

The laws of Tonga forbid the sale of land to foreigners; but it is permitted to be leased upon liberal conditions for so long a term as to be tantamount to absolute sale.

I.—The Islands generally: Mr. Sterndale.

All traders, planters, or permanent foreign residents not in the service of the Government are obliged to take out a license. Spirits and some other articles pay a heavy duty. All the people contribute to the support of the State. The tax upon an adult male is \$6 per annum.

The Government is administered by the King personally, assisted by a Council. On each of the great islands there resides a Governor. They are men of superior intelligence; they speak English, dress well, and live in handsome houses built after the European fashion, of imported materials. A short time ago I had occasion to visit the Governor of Vavao. His name is David (that of the King is George, and of Maafu Charley: all high-caste Tonguese take great pride in English names). David is a man of huge stature, and of so noble a presence that he looks not much the worse from having lost an eye in the wars. He wore a very handsome uniform, which had been made to his order in Sydney, and, together with his sword and accessories, had cost him £200. His house would be regarded in the Australian Colonies as a fitting residence for any high official personage below the rank of a Viceroy. It is constructed of imported materials; all the interior panelled and polished, the furniture of every room being elegant and costly, and imported from New South Wales. In the centre of the building is a large dining-hall, with stained glass doors at each end. It is only used on state occasions. Here the table was laid with every requisite, fine linen, plate, and cut glass. The cook was a Chinaman, the pantler a negro. A better or more elegantly served dinner one would scarcely expect in Sydney; everything was in profusion, even to champagne and soda-water. This David, like all his colleagues in the Government of Tonga, apes the manners of a British officer. One remark he made was very characteristic of the man. I perceived on a Sunday afternoon that he did not leave the house, although his people were all at church for the second time. I inquired the reason, and he replied, "I have been this morning; too much church is not good. I have been told that English gentlemen do not go to church more than once in the day. We got our religion and our laws from the English: why, then, should we not imitate their customs in other respects?" This is but the expression of the general feeling of the ruling race of Tonga. They have been so long accustomed to act by English advice that, when a time of trouble overtakes them (and it is approaching surely and rapidly, and may arrive at any moment), it is upon England that they will seek to lean.

In the Tonguese character there is a certain amount of craft, which may be wickedness or wisdom; but they possess one peculiarity of which Polynesians are generally altogether deficient—they can keep a secret; and in politics they will not show their hand either to friend or foe.

If one chances now to question any man of influence in Tonga as to the immediate future of his islands, his countenance falls, he seeks to change the subject, or becomes sombre, silent, and even suspicious. The reason is plain enough. There is a dark cloud hanging over the Friendly Isles, which must burst shortly and rain blood, unless some strong Power mercifully steps in to disperse the elements of mischief. There has been a war in Samoa (now said to be terminated). It has lasted for more than four years, and has in a great measure devastated the most fertile island of that group. It has been conducted upon a most sanguinary principle, and has left behind a legacy of misery from which it will take many years to recover. The same, if not prevented, is about to happen in Tonga, but with even more disastrous results, forasmuch as these political animosities have been intensified by long anticipation. The Tonga men are better fighters than the Samoans, are better trained in the use of arms, and are more extensively supplied with them. Every Tonga-man well knows, when he goes to parade with his firelock and pouch, that all this marching and drilling, this paying of tax to pay muskets and cannon, is not meant for any mere purpose of display, but that it is the preparation for a long and cruel strife, in which powerful chiefs, well accustomed to the horrors of war and well provided with the means of its prosecution, will enlist their partisans against each other, to decide by force of arms who shall be the successor to the present King, who, from his extreme age and infirmity, may be expected to die any day. Yet, though all understand what is about to occur, they are reticent as to their individual intentions; few men caring to declare, even to their friends, which of the candidates they purpose to support. The case stands thus: King George was a polygamist and had many children. When converted to Christianity, for which he has displayed much zeal, he divorced all his wives but one (of course the youngest), thereby bastardizing all his elder sons. These purpose to fight for the succession, each having followers and supporters. David, among the rest, declares his intention to strike a blow for the sovereignty; and, to introduce a still more formidable element of discord, Maafu, who claims the kingdom of Tonga on pretence of being the bravest man in it, will, as he says, throw his sword into the scale, and bring into the field not only all the old companions of his former wars, but a horde of merciless Fijian allies, who will repay with interest upon the unhappy inhabitants of Tonga the wrongs which their countrymen have inflicted upon Fiji.

From the geographical conditions, the transport of the combatants must be conducted by sea, and European merchants, who have experience of the trade of the group, and who consequently perfectly comprehend the situation, have been for years back anticipating the explosion, and making preparations to supply the material of war in this struggle, which they justly regard as inevitable. Those who are acquainted with the history of the sanguinary civil strife which followed the introduction of Christianity into the Friendly Islands will readily understand what the nature of the conflict will be.

It is lamentable to think that a people possessed of qualities so amiable, and in many aspects so worthy of respect, should be delivered over to a reign of violence and bloodshed (in which none can hope to profit but merciless conquerors and unprincipled speculators), at the very time when, having recently emerged from barbarism, they have shown so great progress in the arts of peace and the knowledge of God. Surely, it seems the manifest duty of whatsoever great nation is now most interested in the prosperity of Polynesia, to take some steps to avert these calamities. One