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"SPEAK UNTO THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL, THAT THEY GO FORWARD."—Exodus xiv., 10.

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CONTENTS.

RELIGIOUS INTELLIGENCE—	Rep. of Committee on Missions 12
Kingmill Islands..... 1	MISCELLANEOUS ARTICLES—
Letter from China..... 2	Poetry—A Strong City is our
Meeting of Synod—Abstract of	God..... 13
Minutes..... 3	Geneva—Jewish Negroes..... 14
EDITORIAL NOTICES—	Illustrations of Scripture..... 14
Flamboro' Presbytery..... 8	Visit to Mount Sinai..... 15
The Magazine..... 8	Waking up the Heaters..... 15
The Synod—Letter to Editor..... 9	Japan—Sale of Gods in India..... 15
Presentation..... 10	Child Sacrifices..... 15
ORIGINAL ARTICLES—	A Good Healer..... 16
Psalmody of the Church..... 10	Elliot, Apostle to the Indians..... 16
Translation of Calvin's Com- mentary on 1 Peter..... 12	Receipts..... 16

Religious Intelligence.

THE KINGSMILL ISLANDS.

Character and Productions.—The Kingmill group lies in Micronesia, about 2000 miles south-west from the Hawaiian Islands, on both sides of the equator. It consists of fifteen principal islands, which, according to Mr. Randall, who has lived upon one of them several years, and has visited most of the others, have an aggregate population of 46,500. These islands are of coral; they consist, for the most part, of a narrow reef enclosing a lagoon, and do not anywhere rise more than twenty feet above the ocean. Their first appearance, as one approaches them, is of a long low line of cocoa-nut trees, with which they are densely covered. Pitt's Island, the most northerly of the group, and the first land which the *Caroline* made on its exploring voyage, is in fact two islands, known to the natives as Taritari and Makin, and having a population of 2,000. Taritari is a coral reef from one-eighth to three-fourths of a mile in width, enclosing a lagoon of a triangular shape, which is twenty miles across; Makin is much smaller. Almost the entire vegetable productions of Pitt's Island are the cocoa-nut tree, the pandanus, a coarse kind of taro, and a species of bread-fruit. The two or three goats on the island find barely enough vegetation to keep them alive. The cocoa-nut tree, however, goes far towards making up to the natives the want of everything else. "They use it," says Mr. Snow, "for food, drink, clothing, to build houses, to make boats, for ropes, for sails, for oil, for sweetening, for implements of war and of husbandry, for household utensils, and, if there be any other wants, the cocoa-nut tree, leaf or fruit, in some of their modifications, are made to supply them."

The population is divided into three classes—chiefs, landholders, and slaves. They live in small communities, and regard the oldest of their number as a kind of patriarch. The office of king seems to be hereditary. Polygamy prevails. They are inquisitive, and manifest considerable skill in the construction of their houses, and especially of their boats, which are sometimes sixty feet in length. Their common houses consist simply of a roof supported by posts four or five feet high, and, save that they serve to protect them from the sun and rain, "are about as much out doors as in." Those of the superior rank have sometimes a sleeping-place, or store-house, or both, in the upper part of the roof. In each village is a "stranger's house," where those who are travelling from one part of the island to another, and have no one in particular to call on, may pass the night; where families may live for days, or even weeks, in case their own house is in any way destroyed; where their councils are held; and where they assemble for feasts, dancing and singing, amusements of which they are so passionately fond, that they come together to them, not only from towns, but from islands;—such a building answering for a town-house, tavern, poor-house, council-house, and theatre. Some of them are immensely large; the one at the village where the King resides, is 117 feet long, 65 wide, and about 50 high. The missionaries could not help remarking to each other; "Here are houses for public Christian worship already erected, waiting for those who shall proclaim the word of life."

Religion.—Their religious worship scarcely deserves the name. "They have," says Mr. Sturges, "no temple, no idols, no priests." A

few simple ceremonies by which they hope to secure the favor of the dead, is the whole of their religion. These consist in bringing offerings of cocoa-nuts, at stated times, to a stone, which is set up near each house, and which is regarded rather as a resting-place for the spirits than a god. These offerings are also made, whenever the spirits are supposed to be displeased with them. Their confidence in this loose system of spirit-worship, has been greatly weakened of late, by the prevalence of a fatal sickness, against ravages of which, they saw that the spirits which they worshipped had no power to protect them. The singular custom which they have, of disposing of the dead, must have sprung, it would seem, from this veneration of the departed spirit. The body of the King, who has been dead three weeks; was found in the centre of his house, at Makin, partly covered with a mat, and affording food for flies, except as they were prevented by his many wives and children, who seemed to be taking turns in keeping them away. A fire was kept burning day and night; cocoa-nut oil was often rubbed on the body; wailing was frequent; and this was to continue till the flesh dropped off, when the bones would be cleaned and placed on the loft of the house, or thrown into the sea. The old King's father was kept in this way, several years. At Makin, if not elsewhere, the bodies of all are deposited of in the same manner.

Intercourse with the Natives.—It was a joyful sound, when land was first announced from the mast-head of the *Caroline*. As they drew nearer, and the long line of cocoa-nut trees became visible, they gazed at the sight with intense interest. What reception would they meet with? Would savage violence attempt to surprise them before the morrow; or, if the natives should be found "mild," as Capt. Wilkes represented them, would there be any means of letting them know, that it was not for purposes of trade, but in reference to the "glad tidings" of salvation, that they had come? They "lay to" till morning; but before commencing themselves to sleep, they committed themselves in special prayer to Almighty God. "It was a meeting of no ordinary interest." That an interpreter might be found, that the natives might be inclined to receive them kindly, and that in all their intercourse with them they might be guided by wisdom from above, were their chief requests. They had occasion to remember these prayers, for they were poured into His ear, who has said, "Ye shall not seek me in vain."

On the morrow, as they rounded the southern point of the island, what was their surprise to see a long thatched building, with the English flag flying from the centre! It belonged to Randall & Durant, who have been established there six years, trading in cocoa-nut oil. These men gave them a cordial reception, and favored their object throughout—one of them acting as their interpreter. The natives met them with a "bashful deference," evidently making an "extra effort" for the occasion, by putting new palm-leaf mats, their only dress, about their waists. Wherever they went they were struck with the large number of children, compared with the adults, and with their superior healthiness and beauty. On entering their houses, some of the women were found boiling down the sap of the cocoa-nut tree, to make molasses; others scraping the nut for oil; but most of them sitting idly about. Their hospitality was invariably shown by setting cocoa-nuts and "toddy" before their visitors; and they seemed sorry that they could not eat and drink more. The landing of the wives of the missionaries produced quite a sensation, as only one white woman had ever before been on the island. The demeanor of the natives towards them was "very respectful," except that, when they approached the village of the King, there was a perfect rush to see them, and some of the women run right "across their track, to get a look in the faces" of the ladies of the party, when they would "fly off again in a sort of rapture." This village is about three miles from where they landed, on the shore of the lagoon—the way to it, except for about a mile over a sandy beach, being through cocoa-nut groves. Two patches were interspersed among the houses. The house of the King scarcely differed from the rest. As the meeting had been appointed to consider the matter of having missionaries come and teach them the worship of the true God, a large number had assembled—not less, in the opinion of Mr. Clark, than 500. The King, a lad about fourteen, having on a dirty shirt, trousers and hat, was seated on a platform raised by logs about a foot from the ground; before him lay his four uncles, "great, fat, lubberly-looking fellows;" around was a "mass of men, women and children, walking, standing, sitting, lying, jabbering, with their eyes all directed to the new comers." After being introduced, the women, at