

SOUTHERN MISSION.

Tierra del Fuego.



R. BRIDGES sends us the following description of his recent expedition with the Bishop:—

*“ Dawson Island, ‘en voyage’ to Sandy Point,
March 1st, 1878.*

“ I must now inform you of our late excursion in Onaland. At noon on Wednesday, Feb. 20th, we left Sandy Point for Gente Grande Bay, having three pack horses on board, most kindly lent and shipped for us by the Government. The wind being light, we did not reach our anchorage till 6 p.m. On our way we saw large smokes to the southward of the bay, and on arriving there was a large smoke up in the hills at the head of the bay, where was evidently an encampment of natives. After tea we landed, and walked about for an hour and a half. We found the land for a long distance from the shore worthless, being wholly ruined by warrens of diminutive *sáapye*, a rat-like animal. The chief feature of these creatures is their front teeth, which are an inch long, and describe an arc of 90 deg. In walking we were frequently sinking through, and had to take off our boots to empty them of the dry earth. The soil is very dry, being too readily drained of its moisture by the bed of shingle underlying it. We came across several ‘lagunas,’ which were dry. There was no

saltiness perceptible on the plants which grew in them, which were encrusted with a salt-like powder peculiar to some water plants. The beds of these 'lagunas' consist of pipe-clay, which is largely taken up by the water and held in solution, as we found in a large lake further inland. This water, when disturbed by winds, raises abundant foam, and as this parts with its air and moisture, a considerable amount of meerschaum is deposited. I hear there are 'salinas,' or salt ponds, on the north coast, and in an inlet to the south of Gente Grande Bay one such was found with a considerable deposit of salt.

"On Thursday, first thing, the horses were landed, and preparations were made for our walk. We fairly started about 3 p.m. When all was ready, his Lordship called us together, and after a few words of advice and encouragement engaged in prayer, commending our effort to the blessing of God.

"The day was fine, and the wind blowing fresh from the S.W. We walked hard till 6 p.m., going in an E.S.E. direction towards a gap in the range of hills where we purpose crossing them. Having attained this point, we purpose continuing the same course for another day, and then to diverge to the right, and strike the shore of Useless Bay a few miles within Cape Boqueron. We found the coast of Gente Grande Bay much indented by deep bays. The vegetation differs greatly from what prevails in the south, and many birds are numerous here which are never seen at Ushuwia. During this first afternoon we came across three large hounds which we suppose to belong to the natives whose smoke is visible to us, bearing E.N.E. of us. At 6 p.m., reaching the shore of a large lake, whose shore is fringed with a narrow belt of luxuriant grass, we pitched our tent and stayed the night.

"I should have stated that our party consists of seven persons, viz., his Lordship, Mr. Beattie, myself, Harry (cook of the 'Allen Gardiner'), and three Yahgans, whose names are Dataminik, Samuel, and Oosiahgoonjiz. His Lordship superintends all. Each of the natives is coupled with one of us in charge of the several horses and baggage borne by same. Thus we all clearly know our work.

"Having pitched tent, we staked the horses, had tea, supplicated the God of all mercy, and retired. We in turn kept watch. The immense flocks of plovers and divers other birds frequenting the lake much disturbed our rest. The natives' dogs also were prowling about during the night. However, we were cheered by a fine moonlight night and glorious sunrise.

"We rose the next morning (Friday, 22nd Feb.) betimes, and were ready for starting at 9 a.m. We made a détour to the left, round the head of the lake, some three miles. On our way we entered a large grass valley, which was exceedingly beautiful. The grass was luxuriant and of good quality, and of divers kinds, and up to our hips. This valley was but slightly lower than the land on either side; it had no watercourse, was

some two miles long, and had an average breadth of about 90 yards. The land beyond was a waste.

“Having rounded the head of this lake, which is about 8 miles by 4, and runs in an S.W. and N.E. direction, we resumed our course to the gap. At 2 p.m. we entered the hilly land, which, in a direct line, is about six miles from the nearest coast, and rested for a while in a large bushy valley. About 4 p.m. we came across a beautiful lake of purest water. This lake was surrounded by hills, and probably was fairly deep in the middle.

“In the flat lands there is neither grass nor berries, but among the hills berries are most abundant, and many of the larger valleys are covered with the best grass. Though we approached this day the neighbourhood of the native encampment we saw no natives, or rather we had no contact with them. His Lordship thinks he saw two, and felt almost confident he saw one at no great distance hide himself among the bushes. The same dogs we saw yesterday we came across again to-day. They went towards the smoke of the natives' encampment; and we judged, after former experience, that if, on our discovering ourselves to the natives, they did not approach us, it would be useless our attempting to approach them. Therefore, we did not diverge from our course, which led us past the natives' encampment; and they must have been aware of our presence, as we kindled signal fires, which were visible from every direction. To-day we have seen many guanacos, but the watchful creatures, generally posted on the summit of the hills, evaded every attempt to reach them. At 5.30 p.m. we encamped for the night beside a large brook, where the best grass abounded. Save in places where there is no soil to burrow in, and in the swamps, there is not a yard of land free of the *sáapye* burrows. Thus each night it was necessary to level out our floor with the spade. The bulk of the land we travelled over to-day was worthless. In fact, this valley where we are now encamped is the first good land we have reached since leaving the grass-flat mentioned before. To-day we met with immense flocks of geese, plover, and widgeon, and abundance of goosh and diddy berries of finest quality, of which we ate largely. The Gap is still a day's journey ahead, being quite double the distance we anticipated.

“*Saturday, 23rd February.*—Last night was beautifully fine, but this morning it rained heavily. By noon, the weather having cleared up, we started, again making for the Gap. From the hills we had an extensive view across the Straits, and of the coast line from Philip round Gente Grande, and for many miles to the south of it. Here we saw very extensive lakes close to the shore, separated from it by mere strips of flat land. One large lake, as blue as the sea, appeared as though it was an inlet of the same; and we made a *détour* towards it, to ascertain the truth, intending to descend to the coast there and survey it, if it proved to be an inlet of the sea. Soon finding it to be a lake, we resumed our course to the ‘Gap,’ which we reached at 5.20 p.m. We lit signal fires to the

'Allen Gardiner,' which was still visible, and descended into a valley on the east of the range, where, beside a fine brook, and in the midst of splendid pasture, we again encamped. We have seen very few traces of the natives to-day: guanacos we have seen in considerable numbers. There are fine longitudinal valleys among these hills, with lateral ones meeting them from the hills on either side. The descent is slight and even, and but for the distance from the sea, the absence of harbours, and the broad belt of waste and burrowed land between the hills and the sea, these valleys might be turned to good account. In all the dry land, high or low, the *sáapye* abound. This land chiefly is a succession of hills, basins, and rolling prairie land. Bushes abound in the lateral valleys, and grass in the principal ones, in which only water is found. The south-east slopes are better covered with soil and pasture than the north-west, and peat abounds in the large valleys within the hills, but is entirely absent on the sea side of the range. The bushes are not in these parts large enough to supply fuel, save for occasional use. In order to cross some of the brooks we had to make considerable detours, so that we have winded in and out among the hills, giving the natives, if in our vicinity, ample opportunities to discover and approach us, but as yet in vain.

"*Sunday, Feb. 24th.*—Had a fine night, and the day opened with splendour. We rested, and had religious worship; and at 1.30 we started for a short march, thinking this, under present circumstances, preferable for all, than a listless, idle day. At 5 p.m., reaching a place suitable, we encamped beside a fine stream. The day closed in with rain, and we are now enclosed by a rolling land, and the sea is hidden by intervening hills.

"*Monday, Feb. 25th.*—A splendid day. Had a good march to-day, and reached the shore of Useless Bay, about 3 p.m. Most of our journey was through a forest of tall bushes, through which it was difficult to force our way, and many of them were the thorny *berberry*. There were many fine clumps of *lanadura*, standing up in remarkably compact masses above the surrounding bushes. These clumps increased in girth upward, and ended in table-like flatness at top. The appearance of this bush-land from a little distance gives one a strong idea that the land is covered with dense forest. The soil is deep and rich in this extensive tract of bush-land, which prevails for many miles from the hills seaward around this bay. We encamped early, close to the seashore, under a *barranca*. To-day, though we have seen more signs of native life than before, the natives have not discovered themselves.

"*Tuesday, Feb. 26th.*—A strong S.W. gale all day. After breakfast and morning prayers we struck tent and trudged along towards Cape Boqueron, seeking a good place for shipping the horses. After walking about two hours we were pleased to spy the 'Allen Gardiner' in the offing. We lit signal fires, and seeing them from the vessel the mariners directed her

course towards us. The gale being fresh, and the bay exposed, they shortly hauled off and lay to. We on shore selected a place and pitched tent for the night.

“ *Wednesday, Feb. 27th.*—The ‘Allen Gardiner’ came in at 7 a.m., and after breakfast we prepared to embark. The weather was very favourable; had it been otherwise we should have been driven to seek a more sheltered spot in Fenton Inlet, to the north. The day was calm, so that we are at 9 p.m. but a few miles off the place of embarkation.

“ *Thursday, Feb. 28th.*—Last night it blew hard from the west, and we sailed under small canvas towards Dawson Island, and to-day came to an anchor in Gidley Cove, on its east coast. Here we more securely fixed the horses, and remained the day, which turned out very fine.

“ *Friday, March 1st.*—A fine day; light wind from the west. Weighed anchor, but made very little progress all day. In Gidley Cove are the remnants of the futile French settlement attempted some years ago. We here again saw no signs of native life. At nightfall we saw smoke rising in the neighbourhood of Cape Valentyn, the northern point of Dawson Island.

“ *Saturday, March 2nd, 10 a.m.*—We are now in Fresh Water Bay landing the horses. We anchored at 9 a.m. to-day. I have been ashore, and see this country to be capable of producing crops of oats, barley, potatoes, and other roots with advantage. Here there are some acres of land in barley, which will be fit for the sickle in three or four weeks. Directly the horses are landed we shall be off for Sandy Point. The wind is N.W.

“ T. BRIDGES.”

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REMARKS were subjoined by Mr. Bridges to his account of his visit to the Ona country, but were omitted last month from want of room.

REMARKS.

“Though we saw no Indians during our march of seven days from Gente Grande Bay, this does not prove any lack of natives in these parts. It rather proves the result of their past intercourse with foreigners to have engendered fear and not confidence. Of course we know this is largely owing to their own conduct, which leads to mutual hostilities. On our way from Sandy Point to Gente Grande Bay we saw much smoke in divers places, signs of the presence of natives. Again, though we saw few signs of native life, yet the land over which we have journeyed is very insignificant compared with the immense area of this Onaland. Had time permitted we should have made a much more extended examination, but his Lordship’s engagements elsewhere prevent.

“In consequence of the importance of the Ona question, and the interest rightly felt by our Committee and myself and others in this fine race of people, I have offered to conduct an enterprise next summer of some six weeks or longer, subject to his Lordship’s and your approval. Should he agree I should prepare earnestly for it in the meantime by studying Ona, and gathering all possible information. His Lordship can best judge of this matter, and you will, I trust, be able shortly to confer with him on the subject. My plan is this. To land from the ‘Allen Gardiner’ with two or three pack-horses in Thetis Bay, Policarpo Cove, or anywhere else on that coast. I should go accompanied by natives only, viz., two from Ushuwia, Dataminik, Piaminol, Wotial, and a few others. With the two last-named I would meanwhile become acquainted, induce them to stay at Ushuwia, and learn from them Ona. I find Dataminik’s knowledge to be very imperfect concerning the Ona and their country. With these I would

penetrate deeply into the country, meet with as many Ona clans as possible and see and hear all I could. I have reason to feel very hopeful of the results of such an effort; it would be economical and safe. As we came across natives acquainted with the parts beyond, we would engage for a trifle one or two as guides and helpers. We might, I should think, thus penetrate from Policarpo Cove or neighbourhood to Admiralty Sound, and thence take a course towards San Sebastian Bay. I could arrange to meet the 'Allen Gardiner' at a certain place and time. I have told 'his Lordship' that I am not only willing but desirous of making this effort, feeling quite capable of it as regards personal vigour, and confidence in, and knowledge of, the natives. All I should want would be tea, coffee, and sugar, rice, flour, and biscuit, some tins of soup, and a tent, which I would get made in the meantime. I should not want to leave Ushuwia till I was taken to the East Coast of Onaland. If we got the horses free at Sandy Point, I should be for disembarking in Philip Bay, and going round the North and East Coasts some miles inland, only striking the coast here and there, and from Sebastian Bay, strike across to the head of Admiralty Sound, and thence eastward to Thetis Bay or neighbourhood. My chief reliance would be placed on the natives of Thetis Bay, with whom I would meanwhile become acquainted, by sending a party of natives from Ushuwia to bring them to me at Ushuwia, which I doubt not I could accomplish in four months at the furthest. This investigation would fully satisfy you as to what was best to be done, and might prove of great interest to the helpers of our work at home."

Mr. Bridges further writes:—

Ushuwia, March 14, 1878.

"If I can find time I will send you with this the plan of this station, with particulars which you request, but at any rate you shall have it as early as possible. The 'Allen Gardiner' left for Yendagiah the day before yesterday, but was delayed by calms in this neighbourhood till last night, when a west wind sprang up, and it is now blowing hard. We expect her back to-morrow. We arrived here, from Sandy Point, at 10 p.m. on Sunday the 10th inst. On Monday, such cargo as she had, a ton of coal and some provisions (private), was landed, and a cow, heifer, and big calf were taken aboard for Yendagiah. To such of the kind friends as sent gifts of clothing, &c., as time permits, we have written or will write to. I thank you for the orderly list of their names. I trust you may soon feel fully satisfied concerning the conduct of the work here, at Keppel Island, and elsewhere in these parts, which you have so much at heart, seeing a good return for the outlay incurred in good work done.

"Such particulars as you request I hope to enclose with this, viz., the number of baptized Indians and their names, names of the married natives and their children, the names of cultivators of the soil, the number of improved dwellings, and the number of resident heathen natives. Con-

cerning the latter, however, I cannot speak definitely, as there are none such in the proper sense of the term. Only those, even of the baptized, for whom regular work is found when they desire it, are residents here. The rate of employment accurately measures the degree of residence. Such as have been the more regularly employed by the Mission are those who have done most for themselves in bettering their condition. All I can say, therefore, about the numbers of resident heathen natives is that the number of such natives found at one time here varies from 170 down to, say, 10 or 12. Of these many in the year could show a residence of four months; fewer, of course, a residence of six months, and perhaps not one a residence of eight months. This is also the case with the school children, as I think I detailed in my October letter.

“During our five and a half weeks’ absence the difference in the state of the gardens is surprising. The growth has been very rapid in spite of the adverse weather. All unite in saying that this is decidedly the worst season we have had since we came here. Notwithstanding, we have plenty of turnips, cabbages, carrots, lettuces, and potatoes.

“You will be glad to hear that the fine boat, the ‘Margaret Dundas,’ has fallen to us. She is a great acquisition to us. I purpose going in her shortly to see what the good natives are doing at Gable Island, and give them some advice and instruction.

“Will you give our best thanks to Mr. Acworth for his boat, and tell him that, whilst we shall take every care of it, we shall largely utilize it. We have put up a house on the beach to keep it safe and sound, which house is also useful for salting hides, and, in case of rain or snow falling when stores are landed, they can be packed away in this place.

“During my absence the natives here have been very earnest in their wishes to push on their own work in connection with their gardens, cowhouses, and fences, &c. But when they are thus employed they are very prone to expect more assistance than the Mission can bear. They have a very extensive use of Mission tools of every description, and the draw on our nails and screws is very exhaustive. Much means of employment is spent without any return, owing to bad weather preventing the carrying on of the work. There is, on our parts, a constant need of firmness in resisting their unreasonable expectations of payment. We ever make the offer of employment a favour to the employed, and if there is any demurring, without further ado, we withdraw the offer. Also, if persons employed are insolent or dissatisfied, as they often are, as a punishment, employment is withdrawn. It is necessary to exercise strict discipline at times. The ‘Allen Gardiner’ has just returned from Yendagiah, having landed the cattle at six this morning.

“The chief work on hand is that in connection with the Orphanage. The fuel supply takes up much time. The crops sown rather late are not very hopeful, but the earlier sowings are very good.

“The people were deeply interested in the Sandy Point news. There

are here a large number of natives from the south and east. Some are miserable specimens of humanity, being unnaturally dwarfish. Some of these people as they age lose substance continually till they become miserably attenuated, yet, on the whole, they enjoy good health. Others keep in full flesh, and are apt to pass suddenly away whilst still strong and comparatively young.

“Bad colds are prevalent among the natives, affecting them much more generally and painfully than they affect us, and thus is often engendered the seeds of consumption, so prevalent among the people.

“THOMAS BRIDGES.”
