

Missionary Society. I have lately received a letter from him informing me of the change. The Rev. Dr. Ross has acted as our agent for twelve years. His services have, I believe, been entirely gratuitous. He has transacted the business of this Mission in a satisfactory manner, and has always shown an obliging disposition. I regret that infirm health has obliged him to give up an office, the duties of which he has so long and so well discharged. All letters for this Mission should in future be addressed to the care of our new agent.

Our new stone church was opened about two months ago. The building of it has occupied about 18 months. Its dimensions are 101 feet long by 41 feet wide. To the natives, who have been accustomed only to build small grass houses, it has been a great undertaking. The amount of labour expended on it can hardly be conceived by persons at home where every facility for such an undertaking is enjoyed. The stones were all carried by the natives, and some of them were so large that it required 60 men to remove them to their destination. They were quarried near the building, otherwise we could not have undertaken the work. It is a matter of much thankfulness that the church has been built without any serious accident, though the natives were unaccustomed to such labour. I may be allowed to say that it is a very neat and substantial building, and with the exception of the King's church at Honolulu, Sandwich Islands, I have not seen any equal to it in the islands which I have visited. The walls are plastered outside as well as inside, and are protected from the weather by a verandah which surrounds the building. The floor is plastered and doubly covered with matting. As the natives sit oriental fashion, it is not seated. There is a neat pulpit on one side of the building, and a seat for mission families on the opposite side, also some moveable sofas to accommodate strangers.

The opening of the church was an event of some interest. The Rev J. Copeland preached an excellent and impressive sermon on the occasion, from Luke 19 : 46—"It is written, my house is the house of prayer." The interest of the meeting was enhanced by the presence of five native teachers and their wives, who were to sail for Tana next day. They were set apart by prayer for their arduous duties, and I gave them a short address. The day after the church was opened, the natives, according to their usual custom, made a large collection of food which was cooked, and distributed among the people of the different villages.

I mentioned in a former letter that we intended this year to elect some ruling elders. Seven men have been nominated for the office, and if no objections are brought against them, we expect to ordain them this week. Their names are Simiona, Lathella, Topoe, Nangareng, Nasani, Matanahileth and Niiai. They are all persons in whom I have much confidence. To each of these men I intend to allot a district, and hold monthly meetings with them, and receive their reports about church members and others under their care. Our natives at best are but children, and need all the guardianship that can be bestowed upon them. With the aid of the elders and deacons I trust that my own responsibilities and labours may be somewhat lessened, and that I may be enabled to devote more time to the translation of the scriptures, which has now become an important work. The ordinance of the Lord's Supper will be dispensed next Sabbath, on which occasion we hope to receive about eighteen persons into church communion for the first time, who have been attending a weekly class of candidates from one to two years.

You have probably heard of the return of Mr. and Mrs. Matheson to Tana, after a year's absence. Mr. Paton writes "Mr. and Mrs. Matheson returned from Erromanga in the 'Blue Bell', and after waiting here ten days, I took them to their station in a boat. Mr. M. is not strong. He had a bad turn while here, but he wrote me yesterday that he was well. Some of his people looked sulky, but others seemed delighted with his return, and I saw some of the women clasp Mrs. Matheson in their arms and kiss her as they wept for joy." I have a letter from Mr. M. two weeks after their arrival at their station, but it contains no additional information.

The accounts from Mr. Paton's station are very interesting. He still encounters much opposition and annoyance from the heathen, but God sustains him under all his discouragements. The effects of his labours are now being felt. Many of the Tanese who before opposed christianity are now willing to receive religious