

ROUND SAVAI.

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FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CYRIL

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The natives in the age of which I speak were certainly wild and barbarous; approached as near to cannibalism as it was possible to do without being one whit worse than their foes the Tongans, or nearly so bad as their more distant neighbours, the Fijians. And no doubt, also, they held religious tenets which, to the mildest Christian, seemed, to say the least of it, "rather peculiar." But they were undoubtedly good workers both on their own plantations, dwellings and public works, and in that respect were much superior to the proud and lazy set of which the present and rising generations are composed. The natives of these days, (too lazy to work, but not too conscientious to steal) have not only neglected the only pathway across the mountains which their countrymen ever cut, so that it is now almost indistinct from the overgrowth of bush; but, jealous of any show of enterprise on the part of the white-man they have more than once attempted to tabu both Mr. Nelson and Mr. Cornwall from making use of the latter gentleman's own made track. When they found the tabu would not hold good, the natives living in the nearest towns at both ends of the track, blazed several others in various directions

from the right one, for four or five miles distance, for the purpose of misleading them, more especially Mr. Nelson, who makes use of it the most frequently. I am glad to say, however, that there attempts to throw off the track have not succeeded, the trail being too well known by this time by these gentlemen. The roads, and high, solid dividing walls which are to be met with in Lata are, to my thinking, strong proofs that there was once a very large population; a people not merely of great numerical strength, but much superior to the present generation in height and physical strength in point of fact a most powerful, giant-like race of people. During my residence in Tongatabu I formed the same view with regard to the Tonga race of, say, some two to three hundred years back; which opinion, formed from certain evidences, was afterwards shown to my own satisfaction to be a correct one from the accounts I got during various conversations with the oldest chiefs in various parts of the island; those of the legends of Tonga relating to the deeds of great warriors, and the strength and prowess of the people generally. What appears to me to be the most valuable evidence of all, is the remains of strongly built forts and walls which I frequently met with in the interior, and that celebrated stone structure near the town of Kologa, on the Hahaki (or east) end of the island.

While on the subject of piles of stones—raised by the hands of man, and not the work nature,—as evidences of my theories, I may mention one which we came across in one of our strolls along one of the plantation roads. There must have been hundreds of hands used in constructing this work, not only on account of its size, but from the fact that it happens to be on a part of the estate which is particularly free from stones, which had to be brought from some distance, besides some tons of smooth flat stones which had to be carried a distance of some two miles and a half from the beach. The labour must have been further increased by the fact that the pile is built upon a plateau or piece of table land to reach the top of which on three sides they had to clamber up the sides of a very steep hill for some distance,—no easy matter after walking for nearly three miles up hill from the beach with a couple of kits of stone across one's shoulders. When first discovered by the manager in clearing, it was so densely overgrown with vines that it had the appearance of a thick clump of bush. He was therefore rather surprised when he found, on clearing off some of the vines, this huge pile of stones, but he went on with the clearing; and it is now perfectly free from vines, or weeds, showing its proportions as plainly and proudly as in days of old. The pile is also a fair specimen of the occasional difficulties which have to be overcome to carry out the plan of the plantation as originally laid out, and from which no deviation is allowable by the

which no deviation is allowable by the proprietor, for it lays, like a regiment formed into square to receive a cavalry charge, exactly across the line of road.

To carry the road round would be a break of the rules and not permissible for one moment, therefore the manager has to meet his difficulty and surmount it as best he can. I asked him what plan he had thought of for continuing the road within its mathematical lines on the other side. The mode of procedure which he showed me he intended to act upon is undoubtedly the only feasible one of the many which presented themselves when discussing the matter. Proposing,—as I did, to draw out his opinions,—to demolish the whole structure, so as to bring it to a level with the plantation road which had been carried up to it, there was no difficulty in demonstrating the fact that to thus destroy that huge solid mass of stone, and carry the material to such a distance where it would not interfere with or obstruct the progress of the work of clearing, would occupy the whole of the plantation labour from four to five years, if they were employed on that work alone. It might take even still longer, and I fully believe it would.

So, of course, that plan is out of question but the one that will be adopted is this :— As the level of the proposed continuation of the road is much below that which has been run up to the pile on the other side, some two or three feet of the top stones will be thrown on to the lower part and an easy grade to descend made until the natural level is reached, while on that side where the road is already cut and cleared, an equally easy grade of ascent will be made, thus continuing the road across this mass of stones. Strictly level roads cannot be made on the plantation; but they are all laid out at equidistance, of an equal width and running as straight as a die. As near as I can describe the pile, adequate justice to which I am sure I can not do, I may call it a huge and solid mass of stones piled up to a great height, the interstices being filled up with small stones and sand, and the top levelled and smoothed by first a thick coating of sand on the top of which is a layer of flat, smooth, water-worn bluish coloured stones which are procured from the sea beach. To thoroughly understand the position it occupies, and to arrive at anything like an adequate idea of the amount of work its construction must have entailed upon a great number of powerful men, whose only appliances were their hands, it must

be borne in mind that it is built on a piece of table land some two miles and a half or three miles from the beach. The four sides of the pile are of an equal height from the base to the top, though the land is so situated that on the side facing the beach it is 100 or 120 feet up to the base of the stone pile, and very steep; while on the other sides the height varies from 25 to 40 feet. The base of the construction is a rectangle, 80 yards by 30 yards, the top is 20 feet from the base, and the sides 60 yards long by 15 yards. The question now remains,—for what purpose was such a large mass of stones erected? It is impossible to solve this with any satisfaction, owing to the absence of any information being obtainable from the natives. There can be no doubt that it was built for one of four purposes, viz: a large tulafale (i. e. the prepared site of a building); a "devil" temple; a point of vantage in the old fighting days; or it has been raised in honour of some renowned and powerful chief, whose influence,—or whose family were of sufficiently high rank.—was great enough to cause it to be gathered together. This is the most feasible supposition of the four; and it is further

borne out by the fact that at one corner is a large grave which, covered as it is with a mound of stones, indicates according to an old Samoan custom, that it is the burial place of a man either renowned as a great warrior, or the head of a great chief family. The conclusion generally arrived at seems to be that this is the resting place of the last king of Savaii, Tupu o le Vao,—meaning a chief or king of the highest rank of the bush. It is also held that although this man's name has not been handed down to posterity as a king famous in war, he might be fairly credited with being the builder of those roads on Lata, and similarly good ones on various parts of Savaii, which are at once the wonder and admiration of the present generation. There is not a native living in the group, I believe, who is in the position to positively assert either that Tupu o le Vao was not buried here, or where his mortal remains were finally laid, therefore I think the honour might appropriately be attached to this place as anywhere else. One thing seems to me an undeniable fact, that a more appropriate monument than such a pile of stones could not have well been raised to the memory of a man who is accredited as the builder of such roads as I have attempted to describe. After thoroughly examining and admiring this

structure, we returned to the homestead, and I was fully impressed with the immense amount of labour it must have taken to convert a place so extensively covered with stones into what was then presented to the eye. In most of the cotton fields the stones are too heavy as well as too numerous to make it worth while entirely removing them, only those being displaced which were in the way of planting operations. To a casual observer the trees have the appearance of growing out of these boulders and heaps of stones.

At a later period, I strolled for some distance along the road at the back of the house up the mountain. It is a continuation of the grand main road leading from the direction of the beach up to the homestead. After rising 40 or 50 feet the road continues through an almost level plateau of some of the richest soil in Samoa, and is very free from stones. Continuing for over a mile of this land

the uncleared bush is again reached, at the back of which the mountain takes another stretch upward until it reaches an altitude of 4,500 feet above sea level, according to recent surveys, being 500 feet more than that given by Wilkes as highest part of Savaii. A magnificent

view is obtained from the plateau, and an excellent idea be formed of the extent of the estate. I had now walked over enough of the plantation to enable me to form a correct idea of the place. The work first commenced about 22 months ago, after Mr. Cornwall had laid out a design of the plantation, and obtained a supply of Line labour. The roads run in an easterly and westerly, and in a northerly and southerly direction, are perfectly straight, being laid out by an Azimuth compass, and of an equal breadth of 25 feet. They run in parallel lines, at a distance of two acres apart, the cross roads intersecting these at a distance of 10 acres, thus cutting the fields into 20 acre blocks. The principal road up to the house is 40 feet wide, and as far as cleared at present is about two miles in length. The fields are all walled in, the stones used for the purpose being those taken from the roadway during the process of clearing. On both sides of all the roads is planted a row of bannana trees and breadfruit; and the main road with oranges and pineapples in addition. There are thus at least twelve miles of rows of bannana trees,—most of which are already bearing, besides those belong-

ing to the natives and a very large patch at the beach landing. It will be a matter of impossibility for the plantation hands, who are at perfect liberty to help themselves, to consume anything like a third of the season's crop. But as Messrs. McArthur and Co., are about to run a vessel direct to and from Samoa and Auckland, making Lata the last place of call, a good opportunity presents itself to Mr. Cornwall to ship large quantities of this edible fruit, of which he will no doubt avail himself. There should be no difficulty in finding a market in Auckland for their disposal; and, as the passage across can be done on an average of 10 to 12 days, the consignment will be landed in good condition, and will no doubt command the eager attention of the Auckland fruiterers.

(To be continued.)