

The Friend, vol.32, no.5 (May, 1885), p.33

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RESCUED GILBERT ISLANDERS.

We have been much interested in the narrative going the rounds of the newspapers respecting five Gilbert Islanders picked up at sea by Captain Slocum, of the Northern Light, of New York. This vessel fell in with a boat adrift from Apamana, of the Gilbert Islands, about 600 miles away from land. Seven of the boat's crew had perished during their forty and more days on the open sea. Captain Slocum tried to land them, first on their own island, and failing in that, take them to the Marshall Islands, but failing in that, also, he finally landed them at Yokohama, where they found many friends, among whom a purse of \$500 was raised.

Captain Slocum reports: "A more devout band of Christians I never met. When first hauled out of their cheerless cockle shell, more dead than alive, a man who appeared to be a leader gave thanks to the Almighty with becoming reverence." This old man would not take brandy as a restorative because he was "a missionary."

A free passage on one of the Pacific Mail steamers was given them to San Francisco. In both Oakland and San Francisco, these waifs of the ocean, cheered the friends of missions by their songs and testimony, that it is not a vain and fruitless enterprise to send missionaries to the distant islands of the Pacific. They have now arrived in Honolulu, and are under the Rev. Mr Bingham's care.

Many of our readers, are so familiar with mission-work, that these manifest fruits of the Gilbert Island's-work may not appear as anything strange or remarkable. Not so, however, did this incident appear to Captain Slocum, or to many in Yokohama, San Francisco and Oakland. We rejoice an opportunity has occurred for these poor converted pagans to make known on an elevated stage, that foreign missions are not a failure, but that God's word scattered abroad among the heathen will not return unto Him void.

P.S. - Since penning the above remarks, we have met these wanderers, and were exceedingly pleased with their appearance. It was the privilege of the editor of the Friend to visit the Gilbert Islands in 1861, or twenty-two years ago, and there witness the inhabitants of those islands, in all their debasement and degradation, hence we can fully bear our testimony, in favor of the elevating influence of the great mission-work. We could wish that some of those who are experiencing the rich inheritance of Christianity, and yet defame missions, would visit the heathen in their heathen homes.

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Missionary Herald, March 1884, p.102 ✓

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Abemama is the home of the Gilbert Island waifs the story of whose rescue and return excited so much interest in Japan and in this country last year. (See Missionary Herald for April and June 1883).

It seems that they were converted under the labours of Teraoi, the teacher left by Mr Taylor in 1881, who has been greatly blessed after his wrestle with the principalities and powers of darkness at Abemama.

The old King was also a priest and a medicine man and he called Teraoi to a contest to prove the powers of Jehovah over the pagan gods. The penalty in case of failure was death. The teacher showed the King that his gods were only coral stone and they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spoke. Soon after, while the teacher was with some people singing and praying in an adjacent building, the old man was moved to draw near and listen to the wonderful words of life and Christianity triumphed.

Here Mr Walkup witnessed the novel sight of a christian marriage by Rev. D. Kanoho of forty-six couples, the majority old people, at one ceremony. He also baptized and admitted to the Church one hundred and two persons, among them three of the waifs - the old man and his wife and one of the young men.

The people are all clothed and are apparently prospering in the material things. They have commenced building a stone Church and there are good prospects of spiritual growth.

On Maiana dancing has been the excitement for several months, and only a few of the Church members had resisted the corrupting influence, but the level of the Gospel has been working and forty-six were baptized and admitted to the Church and nineteen couples married.

A notorious white trader has recently been converted and is now helping to build up what once he destroyed.

On Abaiang there are 165 church members, there has been the past year much dancing, rumours of war and disquiet resulting partly from returned labourers and exiles from Hawaiian Islands. But the good seed has been coming up - some in good soil, and 72 have been admitted to the Church.

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