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SPIKER SENDS LETTER HOME

FROM FAR-OFF VAVAN, COMES INTERESTING LETTER.

Missionary From La Grande Writes of Work on Pacific Islands.

Writing from Haalabull, Vavan, Friendly Island, under date of July 20, Joseph Spiker, a La Grande man who a year or so ago was sent to Pacific Ocean Islands as a missionary for the L. D. S. church, advises his old time friend, O. E. Silverthorn of many interesting facts concerning himself and his location. At the time of his last letter he was at Samoa, but he is on the Friendly group now. Among other things, Mr. Spiker writes:

Well, Mr. Silverthorn, I received the nice little piece you put in the paper, and can say you did more than a credit to the letter, but nevertheless I thank you very much for the same as it gave me a chance to write to so many people when you have it put in the paper. I now have a somewhat different tale to tell you. I am in a new country, a new place and am placed under somewhat different circumstances.

I am about 400 miles south of Samoa, on an island called Vavan in the Vavan group of the Society Islands, having been sent here by the president of the mission. I was directly sent out to a native village by the name of Haalabull where I am at this writing and am quite likely to be for at least six months or a year. There are about 1,000 islands and rocks which together form the Friendly or Tongan group of islands. Vavan and the Vavan group, which consists of about 100 rocks and islands comprises about one tenth of all the Society group.

They are almost completely surrounded by a coral reef. The distance around the outside of all the islands is about 40 miles.

Vavan, the largest of them all, is about seven miles across in the longest length and is very irregular. A person can stand upon a large knoll and see the ocean on all sides as far as the eye can reach, and also the coral reef circling the outside, sometimes is within a half mile of the shore and then again perhaps two, three or four miles out. These islands are of coral formation. The soil in some places is quite deep and in other places is but a couple or three feet to the old coral formation. The upper soil is of a dirty orange color and when wet is as slick as glass or soap. In fact the natives often use it for soap in scouring anything; when wet it will stick to your shoes until you would think you were walking on stilts, and when dry (for it gets dry as quick as it gets wet) it packs down very hard and solid. The whole of the Vavan group are densely covered with coconut trees which tower up from 25 to 125 feet high. They are sure majestic. Under these giants grow scrub woods and bush of all kinds. The iron wood grows here and looks somewhat like the cedar. Each man has a piece of land, allotted to him by the government of Tonga, and on this he raises or rather takes care of the things which go to make up his livelihood, such as coconuts, bananas, yams, taro, tannin and other things too numerous to mention. The natives here are much better off financially than the Samoans. When they want some money they go and cut some coconuts and sell it to the few white traders. Most of them have a sort of an outside shell of a white man's house, consisting of lumber sides, tin roof and ground floor, with the rough wood work on the inside, and mats on the ground to sit on. Here on Vavan where they have the seaport, the natives dress a great deal better than they do in Samoa and don't look quite so low in that way, although the Samoans have got them "skinned a city block" for cleanliness (Excuse the slang expression, please).

Well, now to tell you of myself, for you know I am a pretty good hand at not forgetting myself. In the first place I must tell you what I am doing. We hold school four days out of the week and teach English, arithmetic, writing, spelling and geography. (You will think when I say writing, that I should begin at home and that's true, I'm a horrid scribbler.) We have a very nice school, which is known as

MURDOCK'S LIFE BRILLIANT ONE

INSURGENT LEADER COMING HERE THURSDAY ACTIVE MAN.

Eloquence Among the Spiker's (Chief Ass'ts); Was Editor Once.

Probably no American statesman among the younger generation has achieved so much in a brief lifetime as Hon. Victor Murdock, who will be the guest of this city on Thursday evening, September 28th.

Mr. Murdock was born in Burlington, Kansas, just 40 years ago. He completed a course in the public schools and Lewis academy, devoting all of his spare time and vacations to learning the printing trade. At the age of 23, he became managing editor of the Wichita Daily Eagle, a position which he held for nine years.

In 1902, Mr. Murdock was elected to congress and at once took rank as one of the leaders on the republican side. He was foremost in the advocacy of the people's interest, and no more watchful member was to be found in congress. He was one of the first men to advocate the independence of members of congress as against the vigorous rules of the speaker of the house. Consequently, he became the first leader of the insurgents and as such is a controlling factor in national politics.

Mr. Murdock is a man of rare eloquence. He has a striking personality, originality of expression and irresistible magnetism. His lecture on "Political Insurgency" while an entirely non-partisan address, is said to be the best presentation of the present political situation ever given on the lecture platform.

"New Light College of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints." Fine name, eh? It is an appropriate name, too. I have charge of three classes, of the first grades and have got them so that they generally study by themselves, do not fight in school and hold up their hand when they wish to speak out loud. Indeed we have the best school in this group of islands.

Besides teaching school four days in the week we have five night meetings a week and two on Sunday and the other two nights I teach them singing and music in English. I am the first one who has undertaken to teach them vocal music in English on these islands. They are better singers than

Samoans and would make the majority of the people at home ashamed of themselves and are catching onto the vocal music quite fast. There are yet two week days to spare and on them we visit the Saints and also the outsiders. Down here I am doctor, musical director, school teacher, preacher and all combined. I feel fine in the work and feel better than at any time in my life, for I know that I am preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ and that Joseph Smith is a prophet of the living God.

Well, please excuse this scribbling as I can hardly write on my lap.
Yours truly,
F. JOS. SPIKER.

Notice of the Meeting of the Board of Equalization.

Notice is hereby given that the county board of equalization for Union county, Oregon, will attend at the court house, La Grande, on Monday, October 11th, 1911, and publicly examine the assessment roll, correct all errors in valuation, descriptions or qualities of land, lots or other property, as assessed by the county assessor, and it shall be the duty of all persons interested to appear at the time and place given.

All persons having grievances regarding the 1911 assessment may appear before such board and present their affidavits containing grounds for correction. All such affidavits must be presented during the first week of the meeting of the board.

D. M. CLARK,
Assessor for Union County, Oregon.

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