

**A LETTER FROM THE RIGHT REV. ALFRED
WILLIS, BISHOP OF HONOLULU, TO ALL
FRIENDS OF THE
HAWAIIAN MISSION: AND A BALANCE
SHEET OF ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEARS
1874, 1875, AND PART OF 1876**

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A Letter from the Right Rev. Alfred Willis, Bishop of Honolulu, to All Friends of the Hawaiian Mission: And a Balance Sheet of Accounts for the Years 1874, 1875, and Part of 1876 by Alfred Willis

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ALFRED WILLIS

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1874, 1875, AND PART OF 1876.

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1877.



A LETTER,

&c.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

I have allowed a longer time to elapse without sending you a second report of the Mission than I ever intended. But the truth is, the months have flown by, and left so little to record, beyond that of an uneventful round of work, and changes have followed one another so rapidly, that there would have been very little satisfaction in expressing an opinion on passing events, or even attempting to put them on record, when a change of circumstances might have entirely altered the aspect of affairs before my letter was in type.

Before the close of last year, I had, however, resolved on sending you a report of the last two years, with a balance-sheet of the receipts and expenditure of the fund with which your generosity has supplied me, and had already commenced my letter, when the sad intelligence reached the Islands of the decease of Miss Sellon, to whom this Mission is so deeply indebted. The position in which the Mission is left by her departure is a very serious one, and I can only trust that, when the circumstances are fully known, new friends may come forward to sustain a Mission for which she did so much. Her munificence saved the Mission from collapse after the resignation of the See by my predecessor, Bishop Staley, before I was consecrated to it. At that time she made herself responsible for the sum of £400 per annum to the Mission funds for five years, and this noble contribution has been the mainstay of the Special Fund, on which I have chiefly depended for fulfilling my obligations to the Clergy, and for defraying the general expenses of the Mission.

But this is not the only loss the Mission sustains. You are aware that there are on these Islands two most excellent institutions, both founded by Miss Sellon, and carried on by the Devonport Sisters—St. Andrew's Priory at Honolulu, and the School of St. Cross, Lahaina. If I could give you a description of the social condition of these Islands—the style of domestic life still followed by the majority of the natives, unchanged by their nominal Christianity, which provides not a single safeguard for female chastity; the deadness of the moral sense of the ordinary Hawaiian, his utter indifference to his daughter's prostitution—you would understand of what incalculable value these Schools are to the Hawaiian race. There are, I am thankful to say, Hawaiians who have risen out of this degradation, whose lives are pure, and who long for a better state of things, and bless the memory of Miss Sellon. They see that the only hope of staying the present decrease

of the population is by preserving the chastity of their daughters from violation ; and this can only be done by Boarding Schools, such as those which Miss Sellon has founded. The father of one of the pupils of St. Cross, of unblemished character, who has done credit to her training, and is now an assistant in the School, has told me frequently, that he wished his daughter to remain in the School until she should be married.

These few words, to which it is unnecessary to add more, will, I think, be sufficient to show you that no greater calamity could befall the Mission than the closing of one of these Schools. In consequence of Miss Sellon's decease, St. Cross can no longer be carried on by the Sisters. Sister Bertha, who has hitherto had charge of St. Andrew's Priory, has to return to England immediately, as Miss Sellon's successor ; and Eldress Phoebe has to come to Honolulu with Sister Mary Clara, to take the superintendence of St. Andrew's Priory. On January 8th, the day on which the sad tidings of Miss Sellon's death arrived, I learned to my sorrow that St. Cross must be given up, and the property sold. Happily, I had already appointed the Rev. S. H. Davis, who has hitherto been at Kona on Hawaii, to take charge of the Mission at Lahaina, which has been without a Pastor since the death, on St. Bartholomew's Day, of the Rev. C. Searle, whom I appointed in the previous April. It immediately occurred to me that Mr. and Mrs. Davis would carry on the institution. I have therefore become the purchaser, and have made arrangements so that the School will pass into their hands, without any break, or even temporary dismissal of the scholars.

This is eminently satisfactory, and I cannot but recognize the guidance of the Divine Head of the Church, in so overruling events as to make it possible for the institution to be saved. But at the same time I must put before you that this transaction is one which exhausts my already impoverished treasury, and this is a most serious and anxious matter in view of the greatly diminished income that will flow into it, unless the amount of contributions is very much enlarged. I have, however, full confidence that when the position of the Mission is realised, a new sympathy will be awakened, and funds will be forthcoming to relieve me from my present anxiety. But this hope may prove illusory. Let me, therefore, earnestly beg of all who are subscribers not to wait till the end of the year before paying their subscriptions, but bear in mind that at the end of each quarter I have obligations to meet for which I depend on the Special Fund.

My hope is that an endowment for the See may soon be raised. I am about to issue an appeal in this behalf, which I trust will meet with a liberal response. The endowment fund, however, must not be allowed to interfere with subscriptions to the Special Fund for the current expenses of the Mission.

My belief remains unshaken, in spite of the croaking of adversaries and lukewarm friends, that there is a future in store for the Church in these Islands, although at present we see but little fruit of our labours. Even now, in this day of sorrow and gloom, the edges of the dark cloud are bright with promise of the future.

But before that future can be realized, and the Church gathers the population of these Islands into her bosom, two things are needful. First, the Church must be put on a wider and broader basis than it is at present; and secondly, we must have a body of Clergy, who by long residence in the Islands, and familiarity with the language and characteristics of the people, can have that sympathy with them which is necessary before any real influence with them can be hoped for.

But neither of these can be attained without increased funds. To take the second point first, change, change, change, has been the lot of this Mission from its outset, and still continues, as a comparison of the names of my fellow-workers published in my last printed letter with those of my present staff will too plainly testify. One cause of these changes has been the great amount of uncertainty attaching to stipends, which are necessarily made dependent partly on local subscriptions. I do not think that this cause would have operated by itself, were it not for our neighbourhood to the Colonies, and the inducement which they offer to men to labour among their own countrymen and under their own flag. There is, doubtless, an isolation in these Islands, and a want of sympathy with their work on the part of a large number of the residents, which to many minds is a very great trial; and, though there are no physical privations to be endured, as in a northern climate, makes it none the less necessary for any who would do real work here in the Master's service to be ready to endure hardness.

What I mean will become more clear to you, when I come to discuss the second point I mentioned—the necessity of placing the Mission on a broader basis. In my last letter I gave you a sketch of the points that we occupy in the Islands, together with a map, from which you would judge how small, comparatively, is the area in which the Church is as yet represented. Since then there has been but little alteration. The buildings I was then contemplating at Waialua, on Oahu, have been erected, and the School at Kapalana on the outskirts of Honolulu opened. I have not yet been able to commence a Mission at Waiohinu, on the Island of Hawaii, where our presence is much desired. But I can report a movement in Kohala in the north of the Island, to obtain the ministrations of the Church. An American Clergyman is now in correspondence with me, who will, I hope, be eventually appointed to one of these districts.

Now, if you will look at the map, and consider that the Congregational system has been so thoroughly organised through the Islands, that every little village has its church and native minister, supported by the people, it will be clear to you what a delicate mission is entrusted to the Church. For whilst on the one hand we long to impart to them the fulness of the Gospel, which they have only imperfectly received, great care has to be taken lest we weaken the hold of the people upon such truth as they already have. It is weak enough already, and the influence of the foreigners amongst them is in the direction of a general indifference to religion. It is not the present generation that will be brought into the Church. But if we could plant Schools throughout the Islands, the rising generation might be trained in purer morals, and a truer knowledge of the way of life.

If there are any who still entertain the idea, which I trust is exploded, that the Church should not enter into fields already occupied by other forms of Christianity, all I can say is, Come and see for yourself what these other forms are, and what is their result, and you will no longer wish to qualify the command of our Saviour to His Apostles, to go into *all* the world. As an organization, Congregationalism here is admirable, but it has no elements of self-perpetuation, and as a system it is rotten to the core. It is no longer under the control of the American Missionaries who planted it. Its ministers are men of no training, and, with few exceptions, of no character. The discourses delivered from their pulpits are mostly on political topics. Their communions are marked by a shocking irreverence, and in some places molasses and water are still substituted for wine.

As a moral agent it is powerless to improve the people. The Puritan strictness which originally inveighed against the use of tobacco and spirits, as a sin equally reprehensible with adultery, has had no other result than to cause the native to commit adultery with as easy a conscience as he smokes his pipe and drinks his gin when he can get it. The attempt of the Puritan missionaries to enforce these tabus of tobacco and rum upon the natives as ordinances of the Gospel, while they could not restrain their own children, encouraged the people in hypocrisy, and the real blight on the life of the nation went on unchecked. To this day the ancient unnatural custom which allows a woman to have two husbands, a custom which lies at the root of the rapid decline of the race, is connived at. Men who are known to be guilty of it are held in honour, and are among the deacons of the native churches.

Whilst Congregationalism is thus powerless to regenerate the nation, and seems almost to have abandoned the effort, the belief in the gods their fathers worshipped, which was never wholly given up, is re-asserting itself, and the kahunas, in whom the office, an hereditary one, of priest and doctor is combined, are

exercising an increasing influence over the native mind. Where they are not believed in, they are feared. The belief that they have the power of praying to death lies at the root of this fear, and if, as I have very little doubt, they have, at least in former times, accomplished the death of their victims by secret poisoning or other means, it can be no matter of surprise that this fear should be deeply rooted. There is no doubt that in old times the kahunas had considerable skill both in medicine and surgery, and it is much to be regretted that their uses of the herbs of the country was not carefully investigated and treasured up. The knowledge that they possessed is now nearly all lost; or if the properties of a plant continue to be known, the present kahunas are either ignorant of the mode of preparation, or of the proportions in which it should be administered. In such hands the practice of medicine is often attended with fatal results. Nevertheless, the natives have more faith in their own kahunas than in the foreign practitioner. The kahunas, for the sake of their own credit, make a very convenient division of diseases into native and foreign. They allow that the foreign disease requires the foreign doctor. When a patient dies, the friends are consoled by the comforting assurance that he had two diseases, and, though cured of the native complaint, he had succumbed to the *foreign!* Mixed up with a bona-fide practice of such knowledge as they have on the part of some, there is a great deal of humbug and trading on superstition on the part of others. A mother consulted a kahuna—a veritable witch, the kahunas being of both sexes—about her sick baby, and was told to cut off a lock of her hair, and give it the ashes. The infant was choked. A member of our illustrious legislature, in many ways an intelligent man, who was suffering from a disordered liver, sent for a kahuna. He was told that his life was in imminent danger, and that he could never get well in his own house, *because one of the uprights of his grass house was crooked.* The sick man left immediately. Just as in England and America it is not the ignorant, but those who are at once intelligent and irreligious, who become the votaries of Spiritualism, and dupes of impostors; so here it is not only among those who have made the least advance from their original condition, and have no acquaintance with English, but quite as much among those who have had a fair education, and can speak our language, that superstition is rife. There is in human nature a principle of faith, which must have something to rest upon; and if it be not guided by the truth, it must rest upon lies. The quickening of the intellect, and the acquisition of knowledge cannot save the soul from becoming the victim of "strong delusions, that it should believe a lie;" and when we see Englishmen and Americans who have left the Faith sinking down to the spiritual level of the tribes of Central Africa, who, having no belief in a Supreme Being, are firm believers in sorcery and magic, the return of the Hawaiian to his superstition ought to be no matter of