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KAPIOLANI,

THE

HEROINE OF HAWAII:

OR,

A TRIUMPH OF GRACE AT THE SANDWICH ISLANDS.

BY

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KAPIOLANI, THE HEROINE OF HAWAII.

HER EARLY RELIGIOUS HISTORY.

KAPIOLANI belonged to what may be called the nobility of the Hawaiian Islands. She descended from one of the ancient kings of Hawaii. Her husband Naihe had also a noble descent. They had large landed possessions, which bordered on the quiet and beautiful waters of the Kealakekua Bay, and rose into the woodlands of Maunaloa, with one of the most delightful climates and oceanic prospects in the world. The people inhabiting these lands were in the lowest intellectual and social degradation, and both chiefs and vassals were alike dark minded and savage pagans, preferring their grass huts down on the heated lava of the shore, to the verdant and temperate regions above.

When first seen, Kapiolani is said to have been sitting on a rock, oiling her naked person. Her habits, at that time, were intemperate and dissolute. This was in the year 1820, when the Rev. Mr. Thurston commenced his mission at Kailua, sixteen miles northward of the place noted for the death of Captain Cook. The name of this place was Kaawaloa, and there was the home of Naihe and Kapiolani. Liholiho, king of the Sandwich Islands, and his young brother, afterward known as Kamehameha III., then resided at Kailua; and these, with several chiefs, old and young, were daily instructed by Mr. and Mrs. Thurston, so far as the king's intemperate habits would permit. The missionaries were an object of curiosity to the people, and many came to see them from distant parts of the island, which has a circuit of nearly three hundred miles. Kapiolani was among the more frequent visitors, coming in her well-manned, double canoe. Her sprightly, inquisitive mind soon seized upon the outlines of the gospel, and a change came over her morals. She gave herself to study and to the means of grace.

Near the close of the year 1820, the

royal family removed to Honolulu, on the island of Oahu, which soon after became the acknowledged capital of the kingdom; and it was thought prudent for Mr. and Mrs. Thurston, in view of the rude manners of the people, to do the same. Kapiolani and her husband soon followed, and remained at Honolulu till the arrival of the first reinforcement of the mission, in the spring of 1823. In the distribution of the new company, Kapiolani urged the claims of Kailua, and of her own people at Kaawaloa, and great was her joy when it was decided to reoccupy the former place, now under the efficient rule of Kuakini, or (as he was called by American seamen) John Adams. She united with her husband in proffering to Mr. and Mrs. Thurston and to Mr. and Mrs. Ely the best accommodations afforded by their own little schooner. Mrs. Ely could not at that time endure the ordeal of such a voyage. And it is distressing, in these days of steamboats, to think of the suffering endured by our missionary brethren and sisters on board those small, ill-ventilated, closely-crowded native vessels in their protracted voyages, which sometimes were a week and more only from Honolulu to Lahaina, now occupying only a single night.

The king was at that time cherishing the plan, which he lived to execute in part only, of visiting foreign countries, and seeing in person the King of England and the President of the United States. His departure had the effect to throw the government of the islands into better hands — with Kaahumanu at the centre as regent, and Kuakini as governor of the great island of Hawaii. Mr. Thurston found, on his return to Kailua, that the governor had nearly finished a neatly thatched house of worship, with pulpit, and seats around the walls, and mats neatly spread over the intervening ground. This house, as erected by a heathen ruler,

and standing amid the ruins of a *heiau* wherein human victims had not long before been offered, had a special interest.

Meanwhile Kapiolani was putting up a similar house of worship at Kaawaloa, and was importunate for a Christian minister, often weeping, it is said, over the unavoidable delay. If Naihe was not yet in thorough sympathy in these matters with his interesting wife, he did not withhold his coöperation; and an old chief, named Kamakau, who is once spoken of as a poet, seems to have been even more advanced than herself in the Christian life.

Mr. and Mrs. Ely arrived at Kailua in February, 1824, and Naihe, Kapiolani, and Kamakau all united their efforts to secure the new comers for Kaawaloa. They engaged to build them a house, and to furnish them, free of expense, with vegetables, and with fresh water, which had to be brought from a distance. The effort was successful, and the new house of worship was dedicated on the last day of February, Mr. Thurston preaching on the occasion to a large and attentive audience.

In July, Kapiolani had a painful illness. When Mr. Ely expressed anxiety for her recovery, her reply was: "I wish to suffer the will of God patiently. If it be his will, I desire to depart and be with Christ. Then I shall be free from sin. Once I greatly feared death, but Christ has taken away its sting." From this sickness she recovered, to the especial relief of her missionary friends, who expected much from her aid in that part of Hawaii. A Sabbath-evening call she made at Mr. Ely's, soon afterward, will illustrate the lively, intelligent character of her piety. She spoke with great interest of the state of man. "The heavens and earth," she said, "the sun, moon, and stars, the birds and fishes, the seas, mountains, valleys, and rocks, all combine to praise the Lord. But where is man, poor, sinful man? He is mute. God has given him a mouth and knowledge, but man refuses to praise him." As she spoke, she wept. Then she added: "We are dreadfully depraved. We

are justly the objects of God's displeasure. We shall stand speechless at the bar of God."

Not long after her recovery, Kapiolani made a visit of a month at Lahaina, on the island of Maui, beautifully situated on a fertile strip of land, adorned with coconut trees, with lofty hills in the background. The Rev. William Richards was then residing at Lahaina. Her habit was to make a daily call on him and his wife. Her nature was eminently social and seems to have been remarkably sanctified by grace. Speaking of public worship, one Sabbath evening, she said: "I love to go to the house of God, for there I forget the world. When among the chiefs, I hear so much about money, and cloth, and land, and ships, and bargains that I wish to go where I can hear of God, and Christ, and heaven." She continued: "When I hear preaching about Jesus Christ, my spirit goes out to him; and when I hear about God, my spirit goes to God; and when I hear about heaven, my spirit goes up to heaven. It goes, and comes, and then it goes again, and thus it continues to do." She then inquired, with earnestness, whether Mr. Richards did not think she had two souls, saying that it seemed to her she had one good soul and one bad one. "One says, God is very good, and it loves God, prays to him, and loves Jesus Christ, and loves preaching, and loves to talk about good things. The other one says, it does no good to pray to God, and to go to meeting, and keep the Sabbath."

"We shall long remember the last evening that we enjoyed her society," wrote Mr. Richards. "She was expecting soon to return to Hawaii, and I therefore invited her to take tea and spend the evening with us. She came with Keameamahi, who is also one of our best friends. Honorii and Pupuhi joined the circle. The evening was not spent in general conversation. Kapiolani was pleased with nothing that would not come home to the heart. Many enlightened Christians, after leaving a pious circle, would blush at their own coldness could they but have seen how anxious

this chief was to spend her last evening in the best manner possible. At the close of the evening we sung the translation of the hymn, 'Wake Isles of the South,' and then parted with prayer."

"A few years ago," continues this excellent and beloved missionary, now long since numbered with departed saints, "there was scarcely a more degraded person on the islands than Kapiolani. She gave herself up to intemperance and every species of degradation. Now she is in every respect perfectly moral. She always appears in a neat dress, has in many respects adopted the customs of refined society, and is, in her whole character raised so far above the generality of the nation that one can hardly avoid the belief that she was educated among an enlightened people. How gladly would I present this chief to a circle of those who say this people can never be civilized, and let them account for the difference between her former and her present character. There are other similar examples here, but I know of none so striking as this."

KAPIOLANI AT THE GREAT VOLCANO.

Kapiolani is described by one who knew her as having a portly person, black hair, keen black eyes, an engaging countenance, and a warm heart and leading mind. Her costume at this time was that of a Christian matron; her house was furnished with chairs, tables, and beds, and she "used hospitality" according to the Scriptures. She and her husband were patrons of the schools, and discountenanced vice in all its forms, and their house of worship was thronged with attentive hearers.

It was now the fifth or sixth year since this woman had her first opportunity to hear the gospel. In that part of Hawaii, numbering then somewhat more than twenty thousand people, the beams of morning light were quite visible upon the retiring night of paganism. It is even probable that some one or more gospel rays had reached the larger portion of the adult portion of the seventy-five thousand on that large island. The destruction of

idols by the government must needs have awakened some curiosity in respect to the new religion, which had so soon after found its way among them. But there was necessarily a great amount of superstition remaining among the people, especially that which addresses itself to the fears. Indeed we find not a little of such superstition, even now, in the oldest Christian countries. On Hawaii, this centred in Pele, and the marvelous volcano of Kilauea, of which she was the reputed goddess. It was time for something to be done to break the spell of this superstition, and it could best be done by some native of rank and character. The Lord prepares instruments for his own work, and Kapiolani was the honored instrument in this emergency.

Hearing that missionaries had commenced a station at Hilo, on the opposite side of the island, she resolved to visit them, though it involved a journey on foot of a hundred miles over a rough and most fatiguing way. And as Kilauea was on the route, it was her purpose to brave the wrath of Pele, and give a practical demonstration of her own belief, that the Jehovah of Christianity was the only God of the Volcano. In this act of Christian heroism she rose far above the ideas and sentiments of her countrymen, and, indeed, above those of her own husband, Naihe, who joined with the multitudes of others in endeavoring to dissuade her from so rash an enterprise. The destruction of the idols and of the *tabu* had done nothing toward giving the people a new religion. It was the general sentiment that her presumptuous invasion of the realms of Pele would be attended with fatal consequences. Her response was the same to all — of a calm determination to execute her purpose. When approaching the regions of the volcano, she was met by a priestess of Pele, and warned to stop. The warnings of the pretended prophetess were disregarded, and to a letter from the goddess, which she professed to hold in her hand, Kapiolani responded by quotations from Scripture, read out of one of her printed books.

At the crater she found Mr. Goodrich,

one of the youngest missionaries, lately come to Hilo, about thirty miles distant, who had heard of her intended visit, and whom she was glad to see. With her company of about eighty, and Mr. Goodrich, she descended some hundreds of feet to the black ledge, and there, amid some of the most terrible of natural phenomena on the earth's surface, which had ever been appalling to her countrymen, she ate the berries consecrated to Pele, and threw stones into the seething mass. Then she calmly addressed her company. "Jehovah," she said, "is my God. He kindled these fires. I fear not Pele. Should I perish by her anger, then you may fear her power. But if Jehovah save me when breaking through her *tabus*, then must you fear and serve Jehovah. The gods of Hawaii are vain. Great is the goodness of Jehovah in sending missionaries to turn us from these vanities to the living God." They then united in a hymn of praise and bowed in prayer to Jehovah, the Creator and Governor of the world.

Was there not a moral heroism in this act of Kapiolani? When, three years ago, the writer himself stood by this greatest and grandest of volcanoes, and saw the mass of molten lava upheaving and surging over the breadth of half a mile, through the agency of an unseen power, and beheld a group of Christian native attendants seated thoughtfully by themselves on the verge of the abyss, he would not have deemed it strange if even they had some lingerings of the old superstitious fears, though it was then almost forty years after the visit of Kapiolani.

KAPIOLANI AT HOME.

Mr. Ely must have exercised a considerable degree of caution in receiving native converts into the church at Kaawaloa, since Kapiolani was not admitted until after her memorable visit to the volcano, near the close of 1825. The reception of Kamakau, the old chief already mentioned, was still later. So late as the close of 1826, Naihe was not an accepted candidate for admission, though believed to be not far from the kingdom of heaven.

He was habitually kind to the missionaries, and decidedly favorable to their object. Of Kapiolani, Mr. Ely speaks in strong terms of commendation. "She is indeed," he says, "a mother in Israel. No woman on the islands, probably, appears better than she; and perhaps there is no one who has so wholly given himself up to the influence and obedience of the Gospel. I am never at a loss where to find her in any difficulty. She has a steady, firm, decided attachment to the Gospel, and a ready adherence to its precepts marks her conduct. Her house is fitted up in a very decent style, and is kept neat and comfortable. And her hands are daily employed in some useful work."

The village of Kaawaloa, where this noble woman so adorned her Christian profession, was situated on a bed of lava forming a plain of from half a mile to a mile and a half in width, south-east of which are the deep and quiet waters of Kealakekua Bay, and south-west the ocean. A precipice of singular appearance rises hundreds of feet on the north-east, and you perceive that it was once a lofty cataract of molten lava, by which the plain was formed. The arable lands are above and beyond the precipice, and a road, of modern construction, now descends along the face of the precipice to the landing below. When Kapiolani built the stone house still standing in the beautiful region two miles above Kaawaloa, near where the house of the Rev. Mr. Paris is now located, is not known to the writer. He only knows that she removed to that place to accommodate Mr. Ruggles, the successor of Mr. Ely, whose health required a milder temperature than could be found on the black lava of the shore.

But it was in the village of Kaawaloa, on the plain below, that Naihe and Kapiolani resided when they entertained Captain Finch, of the U. S. ship Vincennes, and the Rev. Charles Samuel Stewart, in the autumn of 1829; and there we shall see Kapiolani as she was at her own home. The writer imagines that in the year 1863 he saw some of the forsaken

remains of her dwelling. Her house, as described by Dr. Stewart, at the time of his visit, was a spacious building, inclosed in a neat court by a palisade fence and painted gate, from whence she issued to meet them with the air of a dignified matron, her amiable and benignant face beaming with joy. We can do no less than quote the expressive language of Dr. Stewart:

“This chief,” he says, “more than any other, perhaps, has won our respect and sincere friendship. She is so intelligent, so amiable, so lady-like in her whole character, that no one can become acquainted with her, without feelings of more than ordinary interest and respect; and from all we had known of her, we were not surprised to find the establishment she dwells in equal, if not superior, to any we had before seen—handsomely arranged, well furnished, and neatly kept; with a sitting-room, or hall, in which a nobleman, in such a climate, might be happy to lounge; and bedrooms adjoining, where, in addition to couches which the most fastidious would unhesitatingly occupy, are found mirrors and toilet-tables fitted for the dressing-room of a modern belle.

“It was near tea-time; and in the centre of the hall a large table was laid in a handsome service of china; and, after a short stroll in the hamlet, and the rehearsal of the tragedy of Captain Cook’s death on the rocks at the edge of the water into which he fell, we surrounded it with greater delight than I had before experienced, in observing the improvement that has taken place in the domestic and social habits of the chiefs. Kapiolani presided at the tea-tray, and poured to us as good a cup of that grateful beverage as would have been furnished in a parlor at home; while her husband, at the opposite end, served to those who chose to partake of them, in an equally easy and gentlemanlike manner, a pork-steak and mutton-chop, with nicely fried wheaten cakes. A kind of jumble, composed principally of eggs, sugar, and wheat-flour, made up the entertainment. After the removal of these, a salver with

a bottle of muscadine wine, glasses, and a pitcher of water, was placed on the hospitable board. And every day we remained, similar generous entertainment was spread before various parties from our ship.”

—The Vincennes remained several days; and when, at the close, Captain Finch requested the Rev. Mr. Bingham, who had come with them from Honolulu, to express to Kapiolani the pleasure his visit had afforded him, and his thanks for her hospitality and kindness, her reply was, that the kindness of the visit had all been to herself, to the king and chiefs, and to the nation; “that he might have had some gratification in the visit, but he could have had no happiness like theirs; *for our happiness*, she exclaimed, clasping her hands and pressing them to her bosom, as she lifted her eyes, glistening with tears, to his, *our happiness is the joy of a captive just freed from prison!*”

The closing of this domestic scene was beautifully characteristic. Messrs. Stewart and Bingham were to embark in the Vincennes at a late hour in the evening, and Kapiolani had engaged to send them on board in a canoe. Entering the principal house to take leave, they found the family at evening prayers. The parting scene, at midnight, is thus graphically described by Dr. Stewart:

“The paddlers of the canoe had been aroused from their slumbers; other servants had lighted numerous brilliant torches of the candlenut, tied together in leaves, to accompany us to the water; and I was about giving my parting salutation, when not only Naihe, but Kapiolani also, said, ‘No, not here, not here, but at the shore; and, throwing a mantle around her, attended by her husband, she accompanied us to the surf, where, after many a warm grasp of the hand and a tearful blessing, she remained standing on a point of rock, in bold relief amid the glare of torchlight around her, exclaiming, again and again, as we shoved off, ‘Love to you, Mr. Stewart! love to Mrs. Stewart! love to the captain, and to the king!’ while her handkerchief was waved in repetition of the expression,

long after her voice was lost in the dashing of the water, and till her figure was blended, in the distance, with the group by which she was surrounded."

Naihe died of paralysis on the 29th of December, 1831. He was a kind husband, an able counselor, a valuable coadjutor in the support of schools, a decided magistrate, a firm and steady supporter of good morals and religion, and a constant attendant at the house of God on the Sabbath. Though his Christian experience was less demonstrative than that of his wife, he died in the faith of the gospel; he is believed to have "died in the Lord." Greatly beloved by his people, the loss of his example and authority was much felt.

Mr. Ruggles, after mentioning the death of Naihe, speaks of the bereaved and afflicted wife, as "a precious sister, a burning and shining light in the midst of her benighted countrymen." "The chief desire of her soul," he adds, "seems to be the conversion of sinners, and she is always ready for every good word and work." That the years which intervened between the death of her husband and her own departure, were filled with such acts of usefulness as comported with her state of widowhood, with her advancing years, and (as is probable) with a diminished income, is sufficiently evident in the notice of her death by the Rev. Mr. Forbes, then, and for some years, the missionary in that district. He wrote thus: "Our beloved friend and mother in Christ, Kapiolani, is gone to her rest. She died May 5, 1841. Her end was one of peace, and with decided evidence that your missionaries have not labored in vain. For twenty-four hours and more preceding her death, she was delirious, owing to the violence of the disease, which fell on the brain. This nation has lost one of its brightest ornaments; and speaking thus I disparage no one. Her life was a continual evidence of the ele-

vating and purifying effects of the gospel. She was confessedly the most decided Christian, the most civilized in her manners, and the most thoroughly read in her Bible, of all the chiefs this nation ever had; and it is saying no more than truth to assert, that her equal, in those respects, is not left in the nation. There may be those who had more external polish of manner, but none who combined her excellencies. She is gone to her rest, and we at this station will feel her loss the most. We can not see how it can be repaired."

Experienced Christians, on reading this narrative of Kapiolani, will be conscious of fellowship with her, and will feel no disposition to question her piety. They will recognize in her a signal proof and illustration of the genial and beautiful Christianity introduced by the American missionaries into the Sandwich Islands. Other similar instances there were indeed, and not a few—and the name of Kaahumanu, regent of the Islands, will occur to many—but perhaps in no one case were the graces of Christianity so thoroughly demonstrative as they were in Kapiolani. To set forth the nature of the religion, which obtained such hold upon the island-people in the last generation, through the blessing of God on the labors of those missionaries, one of their best developed converts was naturally selected; and the writer has aimed to give his narrative a simple form, and avoid exaggeration, and the whole is believed to stand on a firm historic basis. The hand of God is to be acknowledged in the consistent, Christian life for twenty years, of this child of a degraded paganism. Hers was the religion of the Puritans, and would to God that all those Islanders, from the highest to the lowest, were like her. We should then behold a nearer approach to a heaven on earth, than earth has afforded since the fall.



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