

FRAGMENT OF A TRADER'S JOURNAL

1882 - 1888

ISLAND OF BERU

by

J. Prout

with explanatory notes and correspondence.

- (i) Note by Mr. R.P. Gilson.
- (ii) Letter from Mr R.P. Gilson, dated 9.5.56.
- (iii) Letter to Mr. R.P. Gilson, dated 17.5.56.

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Fragment of a Trader's Journal, 1882-88.
Island of Beru.

AUGUST 1882.

14th.from South End, found things here about as usual.
W.S.E. Fine

15th. Nothing important doing. W.S.E. Fine

16th. Returned South End.

SEPTEMBER 1882.

9th. Arrived from South End Station, found that during my absence the Natives had stolen a great number of my sharks fins that I had bought from them on my previous visit to this station.

..... Nothing important doing.

16th. Returned to South End Station.

NOVEMBER 1882.

6th. Arrived from South End Station, found that all my fowls /sic/ but the rooster had been stolen making the total loss of 10 hens and four chickens. Natives becoming greater thieves than formerly.

Purchased from North End Missionary 30 thousand nuts on a/c of L.M.S. 8 thousand on his own a/c.

7th. Nothing important doing. W.S.E. Fine

8th. Nothing important doing. W.S.E. Fine

9th. Kaupoli and Police of the whole Island busy punishing a man & woman for cohabiting, neither being married. The man refusing to pay the fine, they concluded to make both the man & woman fast to a tree & keep them in the sun until they either paid their fine or expired from exposure. On his resisting a policeman fired at him but missed, when others attacked him with their weapons. The man has been badly wounded with a whale spade in the head and is otherwise injured from illusage /sic/. The natives say these punishments are ordered by the Samoan Teachers, who it seems are

fast becoming the rulers of the Island. Natives greatly altered for the worse toward white traders on the Island. Two fines imposed today one of a Thousand Nuts for the man and Do for the woman the other 800 for each.

- Nov. 10. Nothing important doing. W.S.E. Fair.
 " 13th. Left for South End Station. W.S.E. Fine

DECEMBER.

- Dec. 15th. Arrived from South End. W.N.E. Fine
 " 20th. Left for South End. W.N. Fine
 " 25th. Schnr George Noble arrived sailed again same day.

JANUARY 1883

- Jan. 2nd. Arrived from South End. Frank sick. W.N.E. Fine
 " 9th. Caught Native stealing. Thrashed him. Fined.

FEBRUARY.

- Feb. 11th. Started for South End. W.E. Fine.
 " 18. Schnr Julia from Honolulu for W.E. Fine.
 Feb. 19th. left having one recruit from this Island.
 Fine.
 " 26th. Arrived from South End, started making up Copra. W.E. Fine.

MARCH 27th./sic/

- " 27th. /sic/ Finished making up Copra & started for South End.
 W.E. Fine.

APRIL.

- April 14. Arrived from South End. W.E. Fine.

- April 15th. Arrived the Annie F. Briggs. Trading. W.E. Fine.
- " 19th. Annie F. Briggs sailed. George Noble arrived. W.E. Fine.
- " 23rd. George Noble sailed. W.S.E. Fine.
- " 24th. This is a day that will not be quickly forgotten by me. On the 9th of January I detected a Native stealing nuts that I had bought and I fisted him and ordered him to go out of my yard. He refused altho repeatedly told to go whereupon I took a stick of a size suitable to punish a thief. I struck him over the head with it and drew blood, no serious wound, slightly broke the skin. The man when brought before the Kaupoli denied the theft. Kaupoli believing him and not crediting my assertions fined me 1000 Nuts or 100 heads of tobacco. This I refused to pay unless they fined the native for stealing. Today they came to my house in full force. Police & members of the House of Government demanding the fine and on my again refusing to pay it unless the thief was also fined I was pounced upon by a great number of them and received most brutal treatment, was tied and draged /sic/ to the Kaupoli house and kept tied until my friends brought a thousand nuts. Natives infinitely /sic/ worse under the new order of things than when they governed themselves as they did about 13 or 14 years ago. Bad influence at work somewhere.
- April 27th. Arrived Schnr Midge from Fiji returned labor. Recruited 37. W.E. Squalls.

MAY.

- May 1st. Arrived the Minnie Hare from Fiji. Recruiting got 7.
- " 2nd. Midge sailed full compliment /sic/ of recruits. W.S.E. Minnie Hare sailed.
- " 10th. Left for South End. W.S.E. Fine. "began house" /sic/
- " 11th. Nothing important. W.S.E. Fine
- " 14th. Commenced making up Copra. W.S. Fine.
- " 15th. Kaupoli & Police force from this end gone to middle Kaupoli House to settle some land dispute. Making copra. W.S.S.E. Fine.

- May 16th. Self and Natives making up Copra. W.S. Fine.
- " 17th. Still at work making up Copra. W.S.W. Fine.
- " 18th. Finished making Copra. W.S.E. Fine
- " 19th. Frank arrived from S. End. W.S.E. Fine.
- " 20th. Sunday, squalls with rain. W.S.
- " 21. Received from Police men 50 young nuts. W.S.E. Fine.
Frank started this morning for S. End.
- " 22. Received from Sandy Books & Lampwicks from South End Station.
W.S. Fine.
- May 23rd. & Natives building house. W.N.E. Fine.
- " 26th. Frank from S. End. W.N.E. Fine
- " 27th. Change of wind from N.E. to S. Fine.
- " 28th. Self and Frank for S. End Station. W.S.S.E. Fine.
- " 30th. Returned from S. End Station. W.N.E. Fine. Mary gone
S. End.

JUNE.

- June 1st. The opening of the month with nothing important. W.S.E. Fine.
- " 2nd. Ketch Patience from Fiji for Labor got none from this Island.
W.S.E. Fine.
- " 4th. Ketch Left. W.S.S.E. Fine
- " 5th. H.M.S. Espigole /sic/ on a cruise called to impose fine on
Natives for thieving from the wrecked Shnr Orwell. Fine 600
Bags of copra to be paid within 3 Years. W.E. Fine. Left
same day.
- " 6th. Annie F. Briggs arrived. W.S.E. Fine.
- /n.d./ George Noble arrived. W.S.S.E. Fine.
- " 21st. Copra House fell.

June 30th. Frank from S. End. W.S.E. Rain squalls.

1883. JULY.

- M. 2nd July. Left Scott's old station that I rented for 15 months and came to new house on wife's land at Tabananikarana. W.S.S.E. Rain.
- T. 3rd " Frank left for S. End station. W.S.S.E. Fine. Kaupoli from S & M to decide disputed piece of land, decision not known. ("Against Frank" given in the evening.
- W. 4th Barque India from N.Z. Wind S.E. Fine.
- St. 7th Barque India left. W.S. Fine.
- S. 8 Arrived Schnr Ariel from Senca trading, Capt. Kustel, also Schnr Lissy Do Do same owners. W.S.E. Fine.
- T. 10 Schnr Lissy left for Onotoa. W.S.E. Fine.
- W. 11 Schnr Ariel left. W.S. Fine.
- St. 21 Schnr. Midge from Fiji recruiting labor. W.S.E. Fine. Left 27th with 37 recruits.

AUGUST

- M. 6th Finished & paid for copra house. W.S.E. Fine.
- /n.d./ Commenced making copra. W.S.E. Rain squalls.
- St. 11th. Chinaman's woman came & received from me balance of a/c \$2.50 also 2 Meat & 4 yds Ribbon. Paid natives for work for week commencing 6th. W.S. to S.E. Squally.
- M. 13th. Vessel off N. End supposed to be from Honolulu for labor. W.S. Fine.
- 16th. Patience from Fiji with returned labor & for recruits. Frank from South End. W.S. Squally.
- 27th. Arrived, Ariel, Cap Kustel, shipped copra.

- 28th. Shipping copra aboard Ariel.
 29th. Do Do Do Do
 30th. Ariel sailed. Wind WNE. Fine

SEPTEMBER

- 18th. Schnr Midge arrived from Fiji with returned labor. W.S.E. Fine
 26th. George Noble arrived from Sydney also German 3 Masted Schnr Estella Trading thro the Group. W.S.E. Fine.
 27th. German Schnr Estella departed. George Noble drifted from her anchorage. Midge departed for Onotoa. Very strong N.E. Wind with heavy rain squalls.
 29th. George Noble departed. W.S.E. Fine.

OCTOBER

- 14th. French Barque from Tahiti with returned labor also to recruit labor for Tahiti, recruited 30 departed 17th. W.S. Fine.
 18th. Minnie Hare from Fiji for labor. W.E. Also Kalona from Honolulu for labor. None.
 22. Minnie Hare departed with no labor from this Island. W.S.E. Fine
 31st. Arrived Schnr Three Cheers from Henderson McFarlane & Co. W.E. Fine.

NOVEMBER

- 1st. Three Cheers left. W.E. Fine.
 17th. Ketch Patience from Fiji for Labor, Cap Johnson. Govt Agent Mr. Kent. W.E. Fine
 27th. Ketch Patience left for Onotoa, with 20 $\frac{1}{2}$ labor /?/ from this Island. W.N.E. Fine.

DECEMBER

- 1st. Whaler sighted name unknown. W.N.E. Fine
 4th. Natives commenced bringing copra for fine.
 8th. Ariel arrived shipped no copra. Left same day.

JANUARY 1884.

- 9th. N.Z. Schooner for the copra for fine. /sic/ Strong N.W. winds with rain. Ransom Cap Harris Mr. Dummett Supercargo. Also Whaler.
 10th. Schnr Julia of Honolulu wrecked on Nukunau. Strong W. Winds. Rain.
 21. Three Masted Schnr Estelle /sic/ from Jelcut /sic/ trading. W. Variable. Fine.
 22. J.W. Sever /sic - Seaver/ from Samoa trading. W. Variable.

FEBRUARY 1884.

- 14th. 3 masted Schnr Estelle trading with Missionaries.
 15th. Schooner Ransom passed this Island. V.N.N.E. Rain. George Noble called, left same day.
 16th. Frank from South End. Estelle still here. W.N.E. Fair.
 17th. Missionaries unable to hold services on account of trading vessel Estelle being here and the business of trading by Teachers not completed until late on Sunday morning. W.N.E. Squally.

APRIL 8th.

- Shark fins brought for sale, refused to buy unless they also traded for cebra. /sic/ W.S.E. Fine
 10. Eclipse of moon 11:45. W.S.E. Fine.

- 12th. Commenced trading for shark fins. W.E. Fine
- 13th. Kaluna /sic/ from Honolulu for labor, got none. W.E. Fine.
- 15th. Kaluna departed. W.E. Fine.
- 21st. Deputation from Kaubure requesting me to drill policemen. Commenced drilling this morning. Strong N.W. Wind.
- 22nd. Police drill at 8 oclock. W.N.W. R Squalls.
- 23rd. Strong N.W. Rain Squalls during night.
- 27th. Ketch Patience from Fiji with return labor. 20 for this Island. Wanting no recruits. Trading for copra. W.N.

MAY 2nd.

Commenced trading with Natives for madeup Copra. W.E.

- 4th. Annie F. Briggs, no copra.

1884 - May 6th.

Noticed a difference /sic/ with Natives in trading. Before today they were satisfied with my pay for copra. Somebody under-selling. Wind E. Fine.

- 7th. George Noble arrived last evening. W.E. Fine.
- 9th. N.Z. Vessel Ransom, left same day.
- 16th. Native came with 10 nuts for sale, refused to buy. Strong S. Wind last night with heavy rain.
- 20th. 1 Foul /sic/ stolen.

JUNE

- 17th. Three chickens stolen since 7 oclock this morning.
- 18th. Sohr Midge from Fiji with 8 for labor, also H.M.S. Dart Commander Moore.
- 21st. Midge left. W.S.W. Fine.

- 23rd. N.Z. Schnr Ransom still here, arrived 21st.
 23rd. Ariel arrived. Wind S.E. Fine.
 27th. Ariel departed, shipped 12,155 lbs. Cobra /sic/

JULY

- 9th. Small German Schnr trading with natives.
 11th. German Schnr. left. V.S. Fine.

JULY 14

Hen & six chickens stolen by Natives.

AUGUST

- 4th. Schnr Taviuni, Cap. German. From Fiji trading
 6th. Soap stolen
 7th. Annie P. Briggs, Trading. (Eric left)
 16th. Flag Halyards stolen.
 23rd. Schnr Futuna from Samoa for Labor.
 28. Three fouls /sic/ stolen. Futuna still here.
 Septr. 6th. Leather belt stolen from House by Natives.

SEPTEMBER

- 21st. George Noble, Chinic Firm. Departed 23rd.

OCTOBER

- 1st. (Annie P. Briggs, Trading (Eric Returned)
 (shipped 10,907 lbs copra (Teraiti left)
 4th. Three Hens stolen while sitting /sic/

- 5th. Arrived Schnr Name not known did not call here, supposed to be Kaluna wrecked on Nukunau /?/
- 13th. Chopping board stolen by Natives.
- 25th. Hen stolen while sitting
- October 28th Schnr Midge from Fiji Trading.

Missionary at Middle station in difficulty with Natives on account of having improper connexion with a married woman whose husband is absent having gone to Fiji. On investigating the matter it was shown that this is the second time the same young woman has conceived by the same missionary, the first she was persuaded by him to get rid of as many of these people do, this second they were not fortunate enough to conceal /sic/ the state of affairs hence the difficulty. During the investigation the Missionary had to acknowledge having cohabited with the woman.

NOVEMBER

- 23rd. The Native who has been trained by the Samoan teacher has for sometime been holding the office of schoolmaster and assistant preacher or curate, but it has transpired today that he has been in the habit of cohabiting with his female /sic/ scholars thro the daughter of a native Teketa by name who has for sometime resisted his efforts to seduce her, but on the night of the 22nd he managed to carry out his designs upon her by entering the place in which she was sleeping in company with other girls who are under the especial training of the Missionary. In the morning she made known to her mother what had occurred. The father has threatened to kill the girl. The Kaubure has met and imposed a fine of a piece of land upon the young Christian. During the investigation it transpired that he has been performing the same office for many of his lady scholars.
- 27th. Schnr Passed steering S. Estelle.

DECEMBER

- 3rd. George Noble from Sydney. Strong Variable Wind. Called on her road from leeward home.

JANUARY 1885.

14th. Tuaruta married at middle mission.

FEBRUARY

25th. Schnr Estelle from Jelout /sic/ trading

26 Schnr Estelle departed.

April 30. Found about 2 lbs of stone brought in a basket of copra.

MAY.

4th. The Missionary of middle station again in trouble, being found cohabiting with the young school girls. This time he was not satisfied with one at a time. Nothing less than two would satisfy him. They were discovered by his wife in the mosquito screen, when she called on Natives who also found them there, no mistake this time, but I suppose he will find some means to buy over the Natives to silence as he has before done. It seems strange that he does not sleep with his own wife, but I suppose he has the use of so many school girls so much younger than his own wife that he can dispence /sic/ with her company at night.

11. H. Meader from Nukunau on a visit.

14. Three Masted Schnr G. Noble

JUNE 1885.

2nd. Three masted Schnr Estelle trading, Cap Schnyder /sic/ shipped 7 departed.

12th. A Meeting of the three big houses to decide what should be done to a man who had murdered a woman, missionarys /sic/ present. It was decided to execute the native at the expiration of three days, giving him time to make his peace with God.

21st. Arrived Schnr Ranson from N.Z. also Schnr Metauto /sic/ from Ellis Group.

- 22nd. All Island police turned out to hunt up the Native who has been hidden away since 12th inst., it has been decided to kill him for killing a woman.
- 27th. H.Z. Schnr Myrtle, trading for Labor. /sic/

JULY

- 1st. N.Z. Schnr Torea, trading.
- 4th. W.H. Sever, trading.
- 10th. Boy stabbed by Native, died 16th. Murderer escaped in canoe.
- 23rd. Barque Brarile /sic/ from Samoa for Labor & trading for copra.

AUGUST

- 1st. Schnr. Midge from Fiji with return labor wanting no recruits. Captn Cart, Gov Agent Mr. Lockharat /sic/

SEPTEMBER 1885

- 20th. Three masted Schnr Estelle
- 24th. Partial Eclipse of the moon, noticed at 7 P.M.

OCTOBER

- 6th. Schnr Matautu trading.
- 13th. Mission Barque John Williams
- 14th. Mission Barque John Williams departed taking the naughty Missionary Lutero from here.
- 17th. George Noble from Sydney.
- 20th. " " departed Messrs Buckland & Walsh passengers

NOVEMBER

- 9th. Schnr Futuna for labor.

- 20th. 3 Masted Schnr from Honolulu with Labor. Small Schnr Silisen.
- 22nd. Took stock of Fouls /sic/ found 11 Hens & 36 chicken had been stolen within 3 months.
30. Midge from Fiji with labor.

Peru August 12 1889
To 7 yds Print, \$175 in copra

/N.B. Above two lines, in a different hand, appear at this point in the sequence of the journal. Note the 7's. RPG/

JANUARY 1886

- 26th. Caught two men stealing copra from my yard they being engaged to work making up the nuts. They planted the copra in a hole until evening then brought it to me for sale. I bought it for tobacco then examined it and found it was the copra I had marked with my knife when I found it hidden, therefore the men who sold me the copra were the men who hid it and stole it.

FEBRUARY

- 1st. Toromon the man who stole copra from my yard fined by Kaubure 2000 cocoa nuts today 1000 of which is to be brought to me.
23. Black Hen & 6 chicken stolen.
27. 2 White chicken stolen.

MARCH

7. Estelle arrived from Jelcut /sic/. 5th General Segel from Honolulu
- 30th. Finished thatching dwelling & copra houses, paid Natives for work \$20.

APRIL

- 14th. Natives commenced trading with me, having stopped trading here from 10th June 1885.

- 24th. Basket copra belonging to Toperu brought by Abira containing stones (subject for Kaubure).
- 25th. Three Cheers, Cap Robinson - Mr. Baker & Mr. J. Mortensen passengers.

MAY 1886.

22. Zinc bucket stolen from house.
- 30th. During my absence from my trading station today the police came and stationed themselves in my yard, house & loft, awaiting my return from the Schnr Ebon with which vessel I was doing business. Last night the captain invited me to visit the vessel for the purpose of selecting the trade & provisions I required as he was anxious to get them sent ashore by boat in the morning, so as to be able to proceed on his voyage as soon as possible. The police were sent by Kaubure to impose a fine of 200 sticks of tobacco (NZ), 100 to be paid by me, and 100 by the other trader from the Station on South End. The reason being given for the fine is that it being Sunday we had no right to go off to a vessel. N.B. This law has been made, but the trader has not been made acquainted with it, he is allowed to break it and then fined for doing so. We have gone off to other vessels within the last three months & nothing has been said, but the fact is the Kaubure is out of tobacco and wish to get some cheap smoking if possible. I & Volleiro /sic/ have refused to pay the fine.

JUNE 1886.

- 12th. H.B.M. Ship Miranda arrived Commander Eustace Rooke. Commander landed, visited Samoan Teacher & Kaubure, left same evening. While on shore the Commander rectified a little misunderstanding between European traders and Natives relative to going off to vessels on Sunday. Commander convinced them it was absolutely necessary for traders to visit vessels with which they were doing business but not to ship produce on that day by natives of the Island.
- 20th. Three Masted Schnr Estelle from Jaluet /sic/ arrived.
24. Left middle anchorage for S. End.

JULY 1886.

14 Matauto /sic/

20th. Schnr Fluor de Lis /sic/ (Cap Kustel) shipped 4,223 Lbs Copra.

AUGUST

12th. Schnr Jenny Walker from Fannig's /sic/ Island for labour /sic/ & Cutter Daphne from N.Z. for Marjoru /sic/ /N.B. He usually wrote "labor" - RPG/

SEPTEMBER

1st. Schnr Fleur de Lis trading

2. Schnr Estelle trading.

9th. Mission Barque John Williams. Revd W.H. Wilson.

Sept. 24. George Noble from Sydney.

OCTOBER

12. N.Z. Brigtno Flying Fish

15. Schnr Futuna with & for Labour.

16. " Matautu trading.

20. " Futuna at anchor, trouble with Natives, on account of boy who went in the mate's boat, of his own free will, to go to Samoa. The mate on going again on shore was pounced upon by natives of South End, made fast, and kept so until boy was sent ashore. Both myself and the trader at the S. End asked the boy on board if he came on board willingly in the boat, and if he wished to go to Samoa and to both questions his answer was yes. He also refused to go ashore with his father who came aboard to try and persuade him from going away in the vessel. Captain Janson on going on shore was also retained forceably /sic/ until by /sic - boy/ came ashore.

- 29th. A man found dead in the bush this morning, well cut up, Kaubure man, supposed to be murdered by some fellow who has been fined.
- /n.d./ Two men who were suspected of killing the Kaubure man have been shot, there being no proof that they did the deed.
- /n.d./ American Schnr Trading Cap. Milander

NOVEMBER

- 19th. Schnr Elizabeth from Fiji with returned labour.

JANUARY 1887.

- 13th. Schnr Matautu from Samoa
- 17th. Estelle from Juliet /sic/

FEBRUARY

- 17th. Schnr sighted did not call here.
- 26th. Schnr Elizabeth from Fiji with and for labour recruited

MARCH

- 28th. Schnr Estelle

APRIL

23. Fleur de Lis 6,777 Lbs.
- 30th. George Noble (June 21 Matautu)
- 4 July. Torea Mr. Hird S.C.
- August 3d. Jerry about 6 weeks.
29. Ika Vuka N.Z. Mr. Keesling S.C. Cap Robinson

SEPTEMBER

- 2nd. George Noble
- 14th. Jenny Walker from Juelit /sic/ Chartd.
- 15th. Tiernin Schnr S.F. (300 Nuts Toromon Fine
- 26th. John Williams L.M.S. left 27 Eve.

OCTOBER

- 29th. Three Masted Schnr G. Noble

NOVR.

2. Visit from Kaubure requesting me not to sell grog to Natives.
- 18th. Fiji Schnr Midge with return labour.

DECR.

- 12th. Schnr Eauloise /sic/ Captain Arnand, M. Cattet agent from Tahiti with return labor. Two returns for this Island.
13. Matautu from Samoa. Lutero gone /??/

1888.

- April 17th. Copra House broken into by Natives and a large quantity of copra stolen tonight.

NOTES ON THIS JOURNAL

Although there is no title page to this journal, it is quite clear that its author lived on Beru. Numerous points indicate this, including the entry after 30 Nov. 1885 and the fact that Frank Volleiro is known to have traded on Beru.

In the Samoa Times for 14 Aug. 1880 there is a published letter from traders of Beru complaining of the trading activities of the LMS pastors stationed on that island. Signatories to the letter were John Prout, William Price, and Frank Volleiro. There is nothing in the letter to suggest that these three were necessarily the only traders in Beru at that time.

In the Samoa Times for 20 Nov. 1880 there are two published replies to the traders' charges, one by Rev. S.H. Davies of the L.M.S. in Samoa and the other by Roger Turpie, master of the 'John Williams'. Both denied finding any evidence in Beru to support the charges of trading brought against the LMS pastors by Prout et al. Davies claimed that some of the stories were spread by an American at Byron's Island (Nukunau) who was known to be a notorious liar. Also, he reported that Price seemed to have inspired the complaint to the Samoa Times and that Prout had alleged subsequently to have discovered that Price was lying and had therefore broken with Price. Turpie claimed that there was too much trading competition on Beru, with the result that some traders had been trying to bribe the pastors to deal with them or to direct business their way.

Trading competition is suggested in this journal in the entry for 6 May 1884, where the author states that someone must have been under-selling him. Since he and his colleague Frank (Frank Volleiro) from the other end of the island were probably trading for the same firm, or otherwise working together, this competition may have come from another source. Turpie's comment in 1880 suggests that there may have been more than three traders on Beru at that time, while from this journal it would appear that in addition to the author and Volleiro there was a Chinese resident (probably a trader) and someone by the name of "Sandy".

Although the author of the journal was probably on Beru in 1880 - in 1885 he speaks of conditions prevailing 13 or 14 years before - it is still doubtful who he was. Other evidence may turn up, but in the meantime it would be worth checking the shipping returns in the Samoa Times or N.Z. Herald to see which firm or firms chartered the vessels with which the journal's author traded. Accounts of voyages in the same newspapers might also give the names of traders in Beru with some details which would identify the author of this journal.

Note that the original journal has been copied verbatim. As the condition of the original was poor, a few words were obliterated. Multiple stops indicate where in the sequence such damage occurred.