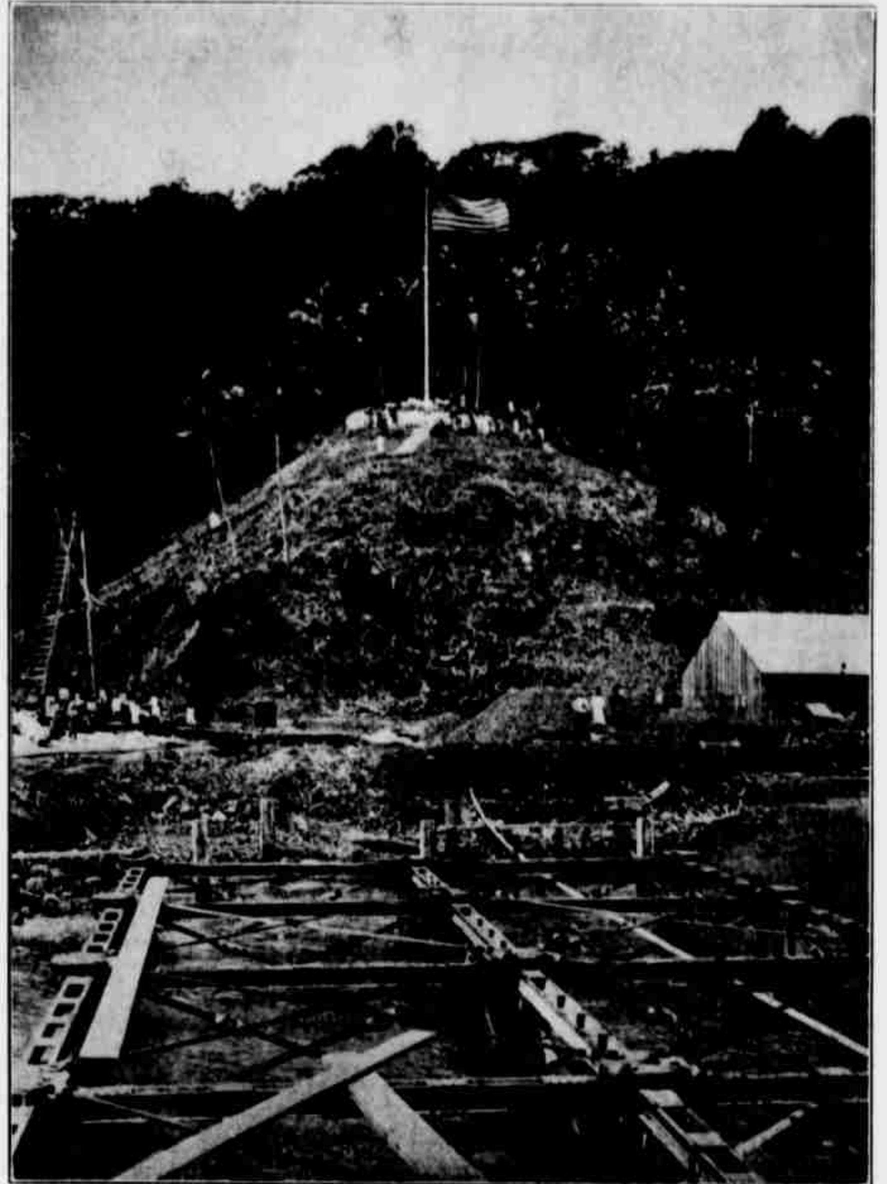
Our New Island in the Central Pacific

MAKING KAVA—THE GIRL IN THE CENTER DOES THE CHEWING.



NAVAL STATION ON PAGO PAGO BAY, SHOWING START ON NEW STEEL WHARF

(Copyright, 1902, by Frank G. Carpenter.)

APIA, Samoa, Dec. 24.—(Special Correspondence of The Bee.)—I give you my notes concerning Apia, the capital of the German colony in Samoa, as they were written on the ground. I came here from New Zealand enroute for San Francisco. The ships start from Sydney and call at New Zealand and the Samoan and Hawaiian islands on the way. It is now four days since I left Auckland, and it will take me four days more to get to Honolulu.

Steaming is delightful down here along the equator. We have nothing but sunshine, and such glorious sunshine. As we coasted the Island of Savii, the largest of the Samoan group, the air was fresh and the wind strong enough to make it cool and pleasant. The sea was a steel blue, with silvery white caps dancing upon it between us and the shore, and the sky was full of white, smoky clouds. Savii makes me think of the Hawaiian islands. It is long and volcanic, but its volcanic characteristics are hidden in verdure. As we sailed by it it seemed like a great hill of the shape of a horse shoe, the ends of the shoe sloping down to the water. Passing this we soon reached the Island of Upolu, on the north coast of which Apia is situated. Both Upolu and Savii now belong to Germany, all the rest of the islands having been given up to the United States.

German Samoa.

The Germans, in their greed for more land, were glad to take the two larger islands. Out here it is thought that we got the best of the bargain. Both Savii and Upolu together are not as large as Rhode Island, and they are of little value outside their harbors, which are not good. Savii is forty-seven miles long and twenty-eight miles wide and Upolu is much smaller. Both islands are mountainous, fertile and well watered. Like Tutuila, they have been built up by the coral polyps, aided by volcanoes.

As I came into the harbor of Apia the tide was low and I could see a great garden or bed of coral rising up out of the water. Here and there along the shore were signs of cultivation. There were groves of cocoanut trees and further up the mountains plantations of cacao. In the green jungle on the hills I could see here and there a patch of chocolate brown, where the ground had been cleared for new cacao farms. Just back of Apia the white villa of Robert Louis Stevenson showed out and above it rose mountain after mountain of different shades of green or blue, covered by the vegetation and the clouds.

The country looked very beautiful in the tropical sunlight. The sky was full of fleecy masses. Here the shadows turned the sea to green and there to navy blue, while upon the land they made a mass of light and shade, added to by the fresh green crop shining out of the old green forest. Close to the water's edge were what from our steamer looked like vast cornfields, which the captain said were cocoanut orchards, containing tens of thousands of trees, loaded with millions of nuts.

Quite a business is done here in copra. The cocoanuts are gathered, split open and the meat taken out. This is cut into strips of about 4x6 inches and dried in the sun, when it shrinks to about half that size and is known as copra. After drying it is packed in burlap sacks, each containing about seventy pounds, and thus shipped to Europe and the United States. It sells here for about 2 cents a pound and in Liverpool or San Francisco for about 3 cents a pound.

Look at Apia.

I am much disappointed in Apia. From Robert Louis Stevenson's letters and the fuss which the town has made in the international history of the recent past I expected to find it a city. It is a shabby little village of 350 foreigners. There are 200 British and 150 Germans, with a few Americans and French for good measure. The town is right on the sea and it runs around the harbor. It is made up of bungalow-shaped buildings, roofed with galvanized iron. A great crowd of Samoans came down to greet the steamer and the whole population of foreigners was out for the same purpose.

I went up to the Tivoli hotel and have made this my headquarters during my stay. The town itself is easily exhausted. It has a half dozen business houses, engaged in shipping cacao and copra and in furnishing the natives with different kinds of fancy goods, cottons and tinned stuffs. There are two photographers, a lot of consuls and a baker's dozen or so of German officials. The Germans are now doing the bulk of the trade and they are gradually gobbling up the plantations.

I rode up to Robert Louis Stevenson's home. It now belongs to a German and the cacao plantation upon which he sweat so profusely was bought at half price by a German planter. This planter has materially added to the house and is fast destroying all vestiges of Stevenson. He has a sign over the gate in half a dozen languages, beginning "Eingang verboten" and going on to say in English, French and Samoan that strangers are prohibited from coming inside the gate. Robert Louis Stevenson's tomb is overgrown with weeds and the pilgrimages to it from the incoming ships are less every year.

Among the Samoans.

I have been taken around over the island of Upolu by one of the Samoan chiefs. I was introduced to him in his house, a kind of thatched shack not far from Apia. He was half naked when I came into the house, but he dressed himself in my presence and went about with me. I find that he speaks good English. He knows the islands well and is very intelligent, as are all the natives I have so far met.

With my friend the chief I visited many of the Samoan villages. They are made up of huts walled and roofed with thatch. It is not necessary that the walls be tight, as it is always warm here, and the more air you can get the better. The usual sleeping place is the floor and this is also the sitting place.

The conditions are just about the same in Tutuila and Manua as here, and what I write about Upolu will do equally well for our islands. The people sleep on grass mats, which they lay on the ground. They use as pillows a little stick of bamboo, mounted on four short legs, which raises their heads well up off the floor. The Samoans are a cleanly people. They are always bathing. You see them everywhere in the water, both women and men. They wade about waist-deep in the streams, swim together in the surf and splash one another, acting more like boys in swimming than men and women.

Uncle Sam's Samoan Daughters.

I like the Samoan girls and I think Uncle Sam has materially added to his gallery of American beauties by the acquisition of Tutuila and Manua. Manua, you know, is an island of ours a little beyond Tutuila, which is noted for its pretty girls. The Samoan women have beautiful forms. They are straighter than the statue of Venus in the Capitoline museum in Rome, and they are as plump and as well formed as the Venus de Medici. They have a rich chestnut brown complexion, large, soulful eyes, which are full of smiles, and luxuriant black hair, which they often bleach to a bright red by the use of lime and other things.

Both women and men are full of good nature. Especially in Tutuila, where they have not been spoiled by foreigners, they are gentle, kind and easily governed.

Our government steamer has been in port here during my stay and its officers have given me much information about things in our part of the Samoan islands. They tell me that the Tutuilans already consider themselves American citizens. They have sworn allegiance to the United States and hurrah for the Stars and Stripes as enthusiastically as we do on the Fourth of July. The government has brought quiet to the island. It has for years been torn up with wars among the different tribes, but the naval officials have required that all the guns be given up and the people are now, figuratively speaking, turning their swords into pruning hooks.

We are ruling the Samoans after the Dutch method; that is, we are allowing them to govern themselves and working through their chiefs. Every village is a little republic, with its own chief, who is in most cases a hereditary ruler. These chiefs have been made the governors of their villages and all work is done through them. Our naval officials sit behind the chiefs and pull the strings and the people think they are ruling themselves. In this way schools have been established and some of the old customs have been abolished. The government desires to encourage education as far as possible and missionary work is respected. At present the islands have a revenue of $7,500 a year, the taxes being paid in copra.

Fortune Making in Samoa.

I have been asked to investigate the chances for Americans to make fortunes in the Samoan islands. Robert Louis Stevenson tried it and failed. He made about $20,000 a year out of his books, but as far as I can learn not a cent out of cacao. The islands have an excellent climate. It is good for consumptives, and if the consumptive be anything else than an impractical newspaper or literary man he might make money at cocoanut raising or cacao planting. There are men who have cacao plantations on Upolu who are making money.

MANUA MAIDS ARE NOTED FOR BEAUTY.

Cacao plants are those which produce the seeds from which chocolate is made. They are planted here in rows about fourteen feet apart and sometimes closer. About 200 rows can be grown upon an acre. It takes four years before the trees come into bearing, and after that time, if properly cared for, they are profitable. One Samoan planter named Moors has netted $1,200 a year from sixty acres and there are others who have done equally as well.

Mr. Moors has 3,000 trees set out at Pago-Pago and he expects to set out more. Some of the native chiefs have plantations and there is a man named Caruthers who netted $900 from less than eight acres of cacao in 1899. Mr. Moors says that two-thirds of all the land in the Samoan islands is suitable for the growth of cacao.

I am not sure as to prices of lands on Tutuila, but I doubt not they could be bought very cheap. Back in the country land is leased as low as 25 cents per acre and about Apia good lands are sold at from $15 to $50 per acre. It costs about $50 an acre to clear the jungle and set out a plantation, but small crops can be raised between the trees and if well handled the plantation will pay in a short time.

As to cocoanuts, I think there is a good deal of money in raising them almost anywhere out in the Pacific. The lands near the coast of almost all the islands will produce good trees and a good cocoanut plantation will yield $1 a tree every year. This is so especially in the Philippines, where, if properly handled, they will yield more.

Our Island of Manua.

I have a photograph recently taken of the village of Manua, on our island of Manua. This is the island next largest to Tutuila. We have altogether four or five islands out here; they are Tutuila, Manua, Ofu and Olosega. Manua contains about twenty square miles. It is mountainous and surrounded by coral reefs. The mountains are about a half-mile in height, but the land rises so gradually that the whole island can be cultivated. The Manuans are much the same as the Tutuilans. They number altogether about 2,000, but they are out of the line of ocean steamship travel and are more interesting than the Samoans of the other islands. They have had missionaries for the last seventy years and are Christians. They have churches and schools and live peacefully under their king. They produce enough food for themselves and sell enough copra to buy what they want in other ways. The American officers say that cocoanut and banana plantations are being put out on all our islands and that they will soon increase in production and wealth. They have nothing but good to say of the people.

It is interesting to hear naval officers tell their experiences in these out-of-the-way islands. They were received in great state by the king of Manua, who treated them to kava before he discussed business with them. He had his chiefs with him and his wife, the queen, sat beside him during the audience. The kava was brought in by the belle of the island in a cup fastened to a branch of cocoanut palm. It was first given to the king, who handed it back to her, whereupon she filled it and again gave it to his majesty. He drank some of it, first pouring some on the ground. After this it was presented to Commander Tilley and the other officers and they drank it, although they knew very well how it was made.

Chewed by Pretty Girls.

The preparation of kava is much the same as that of chicha in Bolivia. Chicha is a beer made of corn, the grains of which are chewed up by Indian girls and expectorated into a pot in which they are left to ferment. Kava comes from a root grown in the Pacific islands, and the kava roots are chewed up by the pretty Samoan girls and made into a drink after the following manner: The kava is first washed and then cut up into little cubes. Then a young girl, preferably a pretty girl, after washing her hands and rinsing her mouth, begins to work. She puts one cube of kava into her mouth and chews it vigorously. When it is well masticated she adds another and another until she has within her lips and cheeks a mass of masticated fiber as big as an egg.

This she takes out and lays in a large flat bowl and then begins to form another egg. She keeps on making eggs until all the root is chewed. Then water is poured into the bowl and the girl begins to knead the fibrous mass under it. Finally the juice goes out of the fiber into the water. It is strained through other fiber until it is clear. It is now of a milky color and it tastes for all the world like a mixture of soapsuds and bitters. It is not an intoxicant, but when taken in excess it goes to your knees, rendering you unable to walk straight for a time. This drink is used in all the islands of the Pacific, and here in Samoa anyone who is making kava has the right to ask any girl who is passing, no matter who she may be, to come in and chew for him.

Missions in Samoa.

I understand that the London Missionary society is doing much good throughout all parts of Samoa. It has been working here for almost three generations and it now claims 27,000 converts. There are also Roman Catholic missionaries on some of the islands, and altogether the people are religious. It seems to me that the average morality among the natives of many of the islands of the Pacific is far higher than among the foreigners. It is the foreigners who bring in the whisky, and the average beach-combing trader is not a man to be respected, although there are high-class business men scattered through the various archipelagoes.

The London Missionary society has done a great deal of work in the Fijis, the Tongas and other islands. It has organized a girls' high school in our possessions recently and it is doing much to elevate the people.

There are a number of improvements going on about Pago Pago bay. A steel pier is being built and coal sheds have been erected. The pier was, I understand, first put down upon coral rock instead of bed rock. After a time the rock broke through and it is said that a large part of the work will have to be done over again. The harbor of Pago Pago is by far the best on the islands and it will probably be the chief coaling place for the steamers which cross this part of the Pacific, taking the place which Apia has now.

FRANK G. CARPENTER.

Not a Common Farmer

Syracuse Herald: "What, my daughter marry you, a common clod of a farmer? Young man, you must be crazy," remarked the choleric old gentleman with the Mark Hanna build.

We looked to see the young man in the overalls wither up and disappear, but instead he smiled faintly, even haughtily, and, jingling a bunch of loose change in his pocket, pensively remarked:

"Mr. Vanderfeller, I planted twenty acres to potatoes last spring, and the crop was a success."

"What!" cried the old man, surprise and remorse in his tones, "twenty acres of potatoes? And I called you a farmer? You're an agriculturist, sir, and I'm proud to have you as a son-in-law."