FROM THE GILBERT ISLANDS TO FIJI.

"Wet, dull, cloudy day; sea wobbly, no wind, squalls of rain. In latitude 8° 20′ South, on the edge of 'doldrum's'' region, chilly, uncomfortable weather."

So reads my journal for the first of October. One month ago we were in Lat. 4° North, and had just such a day as described above. In the belt between these two lines lies an area where a perpetual, almost stormless, super-tropical climate prevails. The "heat equator" passes midway through this region which is bounded by longitude 150° W and 175° E of Greenwich. There is no other region like it on the globe, and its sunny skies, the wonderful clearness of its ocean depths, and the low-lying cluster of coral islands in its midst always strike one with a feeling of surprise and admiration.

We have passed now across the southern limit of this enchanted area, and are doing our best to get by the Ellice group. It is off to the eastward of us, and though we do not see any of them, yet we know that they are not far away, for numerous birds that resort to them at night are flying about the schooner. One of them settled upon the rail and was captured. We found his tail feathers had been clipped quite short, and when one let him go, he "steered quite wild," as the Captain remarked.

Then it came on calm, the next day calmer, the next calmest of all. We had run into one calm streak before, but that was stormy weather compared to this. It was so calm that all the sails were run down, and we lay

"As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean."

There was no air stirring. Even with a fan we couldn't set it in motion, and the stove-pipe in the cook's caboose refused to "draw." A strong swell set in, and, O! how the Julia did roll. There was nothing to steady her, even a hand-spike run out of a scupper-hole failing to keep her on an even keel. I asked Captain T. if he ever saw a vessel roll as the Julia did.

"Roll," said he, bracing against the house as the Julia laid down on her right side. "Roll, why when I was in the old bark Ocean she would roll and jump so as to flip the casks right out of their lashings and end them over on deck."

By this time the Julia was lying (I don't say the Captain was) on her left side, and everything moveable was piled up in the port scuppers.

On the 6th a light breeze sprang up, and, after bringing us within sight of Marshal's Island, Ellice group, allowed us to work to the south and east, and by the 14th increased to half a gale. We were "close hauled" while it lasted, and the Julia made fine work of it plunging and wallowing about, knocking all the head boards in on both bows, loosening some copper, and treating us to a merry mad-cap waltz and galop. In the midst of it all a school of porpoises came around us, and one of the men harpooned a fine specimen. He was something over six feet long, and as strong as a bull. Fortunately the harpoon had cut into his heart, so that his struggles were short-lived.

In colder latitudes, and after a few months' diet of salt horse, porpoise meat is considered a luxury; and so, with recollections of long-ago enjoyable meals made from this kind of sea beef, we attacked the nicely cooked bits of liver, and highly seasoned force-meat balls the steward had prepared. * * I have said that porpoise was as strong as a bull. He was; and in another sense as strong as an ancient Billy-goat, too. We finished our meal by heaving every particle of him overboard, and it was some days before the dishes that came on the table ceased to smell of porpoise.

We had better success with some albicore that we caught, but it may safely be said that all fish caught off soundings are very dry eating, or are not fit to eat at all.

During the rough weather we could do little more than eat and sleep, both being accomplished under difficulties, inasmuch as one had to hold one's soup plate in one hand, and help themselves with the other, and keep as near the table as circumstances would allow while dining. At night, by dint of practice one could wedge themselves into their beds so as not to "turn out" oftener than the watch did. Those were the days that tried our steward's patience.

It was in vain that he urged that his stove would not remain level long enough for him to make soup. He was told that soup we must have, and added Captain T.—sternly, "A really good steward will have soup even if he has to cook it in the bottom of a ten gallon bucket, and we have to drink it out of a bottle."

All things come to an end sooner or later, and so, on the 20th, our tedious passage from the Gilbert to the Fiji islands virtually ended by our sighting Lanthala on that day.

During this weary three weeks not a word of complaint had come from our turtle. From the time that he was tumbled on board at Kuria up to the day of his death he had preserved his temper and stolid gravity. He became quite domesticated and a familiar object (not to say obstacle) underfoot day and night. He weighed about fifty pounds, and never seemed at all put out or disturbed, no matter how many times any of the crew tripped on his shell and tumbled over him in the night. His favorite pastime during the day was to lie on his stomach in the shade where the deck was damp and cool, and—think. Recollections of his past life must have been the solace of his solitary existence with us; and from the fact of his not getting anything to eat while he was on board the Julia, it is presumable that his mental vision conjured up the cool coral groves in which he was wont to browse upon succulent kelp. In fancy he probably roamed again in those green pasture and saw, in his mind's eye, the brilliantly colored fish disport themselves about him.

Through force of habit, he breathed only at long intervals, lifting up his head about every two minutes to do so, giving a quick gasp as though he had but that instant arrived at the surface of the water, and then subsiding into deep thought again.

In the stillness of the night he must have moved slowly about the deck, for every morning he was found crowded into some odd corner, or lying helpless on his back, having tumbled over in his efforts to scale the bulwarks. Sometimes he was discovered tilted up on edge between the side of the cabin and the rail; but wherever he might be found, however awkward might be the fix he was found in, he never lost his gravity, or looked the least embarrassed. Upon being released, he would sink down upon the wet place provided for him under the shadow of the cook's caboose, and give no signs of life for hours, except to raise his head and gasp.

Our steward understood just how to get along with him, making of him a pet and convenience, keeping him cool during the day with bucket-baths, and in the pensive dog-watch shoving him up against the cook-house, and using his back as a seat while he smoked.

At length the time came when our turtle rounded out his quiet life by being served at our table. In preparing himself for this event, it must have been a source of pride and self-gratification to him to know that his tender flesh and luscious fat was to pass under the hands of one who knew the difference between callipash and callipee. It is well known that if the head of a turtle is removed from the body at one point, it will show signs of nervous energy for some time. And so when our steward, having struck the fatal blow, placed the head upon the top of the cook-house, we could see the eyes blink in quiet satisfaction at the neat manner in which the body was dissected. Once or twice the mouth opened as if the head was about to make some remark, but the life-long habit of taciturnity was strong in death, and the jaws closed again without a sound.

The soup, steaks, cutlets, and force-meat balls the steward evolved from between the two shells of that turtle were particularly good, and the lower shell and flippers, nicely pickled, were relished as long as they lasted.

Hawaiian Trade Again.

[*From the S. F. Merchant.*]

The *Merchant*, in its last issue, dealt with the exhibit of exports to Hawaii from San Francisco in the first half of 1884, and contrasted the figures with those of our exports to other countries. It demonstrated the superior importance of Hawaiian trade to this State, and showed conclusively that such good customers as our Island friends should be well treated, to say the least, by the Pacific Coast. Business men and producers will readily understand the point when we state that in the period mentioned San Francisco exported more merchandise and products of various kinds to Hawaii than to all other countries on the American Continent combined, excluding Mexico and the Dominion; while including Mexico, but exclusive of British Columbia, the Hawaiian Kingdom's purchases came within $204,272 of the grand total. This fact speaks for itself.

In the present issue we propose carrying our comparison a little further. We shall go back to 1883, and take the statistical exhibit for that year, furnished by the National Bureau of Statistics, and attested by that painstaking compiler, Mr. Joseph Nimmo, Jr. In the figures following, we give the aggregate trade, which is the sum of imports and exports:

U. S. Columbia	$12,040,426
Hawaii	12,014,526
Canary and Phillippine Islands	10,912,037
Argentine Republic	9,735,307
Hayti and San Domingo	8,814,000
Venezuela	8,305,429
Porto Rico	7,642,201
Central American States	7,124,782
Portugal (Kingdom)	6,078,512
Denmark and Colonies	5,897,891
Uruguay	5,432,928
Dutch East Indies	5,053,048
British Africa and Gibraltar	4,910,478
French West Indies and Guiana	4,829,933
Austrian Empire	4,764,827
Sweden and Norway	4,655,719
Turkish Empire	3,538,670
Chile	3,296,080
Peru	3,020,812
Dutch West Indies, &c	2,396,062
Greece (Kingdom)	1,322,597

We have thus the fact demonstrated that out of a list of twenty of the principal countries doing business with the United States in the year 1883, only one—the United States of Columbia, to which Panama belongs—equalled the Hawaiian trade. Many of them, although populous countries, fall very far under the volume of Hawaiian business, although its inhabitants did certainly not exceed 70,000 all told last year. The Mexican trade in 1883 aggregated $24,704,743, or double that with Hawaii; but this was mainly caused by the shipment of railroad material and supplies, which was a purely exceptional condition, and may not happen again in many years. Of course we do not mean to disparage Mexican trade. On the contrary, we are gratified to know that it is steadily expanding, and under the stimulus of the proposed treaty of commercial reciprocity, it is certain to increase rapidly. We are simply noting the special feature of the year's trade, and it should not be forgotten that Mexico is our next-door neighbor and has a population of some fifteen million people. Our total trade with Japan, during the year under review, was $18,475,324; but Japan counts thirty-five million inhabitants, while Hawaii had not nearly one hundred thousand. Hongkong and China, with a population of about four hundred millions, traded with the United States during 1883 to the extent of $29,918,300, or about two and a half times more than the little Hawaiian Kingdom.

These comparisons are sufficient to illustrate the point we make, that Hawaii is of greater relative value to the United States in the matter of trade and international exchanges than many other countries about whose prospective trade a very loud outcry has been often raised. We desire our readers to think out the point for themselves. We have given them the requisite data upon which to form a sound opinion, and we count on the support of all intelligent men to a policy which has accomplished such remarkable results from so diminutive a beginning. In 1876, before the treaty went into operation, the total trade with Hawaii was $1,889,355; in 1883, seven years later, it was $12,014,526, as already stated, a seven-fold increase almost. Under the stimulus of active competition and commercial reciprocity, there is no reason why Hawaiian trade should not continue to increase in the same ratio.

The Meridian Conference

The following report of the most important session of this conference is taken from a washington paper:

The International Prime Meridian Conference re-assembled yesterday. A committee was appointed to receive and consider the numerous communications addressed to the conference from all parts of the world upon the subject of a prime meridian. This committee was composed of Prof. Adams, Great Britain; Mr. Hinckeldeyn, Germany; Prof. Abbe, United States; Prof. Kikuchi, Japan, and Mr. Echeverria, Costa Rica.

Mr. Sanford Fleming of Canada made an argument against the adoption of the neutral meridian recommended by the French delegates, and Dr. Cruls of Brazil spoke in favor of it. Upon a vote the proposition to adopt a neutral meridian was defeated. Ayes 3, noes 21—each nation casting a single vote.

"The conference proposes the adoption of a universal day for all purposes for which it may be found convenient, and which shall not interfere with the use of local or other standard times when desirable."

Mr. Rutherford of the United States then renewed his original resolution, which was as follows:

"The conference proposes to the Governments here represented the adoption of the meridian passing through the center of the transit instruments at the Observatory of Greenwich as the initial meridian for longitude."

Mr. Fleming of Canada moved as an amendment that the conference adopt the 180th degree of longitude west or east from Greenwich as the prime mesidian, but the other delegates from Great Britain opposed this amendment, and it was lost.

Mr. Valera, the Spanish Minister, stated that he had been instructed by his Government in voting for the meridian of Greenwich to say that he hoped the metrical system of weights and measures would be adopted by England, the United States, and the other nations here represented as recommended by the conference at Rome.

Gen. Strochey of Great Britain said he was authorized to state that his country had asked to be allowed to join the metrical convention, and that the metrical system was already recognized by the laws of Great Britain and was in use for scientific purposes. He could not, however, say that it would be adopted under any circumstances as the popular system of weights and measures throughout the Kingdom.

Mr. W. F. Allen of the United States made an argument in behalf of the meridian of Greenwich, and presented the resolutions adopted by the Railroad Convention in Philadelphia protesting against a change of meridian.

Mr. Lefaivre of France said that the meridian of Greenwich was not the scientific meridian; that it implied no progress in any of the sciences, but was merely a commercial standard. Since, therefore, nothing would be gained to science by adopting Greenwich, France could not make a sacrifice of her own meridian, and incur the vast expense consequent upon the adoption of a new one, because she would thereby gain no advantage whatever.

Sir William Thompson, who is delivering lectures in Baltimore, was present yesterday as a guest, and by invitation of the conference, spoke at some length in favor of the adoption of Greenwich. He held that it was purely a matter of convenience, and that Greenwich answered the convenience of the world better than any other standard meridian.

There was an effort made to discuss the subject of the metrical system of weights and measures, but the President stated that as that subject was not referred to in the acts of Congress relating to the conference or in the circulars issued by the President of the United States, it was not a proper subject for present discussion.

Sir Frederick Evans of Great Britain presented a comparative statement showing that the tonnage of shipping controlled by the Greenwich standard of longitude was in round numbers 14,000,000 tons, while that controlled by the Paris standard was only 1,735,000 tons. He also submitted a statement of the number of charts, etc., purchased by nations outside of Great Britain for scientific and commercial purposes, in order to show how largely that meridian is now being used. Mr. Rutherford's resolution in favor of Greenwich as the prime Meridian was adopted, twenty-one nations voting in favor of it, one (San Domingo) against it, and France and Brazil abstaining from voting.

Mr. Rutherford then moved the adoption of the following resolution: "From this meridian (Greenwich) longitude shall be counted in two directions up to 180 degrees, east longitude being plus and west longitude minus."

The Russian Minister spoke in favor of this resolution. Count Lewenhaupt, the Swedish Minister, moved to adopt the fourth resolution of the Roman conference, counting longitude continuously through the whole 360 degrees. Baron von Alvensleben, the German Minister, said that this was a matter of detail, and that it did not make any difference which method was adopted. Juan Pastorin, one of the delegates from Spain, moved as an amendment that longitude be counted westward continuously around the world.

Pending further discussion, the conference adjourned until the next day at 1 o'clock P.M.

The following is a brief account of the proceedings of the following day, taken from a similar source:—

At the meeting of the international prime meridian conference yesterday, a resolution was adopted providing that longitude shall be counted from the meridian of Greenwich in two directions, up to 180 degrees, east longitude plus and west longitude minus. The following resolution was also adopted:

An adjournment was taken until Monday, when the following resolution will be considered:

"This universal day is to be a mean solar day; is to begin for all the world at the moment of mean midnight of the initial meridian, coinciding with the beginning of the civil day and date of that meridian, and is to be counted from zero up to twenty-four hours."

The President will receive the delegates at the white house at noon to-morrow.

For the above extracts we are indebted to Mr. C. J. Lyons, who received them from Professor Alexander.

The Banana Trade Destined to Assume Enormous Proportions.

But Nature's best gift to the tropics is the banana. Humboldt estimates that a piece of land planted with bananas will produce forty-four times as much man-food as the same area planted with potatoes, and while under a combination of all favorable circumstances a North American farmer can rarely raise more than one good crop of potatoes per year, the Mexican banana planter can get three crops a year, and sometimes seven crops in two years, for the period of maturation is a little less than four months.

The banana trade is certainly destined before long to assume enormous proportions. Not only because the plant can be grown and cultivated forty times more easily than any grain or tuber of our frigid latitude, while the fruit is both more palatable and more nutritious, but also because banana eating is apt to become a fixed habit. Besides its nutritious elements, the ripe fruit has a fascinating principle almost as tempting as the lenocinium of certain narcotic drinks; the appetite grows by indulgence. For people like the taste of the first banana, but after getting used to it, fewer can get rid of a chronic hankering after that same by taste, a certain acid developed in the process of curing the fruit.

Even in spite of the enormous price of the luxury, the demand for bananas has heretofore doubled about every five years, since 1860, when the fruit venders of our inland cities began to invest in an occasional cargo. But since the price of wheat, in crossing the Atlantic, increases only two-thirds, there is no reason why bananas in crossing the Rio Grande should become twenty times dearer. In Cincinnati the shoddiest bananas, rotten ones perhaps excepted, cannot be bought for less than three cents apiece, while in Oaxaca a ramo, or bunch, with more than 100 bananas of the very best quality is sold for 2 reals—a little less than 25 cents. Among the planters of the rural districts, ramos of 200 apiece, about the nutritive equivalent of three bushels of Irish potatoes, can be bought for 1 real. In slow-going fruit barges, exposed to the seething sun of the gulf coast, about 20 per cent spoil before they reach the New Orleans market, but refrigerator cars would reduce that risk to a minimum; and I predict that a time will come when the banana store house of our northern cities will rival the dimensions of the Milwaukee granaries.

Weight of American Coin.

Hon. Thomas C. Acton, U. S. Assistant-Treasurer at New York, furnishes the following:

1 lb. avd.	1	cent pieces			=$1.43	— new
" "	2	"	"	(discon.)	1.46	"
" "	3	"	"	.....	7.32	old
" "	5	"	"	.....	4.60	new
" "	10	"	"	silver	18.10	"
" "	25	"	"	"	18.10	"
" "	50	"	"	"	18.10	"
" "	$	standard		"	17.00	"

—*Scientific American.*