

A few turtle fishers and beche-de-mer curers have made a temporary sojourn on Palmerston's for many years past. Mr. John Brander, of Tabiti, professes to claim it, having registered it in the Consulate of that place in his name, in consequence of a captain in his employment having removed some beach-combers from it, and accepted their assurance that he might have the island for taking them away. But Mr. Brander has never attempted to make any systematic use of it. It might be rendered a most profitable settlement, very much more so than Caroline Island, which, it is reported, was a few months since sold to Messrs. Holder Brothers, of London, for a large sum of money.

Between Vavao and the Samoan group are several islands, of which the most remarkable is Niuafoou. It has no harbour, and is volcanic, being the lip of a great crater, which smokes very much, and deposits large quantities of sulphur. The fertility of the land is astonishing. Cocoa-nuts are in immense quantity and of an extraordinary size, each shell being upon an average equal in capacity to a gallon measure. There are several villages of about 800 inhabitants. This is one of the best kobra trading stations in the South Pacific.

Whether the unusual size of the cocoa-nuts of Niuafoou is owing to any peculiar local conditions, such as the heat of the soil from the vicinity of the volcano, I am unable to say, but I am of opinion that they are a distinct species. The same are found upon Fotuna and Alofa, two very fertile and populous islands, a short distance to the westward. The people of Niuafoou are Protestant; those of Fotuna and Alofa, Roman Catholic. They are industrious and hospitable; although, a few years ago, they were such determined cannibals, that it was common for them to steal their neighbours' children for food, and this not from want, as they lived in the midst of abundance of hogs, vegetables, and fish.

In this neighbourhood, north-west of these last, is Wallis Island (Uvea). It is lofty and fertile, and in the centre of a great lagoon, with several entrances, which constitute a magnificent harbour. There is a large population, all Roman Catholic; among them resides the French Bishop of Oceania, and a community of priests, friars, and nuns. There is a very handsome cathedral of cut stone. One cannot help being struck with astonishment to find such works in a place so remote from civilization. The trade of Wallis Island is in kobra and beche-de-mer.

The Samoan or Navigator Group extends over 4° of longitude. The three largest islands are visible one from the other. They are lofty and volcanic, being a chain of extinct craters. Of their beauty and fertility, no adequate conception can be formed by those who have not seen them.

Savaii is the largest of them, being somewhere about 250 miles round, with a height approaching 4,000 feet. It is of a conical form, and rises from the sea like a vast dome of green vegetation.

There is only one harbour for large ships on Savaii, but a great trade is conducted around its coast by small schooners owned by the merchants of Apia, in the neighbouring island. There are a number of Europeans on Savaii, probably not less than 100; they are chiefly English, employed in the purchase of kobra from the natives, although some are engaged in cotton planting.

Of the population of the whole Samoan group, which amounts to about 40,000, more than one-third reside upon Savaii. Nevertheless, only along the coast line and for a few miles inland is it inhabited, the interior being a mere wilderness of the most gorgeous tropical vegetation; groves, dense even to darkness, of palms and plantains, citrons and mangos, bread-fruit everywhere, and wild yams trailing themselves into a matted jungle. On the flanks of the great mountain are tracts of forest, in which a man might wander for weeks without finding his way out, of the most valuable timber trees, of gigantic size, *Asi*, *Mamala*, *Maridi*, *To*, *Tainu*, *Tomano*, *Vii*. These forests are traversed by ravines, with innumerable waterfalls for the turning of saw-mills, and streams for the floatage of logs. In these woodland wastes, seldom penetrated by the natives except for the purpose of boar-hunting or pigeon-catching, are to be found growing in abundance many indigenous products as yet unregarded by traders, such as—Ginger; the true nutmeg of commerce (not alone that bastard kind so well known in Fiji); a sort of wild fibre which, in its manner of growing out of a pod, resembles cotton, but in lustre is equal to silk, and which has never yet been utilized in any way, though it grows in patches of sometimes hundreds of acres in extent; and various species of cane of the trailing kind, among them the true *Bate*, or rattan of the East Indies, which is used for so great a variety of purposes, and in many parts of the world constitutes an important article of commerce.

The distance between Savaii and Upolu is only eight miles from reef to reef. Upolu, although the second in altitude and area, is the finest island of the Samoan group, from its superior fertility, and from its possessing large and secure harbours.

Savaii is immensely productive, but Upolu, in comparison, is as a garden to a wilderness.

The Island of Upolu, like Savaii, is only inhabited upon the sea coast. This was not the case formerly, as the whole interior exhibits evidence of ancient prosperous settlement. It consists of sloping ridges and wide elevated plateaux, rising one behind the other up to the crown of the central range, very much of which displays vast areas of rich table-land covered with luxuriant forests, in whose silent depths are to be seen the ruins of ancient villages and buildings of strange form, composed of massive stone work. One easily recognizes the fact that all the available land in those localities has been at one time industriously cultivated, from the remains of boundary walls, causeways, reservoirs and ditches for purposes of irrigation, and similar works, affording proof that in some early unknown time the population was much more dense as well as more energetic and industrious than at present.

The soil of these mountain table-lands is of the most productive nature, deep, loose, and porous, of a chocolate colour, and capable of being cultivated with but little labour, as we see that in former times it has been. The lighter portions of the forest, from the looseness of the soil, are very easy to eradicate.

The heavy timber, by reason of its valuable character and the facilities of transport to the sea coast, or the abundance of water power for the purpose of having it sawn up on the spot, would more than repay the cost of its removal. There cannot be a more glorious prospect than, when sailing along some parts of the coast of Upolu, to view the great expanse of cocoa-nut groves extending far inland, spreading over the surface of gentle slopes, intersected by bridle-paths, along which one may ride frequently a dozen miles and meet with scarcely any vegetation beyond the same apparently-interminable forest of palm, bread-fruit, and bananas.

There are upon the island many horses of a very good breed, imported from Sydney. Cattle in