

CORRESPONDENCE.

Written for this Paper.

JENSON'S TRAVELS.

LETTER NO. XXIII.

Friday, August 9th. The most important part of the island of Viti Levu is perhaps the region of country lying on and adjacent to the Rewa river, as it abounds with large sugar plantations and flourishing native villages. Hence I decided to pay a visit to that part of the island, and with this view boarded a steam launch, on which Messrs Brown and Joske kindly gave me free transportation. We sailed from Suva about 3:30 p. m., and after rounding the Suva point we made direct for the Union steamship company; steamer Taupo, which lay at anchor in the Laucala Bay, six miles from Suva, loading sugar from the Nausori mill to take to New Zealand. We lay to and waited for the east sugar to go on board, as the launch was to take the three lighters which had brought the sugar to the steamer back to the mill at Nausori. When the job was finished it was dark; but our Fiji captain thought he could find his way in the darkness over the sand bar and up the river, so he hitched on to the three lighters or flat boats, and started for Nausori, but he had not gone very far till he found his little craft aground, and it took nearly two hours to get afloat again, when it was decided to return to the Taupo, and tie to for the night. This was accordingly done and I, together with a few other passengers who were going up in the launch, slept on board the Taupo all night.

Saturday 10th. Bright and early the Taupo lifted her anchor and started for Suva, leaving our little launch with her three lighters adrift without steam, the native crew having overslept themselves, so that the fireman had neglected to fire up his engine in proper time. However, sufficient steam was soon gotten up to keep in course; and we proceeded on our way to the Laucala mouth of the Rewa river, through which we entered and were then sailing between the wooded banks of that remarkable stream. The Rewa river reaches the ocean through several channels, a delta having been formed at its mouth in ages past; but the most important, though not the largest of its mouths is the Laucala branch, owing to its being the shortest waterway between Suva and the Rewa district, the most populous and best cultivated part of Fiji. The place where this branch breaks away from the main river is called Hellsgate, which is a difficult narrow to pass through without running aground. A little further on we passed (on our right) the town of Rewa which is the largest native town in Fiji; it has a Roman Catholic chapel, and also a Wesleyan church. The native men are known as good canoe builders, and the women make some of the best crockery ware in the whole group. Opposite this town the river is about 400 yards wide, and it reminded me of the Mississippi, in America. It was certainly strange to find oneself sailing on a river of such a size on an island less than one hundred miles across. Continuing our course up from Rewa, the land on both sides of the river continued flat, and is cultivated by Europeans or na-

tives nearly all the way up to Nausori, where the first hills are met with.

One of these standing on our left as we went up was pointed out to me as Baker's hill, it being the place where a Wesleyan missionary of that name resided with his family, where he on a trip to the mountains was killed and eaten by the natives.

We arrived at the Nausori sugar mills, twenty-four miles by water from Suva, at 10 o'clock a. m. Here I was introduced to E. W. Tenner, Esq., general manager of the Colonial Sugar Refining Company's interests in Fiji, and H. H. Thiele, head accountant for the company at Fiji, to whom I had a letter of introduction from Suva. I was well received and a room in the house occupied by Mr. Thiele and Mr. William Wilson, the chief engineer of the Nausori mill, was placed at my disposal. Mr. Thiele is a Dane by birth and speaks his native language fluently. He also being a man of education and literary ability, rendered me efficient service during my pleasant temporary stay at Nausori, and from articles written by him to different periodicals I have culled a number of items used in my correspondence to the NEWS in Fiji affairs.

The Nausori sugar mills are located in the left bank or east side of the Rewa river, about one-fourth miles above the native village of Nausori. It is one of four mills in Fiji owned by the Colonial Sugar Refining Company, whose headquarters are at Sydney, Australia. Besides the four miles in Fiji, (three at Vili Leun and one on Venua Leun) the same company owns seven mills and four refineries in Australia and one refinery in New Zealand. E. W. Tenner is general superintendent of all the company's property on Fiji, assisted by Wm. Berry as general manager on the Rewa river. At Nausori, Mr. Henry T. Moltke, a native of Kjöge, Denmark, is the general manager of the plantation, and has charge of something like 850 laborers, including both sexes, mostly Indians or natives of Hindoostan, who have been imported under contract for working under the plantation. These Indians live in quarters built for their accommodation adjacent to the mill, and in other parts of the plantation. The large number of laborers are divided up into convenient working companies, which are placed in charge of "sirdars" (Indian name for foreman), for plowing, harrowing, planting, weeding, stripping, cutting, packing, loading and hauling, etc.

The women and weaker men do the lighter work, such as weeding and stripping. The company works about fifteen hundred acres of land at Nausori, from which about one-fifth of the cane used at the mill is obtained; the other four-fifths are raised on other plantations owned by the company at different points up and down the river, and by private planters. Among the latter are a number of Indians, who have served their five years' term, and are thus free to do for themselves. They lease land from the company in which they raise their cane. The wages paid the average male contract laborer is one shilling per day or per task, which is equal to a day's work. Women only receive nine pence per day. On this they board themselves; but house room, wood etc.,

is furnished them free. How in the world these poor creatures can save money on such allowances at that mill perhaps will always remain a puzzle—to an American at least—but the facts are that thousands of pounds are annually shipped to India by these same contract laborers who are working for a shilling or less per day. Certainly their wants are few; their food is cheap, and their clothing too; their apparel consisting merely of sufficient linen to cover their bodies; they always go barefooted.

At the mill Paul Seelinger, a young intelligent German, is the manager and head chemist. He has charge of the sugar making, while Mr. Wilson the chief engineer, is responsible for the machinery. Under them are a number of white assistants, including mechanics and firemen, and nearly 150 Indian laborers. Until recently when part of the machinery was removed to another place, the Nausori mills was the largest sugar mill establishment in the southern part of the world. At the present time from 4,600 to 4,800 tons of cane are ground up per week, which produces from 400 to 500 tons of brown sugar. It has to be sent to refineries for final treatment. In 1894 about 118,000 tons of cane were used at the Nausori mills. Three crops of cane are obtained after one planting; the first crop matures in fourteen months, the second and third in twelve months each. About twenty five tons to the acre is an average yield to a crop which is only about one half of what can be raised in the Hawaiian Islands. But then there is no irrigation at Nausori.

Mr. Seelinger and Mr. Wilson conducted me through the mill and took great pains to explain to me the scientific and practical work of sugar making in Fiji; but as the process is the same as in other parts of the world, I shall forego a technical description.

Mr. Wilson also conducted me through the Indian laborer's quarters, near the mill. There are twenty-two long, lumber, windowless houses, with iron roofs, divided into apartments of 10x12 feet. One of these rooms is assigned to a family, or in case of single men, three of these to a room. Quarrels and contentions are very frequent in these quarters; the greatest difficulties seem to arise from the fact that the men don't know their own wives; at least they don't always act as though they did. Only about three months ago a man actually beheaded his wife who had been untrue to him. He was arrested, tried, and sentenced to be hung, but his sentence was subsequently commuted to imprisonment for life, and he is now an inmate of the Colonial jail at Suva.

The success of most industries in Fiji depends materially on the possibility of getting cheap labor. There are three classes of colored laborers, viz: Fijians, Polynesians and Coolies. White men rarely work in the field, they are mostly employed as overseers, mechanics, mill hands, etc. In order to obtain Fijian laborers the planters have to enter into a special contract with the chiefs or magistrates of the various villages from which the laborers are wanted. The planter has to pay twenty-six shillings in taxes to the government for each man a year, and about £8 per annum in wages, besides providing him with food, house, clothes, medical attendance and medicines. The employer has also to pay for the transport of the laborer to the