

Jenson's Travels.

LETTER NO. XXII.

Wednesday, August 7th. I started out from my lodgings in Suva, F. I., for a morning walk along the bay, and the day being cool and pleasant I continued on past the Colonial prison and the Suva graveyard, the latter being situated about two miles north of the center of Suva, near the point where the Suva river puts into the bay. The stream looking so clear and beautiful, I yielded to the temptation of taking a bath, but found the water rather cold, which is no wonder, as this is Fijian winter. The Taveuni river is quite wide at its mouth, but is not very deep. From that stream the Suva water works obtain its supply of water.

Through the courtesy of Henry Miller Esq., the superintendent of all the government prisons of the Fijian group, I was shown through the entire prison premises by the jailer, Mr. Fred Sahlin. The ground covers several acres, and there are at present 175 male and 9 female offenders incarcerated. Of the male convicts there are whites and one is a half cast; the rest are Fijians and coolies (natives of Hindostan and the East Indies). Only eight are imprisoned for life; most of the others are in for short terms, and about half of them are sexual offenders—people who have been convicted of adultery and fornication against which offenses there are very stringent laws. Formerly, when a man seduced his neighbor's wife or daughter, the husband or father of the woman thus wronged would watch for an opportunity to club the offender to death, this being the custom of the country; but since the English fairly got control of the government this custom has been abolished by law, and imprisonment, varying in length from one to twelve months, substituted in lieu thereof. Unfortunately this law is inoperative so far as the whites are concerned. Mr. Sahlin was of the opinion that white offenders, of which there undoubtedly are many, had succeeded so far in clearing themselves by paying certain amounts of money, as some of them had as yet been convicted or sent to jail for sexual crimes. The officers of the prison—there are at present a large number of a few sub-officers, two of whom are women—sometimes have to resort to stringent measures in order to preserve peace in the household. Thus I was shown a regular flogging post to which offenders occasionally are bound, while their backs are being lashed with a h-forked prison thong. The number of lashes inflicted vary all the way from two to twenty and are administered by a powerful native guard while the victim is securely tied to the post by his wrists and ankles, his body leaning forward at an angle of about forty-five degrees. I only saw one prisoner in chains; he was a desperate looking or coolie who

boiled alive, because, as he himself said, if he could not eat he should get thin and weak, and the girls would call him a skunk and laugh at him. He was buried by his own father; and when he awoke he struggled first, he was cold, and told to be quiet, and he buried like other people, and give them no more trouble, and he was buried accordingly.

Thursday, August 8th. I took a long walk along the beach and around the peninsula on which Suva is situated, visiting on my way the large and commodious native government building erected by the Fijians, and the residence of the Fijians who are in the employ of the government. There are quite a number of these buildings and nearly all the male occupants have their names inscribed on the chief pillars to their names, some of them being members of the royal family. As most of them could speak English, I had no trouble in introducing myself to some of the leading men who in turn introduced me to others. Thus I became acquainted with Kudaava Levu, a grandson of Cakobua (presented Teakombi) the former king of Fijia, and his two lady consorts, also grandchildren of the late king, who were there on a visit. The oldest of these girls, whose name is Letia (Lydia) Cakobua, is about twenty years old, and is married to a young chief at Suva. Her sister, Teimuni Vaka-bu, is about two years younger, and is married to a Fijian. Both girls are very beautiful. Through the courtesy of Kudaava Levu, Malakia, the doctor and senior surgeon, I was taken to several houses and introduced to a number of families, who all seemed very comfortable and cheerful, about their dwellings tidy and clean. Some of the houses are as big as 35 feet wide and very strongly built. The interior is all open, but often as many as a dozen doors open to the outside. The floors are all covered with mat, and that part which constitutes the bed is generally raised a foot or so above the rest of the floor.

In my walk I passed a large gang of prisoners working on the road for which some were quarrying rock and others were packing these rocks on their heads from the quarry or end of roadway to some place of use and as present team. It was a strange sight to see this long string of almost naked men walking in single file with their heavy burdens; and it reminded me very much of the prisoners I have seen representing the Egyptian slaves in bondage in Egypt. Most of the prisoners were Indians, but there were also quite a number of Fijians.

Further on I came to an Indian village containing about two hundred families, who live in small, inconvenient and dirty huts. They are people who were brought in to the country as contract or indentured laborers, and who after serving their five years as such are trying to raise rice or do something for a living. In another few years have passed, when they are entitled to a free passage back to India. I was told that most of them were quite content with their lot, and were not pining to return to India, but were making it their permanent home. Finding a young fellow who could talk a little English, I was piloted by him into several houses where I had an opportunity of studying for myself the interior arrangements of the houses of these unfortunate people. In going through the village I seemed to observe considerable cleanliness, as people were putting out trash almost every door; but I was not moved by anyone. I used considerable courteous language in introducing

myself, and my guide informed me that a general quarrel was taking place and that it was an almost every day occurrence, the Indians being a very quarrelsome race. One little man who came running through the village at full speed seemed to be at war with all the rest, as he "joked" right and left and shook his fist vehemently at some women who seemed to make sport of him. The Indians are a very small race of people living in this respect opposite to the Fijians who are a tall and strong built specimen of humanity. The Indian women are great hands for ornamenting their persons. They decorate their ears, noses, necks, arms, waists, fingers, ankles, toes, etc., with all sorts of bracelets, chains and rings. These are sometimes made of gold and silver, and in other instances of brass and other cheap materials. One woman, whose curiosity led her to come up close to me when I had sat down in rest on the beach, was almost covered with English silver money through which brass had been bored and then tied to cords of various lengths to suit different parts of the limbs and the neck. After visiting the Indian village, which is situated on the opposite shore of the peninsula from Suva, I walked across the intervening hills to the latter place, a distance of about two miles, being quite tired after my day's ramble, though I had only walked about eight miles; but the day was not hot and sultry and a man can walk in a tropical country the same as he can in a cooler climate.

ANDREW JENSON.
Suva, Viti Levu, F. I., August 9th, 1895.
UNLUCKY TO HAVE BEEN DROWNING.

Some queer superstitions of People the World Over.

It seems strange that superstitions should be so numerous, yet it is so, and it is almost the small lot who see no common-sense shining into a watery grave without attempting to rescue him, whether he sank because he was not an expert and got beyond his depth, or whether he was seized with cramps. It seems ridiculous to think of, and no doubt it will save many a reputation if a person from sinking his own neck by being dragged under by the weight and struggles of a drowning person to know it is contrary to common sense, and that the wisest person to save the life of a drowning person is to resuscitate him, as soon as he is found to do you some harm.

It is another one of those old superstitions handed down from generation to generation from our European ancestors, and of which some know the derivation. These of it are found among the Hindus and other tribes of the Indians of the West, who seem to have inherited that belief from their forefathers along with so many other quaint things. They still believe, and it's a part of their creed, that in hitting the body of a drowned person you can discover its resting place by floating a chip of cedar wood, which will stop, even in the strongest current, and turn around over the exact spot.

In Great Britain the belief that you must not rescue a drowning person is not prevalent in Cornwall and various parts of Scotland. The French sailor and the boatman of the Doubs bow to the corpse, together with the Russians, and let the people drown.

Dr. Taylor, in his "Primitive Culture," declares this lingering custom

for this old creed is because "the water spirit is angry at being despoiled of its victim, and should the unlucky person who has dared to frustrate him trust himself to the water's power he will drown as sure as fate."

The Bohemian fireman shrinks from extinguishing a drowning man from the waters, fearing the water demon will take away his luck in doing and drown him before he gets to shore with the would be victim. In Germany, when some one is drowned, they say, "The river spirit claims his yearly sacrifice," or, "The Nix has taken him."

The belief is currently in vogue in those countries above mentioned, but the Kamohakos, rather than help a man out of the water, would force him under, and if he should come to the shore he would dare receive him into his house or dare to give him food. He is supposed to be dead after once falling into the water.

THE BARGASSO SEA.

A Wonderful Region in the Atlantic Which No Man Has Explored.

The surface of the Bargasso sea seems like a perfect meadow of seaweed. It is supposed that this enormous mass of gulf weed may have been partly grown at the bottom of the shallower parts of the sea and partly torn from the shores of Florida and the Bahama islands by the force of the gulf stream. It is then swept around by the same agency into the Bargasso sea, where it lives and propagates, floating freely in all directions. And the store is ever increasing, both by addition and propagation, so that the meadow grows more and more compact, and no doubt at the inner parts extends to a considerable depth below the surface.

Now is this all, for at least two-thirds of all the infinite ocean which the gulf stream carries along with it in its course north or else finds a resting place in the Bargasso sea. Here may be seen huge trunks of trees torn from the forests of Brazil by the waters of the Amazon and floated down far out to sea until they were caught and swept along by the current; broken from the tops, orange trees from Florida, cactus and loads from the islands, stored in a broken and broken up, wrecked and remains of all sorts reaped from the rich harvest of the Atlantic; whole birds or skeletons of ruined ships, so covered with barnacles, shells and weeds that the original outline is entirely lost to view, and here and there a derelict ship, transformed from a floating tower of the deep into a nursery put out of reach of man in a mass of unexplained enigmas.

The Arctic Fleet.

The plant from which arctic is produced appears to be indigenous to the mountain districts of Europe and Asia. It is found growing wild in the Pyrenees, Alps, Carpathian mountains, in the mountains of Armenia, in the Urals and the Himalayan range. It is said that the plant has also been found in the mountain districts of the United States west of the Mississippi river, but whether a native or an importation cannot be ascertained. The medicine is chiefly prepared from plants artificially grown in the medicinal gardens of France and Germany.

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