet, Mauna Loa 13,230.

Being unexpectedly disappointed in obtaining a barometer, we were not able to add any scientific measurements to the list given, and here as at other places on our route, were obliged to depend upon the dicta of others, or upon such calculations as could be obtained from simple computations, paces, lines, &c., which was a source of great vexation to us, after having, as we flattered ourselves, obtained the necessary instruments for ascertaining heights, (one of the principal objects of our trip) and not learning of our disappointment, until it was too late to remedy it.

Douglas speaks also of the "apparent non diminution of sound," as being a matter of astonishment to him. The ease and distinctness with which we heard voices, and even conversation at long distances, was frequently noticed by us, also, the rapidity with which sound was transmitted.

Before my friends reached the camp, I had started with our men, to descend the mountain, zigzagging in a southerly direction. They were quite benumbed with cold, and it was not until the sun had been up some hours, that they became sufficiently thawed to proceed with any vigor. The descent was exceedingly steep and toilsome. This side of the mountain was nothing but a vast pile of compact volcanic rocks, of all sizes, broken in every variety of shape, all presenting sharp sides, and jagged points, and thrown at random into a loose, sliding bed of gravel, which slipping from under our feet at every step, endangered our limbs by the avalanches of rocks which it carried with it. After a few miles of such slope, the men discovered a spring of clear, cold water, gushing out of the mountain, to which we all hastened, having been upon an allowance of that article for the last twenty-four hours. Here the missing ones rejoined our party. Mr. C. had brought with him a handkerchief filled with snow, with which we turned too, and had a fine snow balling, while it lasted, pelting each other right merrily. Our Honolulu friends puffing and panting with heat and dust, no doubt would have envied us the occupation. The declivity proved equally steep, the whole way down, with soil enough to bear a few grasses, and a small species of cassia with a yellow blossom. Herds of bullocks were frequently seen, some of which were quite tame, and did not run until we approached within pistol shot. Before reaching the plain we were exceedingly annoyed by a strong wind suddenly springing up, which drove the sand in dense clouds before it, cutting our faces and blinding our eyes by its violence. The plain, bounded by Mauna Kea on the north, Mauna Loa on the south, and Mauna Hualalai on the west, and embracing nearly a third of the superficial extent of the whole island, appears to have been to

most persons a "terra incognita." On some of the earlier charts a swamp or morass is delineated as occupying much of this area, and even to this day it is but seldom visited, except by bullock-catchers. It is mostly a table land, gradually swelling from both sides of the island, until it attains an elevation of four thousand feet. On the south and east it is cut up by streams of lava, apparently of not very ancient date, which have flowed from the adjacent mountains. Numerous small conical craters, of exceedingly regular shape, and composed of slag and sand, dot these streams. As they approach Mauna Kea, vegetation commences, on a soil composed of sand and ashes, through which the volcanic layers occasionally show themselves, but not frequently enough to prevent a tolerable cart-road from running along by the base of the mountain. On this side, the plain, hills, and small craters, for many miles are beautifully diversified with groves of an elegant laurel, which we noticed no where else on the island, or indeed on any other of the group. It grew in clusters of from thirty to forty feet in height, with small dark green leaves, delicate white blossoms, and branches that nearly swept the ground. Their foliage formed a graceful dome, impervious to the sun; while beneath was a green sward, free from all underbrush. Upon the whole they were decidedly the prettiest trees that we met on the island. The plain is too dry ever to become fertile, or of any value to the agriculturist, being like a sponge, so porous that water cannot remain upon it.

After leaving the mountain we traveled at a rapid rate for nine miles, the latter part through a driving rain, until we reached a bullock-catchers hut. It was a mere temporary shelter, thrown up by them while in their hunting excursions, but it proved a welcome haven to us. Having built a fire, dried our clothes, and supped on pork, which by this time had become quite *lividly*, we laid down upon a bed of leaves, and enjoyed a sound night's rest.

July 3.—Rode at five o'clock. Thermometer 48°. Started our natives immediately. A mile's more traveling s. s. e., carried us clear of the laurel trees, and we found ourselves upon one of those me'adamized tracts of Hawaii, ye'lept "clinkers," or, in other words, volcanic streams, which in cooling have split, cracked, tumbled, and burst into every jagged and irregular shape of which nature is capable. Here came the tug of war for our shoes, which soon gave out, but having four pair apiece in our baggage, we reshod ourselves, and hastened on. The natives wore sandals made of raw hides, which requiring continual renewing, greatly delayed our progress. However, the "clinkers" were interspersed with some tracts of smoother lava, which at any other time we should have thought had enough, but now proved a most agreeable change from their rougher neighbors. We occasionally came upon wild geese, which were very tame, and met with abundance of rain water in the hollows of the rocks. At one o'clock we reached a tract of "clinkers" two miles across, which was the very "blackness of desolation" itself. Just imagine the slag from all the forges and glass factories which have been in existence since the commencement of time, dropped in masses from the size of a small house to that of a marble, upon a plain like this; every mass being all points, every point sharp and cragged, and all uppermost, and you can form some faint idea of this highway. After pitching, twisting and tumbling over it, for two hours, to the imminent danger of our necks, and dislocation of our ankles, we came to better footing. We were now crossing the eastern spur of Mauna Loa, through a forest of dwarf ohia trees. The rain, which had been lowering all the morning, now began to pour, and soon

thoroughly drenched us. At four o'clock we passed on our left, quite a lake of water, but owing to the storm could not stop to examine it. At five having found a cave, we concluded to encamp for the night, having been on foot twelve hours, though owing to the badness of the road, we had not advanced more than fifteen miles. The cave was but three feet high, and a couple of rods in depth. The rain had leaked through on to the floor, leaving us the choice only between *wet* or *wetter* ground. However, having crawled in, we soon disposed of ourselves for the night, with the consoling prospect of having a cold or rheumatism to accompany us the remainder of the trip. Scarcely had we got asleep, when we were awakened all but suffocated with smoke; jumping up we found our natives had made a fire of wet wood at the mouth of the cave, and were coolly sitting at the *windward*, and seeing us gasping for breath. The way natives and fire brands went out of the cave will prove a caution to them not to attempt to convert any future travelers into bacon. Lying down again, we passed a tolerable night, and awoke in the morning with merely a soreness in our limbs, which exercise soon wore off. At this height, five thousand feet, the Thermometer was 38°, indicating a low average temperature for this region; such being the cold of a July morning.

SHIPWRECKED JAPANESE.

Having been requested to prepare some account of the unfortunate Japanese who were driven in a gale from their own country and brought to these islands in the fall of 1839, I will attempt to comply, though I have to regret that I have but few facts at command respecting them, and these mostly of a general character. This scarcity of facts is owing to two causes, 1. The imperfect medium of communication while those men were with me; and, 2. It did not occur to me, that it would ever devolve on me to give an account of them to the public. Still, I think, I have the general outline of their history and what has befallen them; and can give it with some degree of accuracy. This work I shall do most cheerfully, if I can thereby subserve the cause of humanity by conferring a favor on these unfortunates.

I would just remark here, that where I shall try to express Japanese names by English letters, the vowels will generally have the sound which they have in European languages; i. e. *a* in name or *e* in met; *i* as *i* in *machine*; *o* is both long and short; and *u* does not differ from the general sound of the same letter in English. In pronouncing words of two syllables, they generally accent the last; in words of more syllables, they accent the last but one. In this respect, they doubtless resemble the Chinese, and perhaps other neighboring nations.

My first interview with three of the Japanese was on the 18th of Oct. 1839. I had been absent from my dwelling, and on returning perceived a crowd in the house and about the door. On entering, I had not time to learn the cause which had drawn them together, when I saw three men, of the general appearance of the Chinese, but more tawny, sitting before me, apparently in a humble posture, and bowing still more humbly; each, at every bow, carrying both hands over his knees till he touched his feet. These bows were often repeated. Who are these visitors? I enquired; and was soon informed by Capt. Cathcart of the whaleship James Loper, who was present, that they were three of seven Japanese, whom he had taken from the wreck of a large junk of perhaps 150 or 200 tons, on the 6th of June. The other four had been disposed of on board other whaleships which were to land them at Oahu. Capt.

Cathcart had kindly taken care of these and supplied all their wants for four months and a half, and now wished to leave them at this place.

From the log book of the Obed Mitchell, a ship which was near when the James Loper fell in with the unfortunate wreck, by the kindness of Capt. Ray, I learned more definitely the place where they met with them. It was in north latitude 30 degrees, and east long. 174 degrees; about half way between the Island of Japan and the Sandwich Islands. When all their moveable property was transferred to the whaleship, the junk was set on fire; and it is due to the kindness and generosity of Capt. C., a generosity often met with among seafaring men, to state, that not only were these sufferers provided with food and necessary clothing, but so far as I could learn, were landed here, with all the moveable property they had saved, including a considerable amount of money, gold and silver, coined in shape of parallelograms, all which, on their escaping the wreck, was put into the care of Capt. C., but none was reserved by way of compensation.

I had never before seen a Japanese. Such was the case with most who were present. Of course the sight of these men awakened no little curiosity. We wished to know what strange events had befallen them; and to learn some thing about their country from which the people of all other nations were effectually excluded. I addressed them in English; but though they had been four and a half months on board the ship, they had picked up but little of our tongue. Others spoke to them in Hawaiian—the first time, of course, that they had heard such sounds; others talked loud that they might overcome what seemed like deafness. Having understood, however, that the written languages of the Chinese and Japanese were the same, we called in the aid of a Chinaman, who could speak some English, and who carried on conversation with them, with as profound silence as the deaf and dumb do their intercourse. He wrote our interrogatories, which the oldest of the Japanese read carefully, and occasionally with much hesitation, and then wrote his reply. Many of the written characters are the same in both nations; and each nation has many that are peculiar to itself. Still each may perhaps understand some of the characters peculiar to the other. The Japanese and Chinese, like the Hebrews, in their writing and printing, begin at the last end of the book, and turn back to what an Englishman would call the beginning. The Hebrews however, write their lines horizontally, while the Chinese and Japanese proceed in perpendicular lines from the top to the bottom. The amount of information, however, gained during this interview, respecting these men, was small. I learned more by incidental and repeated conversations afterward.

The oldest of these men, by the name of Heshero, was called among them, "the old man." He might be fifty years of age, was of a spare habit, and rather small in stature. He was by far the most manly character among them, and appeared to be very kind and conscientious. He had attended most to the schools of their country, was probably the most skilled in their written language, and was always employed in writing with a brush and India ink, except when he could do something to make himself useful to us. He had, doubtless, been a model of industry. He seemed also to be the most devoted to the idolatry of his country—had an idol, which was nothing more than a gilded human figure on a cloth like velvet. This was rolled up and enclosed, with a string of beads, in a wooden box, which was sometimes hung up in the apartment they occupied—sometimes in our house; and from its being missing at certain seasons,