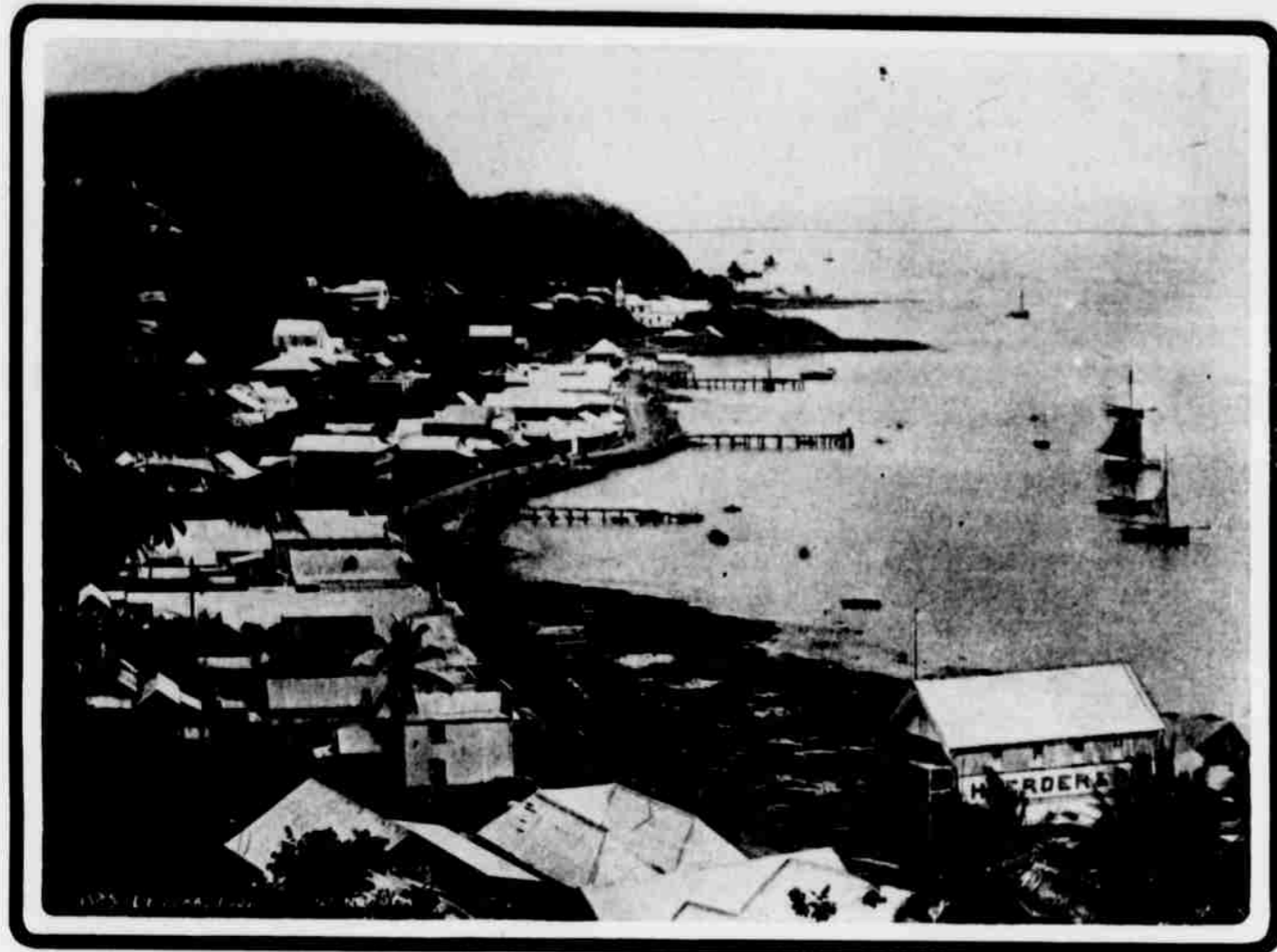


# New Island Republic Of the South Seas

(Copyright, 1901, by Frank G. Carpenter.)  
WELLINGTON, New Zealand, March 21, 1901.—(Special Correspondence of The Bee.)  
—Before I begin my letters on the continent of Australia I want to tell you something about the scheme which is now proposed to federate New Zealand with the Tonga and Fiji islands, making a great colonial republic down here below the equator under the protection of England. This republic will embrace hundreds of islands. It will extend almost two thousand miles from north to south and it may be the beginning of an island empire which will include the greater part of the South Seas. The governments of the various islands are now in correspondence. The leading politicians of New Zealand are pushing the scheme and its adoption is being discussed in the New Zealand Parliament. Premier Seddon is in favor of it and the

that he might lie soft, and such a thing as killing a baby was too common for notice.  
**King Thakombau and His Father.**  
The last king of the Fijis, Thakombau, was the son of a noted man-eater. Thakombau was something of a cannibal himself, but his father craved human flesh as a matinee maiden craves candy. He had war canoes which he sent about through the South Sea islands for supplies, and they often came back filled with dead men and women and with dead babies dangling from the yardarms. Upon their return there was always a feast, in which every one joined.  
You can still see the ovens in which the cooking was done. They were filled with redhot stones, and it is related by the missionaries that victims were often thrust in alive. At one time fifty bodies were cooked, and at another eighty women were strangled for a similar feast. When there were not enough enemies to supply the

they constitute altogether more than two hundred different islands and islets. They were discovered in 1643 by the Dutch navigator, Tasman, the same man who discovered Tasmania, and they became a British colony in 1874. Altogether their area is a little less than that of Massachusetts and their total population about that of Omaha. They are growing less in number every year. There were 80,000 more forty years ago than there are now, a fact which suggests that modern civilization may mean death to the savages of the South Seas. The same falling off has occurred in the Hawaiian islands, as well as in other places where the foreigners have introduced new diseases along with other evils which we have, but which they had not. Take the measles, for instance. This disease was unknown until it was brought in by the Europeans, but when it came it took off 40,000 people the first year, and it has killed many since.  
And still the Fijians are as strong and as good looking as the foreigners. They are among the finest of the Melanesians, and are far superior to our American Indians. They have dark copper skins, frizzly hair, which stands up about their heads in an enormous mop, making them look very tall. They plaster their hair with dampened lime



"THE TOWN OF LEVUKA COVERS FORTY ACRES."

arrangement may be consummated within the year.

The United States is especially interested in the future of some of the islands. The Tongas are not far south of Samoa and the Fijis have recently formed a direct connection with San Francisco by the new line of steamships which the Spreckels have put on connecting Suva and Levuka, the chief cities of those islands, by way of Hawaii, with San Francisco. There is also a connection between the Samoan islands and the Fijis, and the probability is that the greater part of the trade will fall into our hands.

### American Trade with the Fijis.

At the present time the Fiji islands alone are annually importing about \$3,500,000 worth of goods, and a large part of this already comes from the United States. We are supplying them with timber. They buy our coal oil, and our hardware brings the highest price in their markets. The American ax is the only kind a Fijian will use. He likes it because it is light, sharp and well tempered, and he will buy it every time in preference to a German or an English ax. He likes American knives with blades about fifteen inches long to clear his fields and gather his bananas and coconuts, and he is also fond of our cheap watches and clocks. I am told a good business can be created there in knocked-down furniture and also in low-priced pianos and organs. The people buy about \$200,000 worth of cottons yearly and there is a demand for canned meats and flour. Our merchants can learn all about the markets by writing to the chambers of commerce at Levuka and Suva, where they will find banks at both places.

Our drummers can be accommodated at good hotels at either of these towns, and they need not fear the meat brought on the table, for cannibalism passed away long before the English got possession of the Fijis. Indeed, the Fiji islands are now more advanced than parts of the Philippines, and their condition shows what a nation like ours can do with its colony at Tutuila in Samoa and with the wilder parts of the Philippines. There are men still living here in New Zealand who can tell you stories of the days when the Fijians were the bloodthirstiest cannibals on earth, when they had human sacrifices, and widows were expected to burn themselves on the funeral pyres of their husbands. When a chief built a house he festively planted a living victim under each post, and when his canoes were launched he used living men as rollers upon which to slide them down into the sea. When he died his wives were strangled to line his grave.

king's table he ordered his men to ambush the watering places and to lay in a stock of fishermen or stray women who had gone down to bathe.

King Thakombau killed his first victim when he was 6 years old, and he was famous as a cannibal up until the time of his conversion by the missionaries. He then reformed, and later on made the treaty which gave these islands to England.

### Fijians in 1901.

These stories give you some idea of the Fijians of the past. The Fijians of today are perhaps the most civilized of the colored people south of the equator. They have been almost universally converted to Christianity. They have churches everywhere. They have almost a thousand places of worship; there are 30,000 church members among the 121,000 of the population and there are 33,000 children in the Sunday schools. They have their own native preachers and they pay the salaries, giving about \$15,000 a year to the church. There are a half dozen denominations, among which the Methodists, the Presbyterians, the Episcopalians and the Catholics are the leading ones.

The Fijians have good schools. They were first established by the missionaries and afterward taken up by the government. There are now 34,000 scholars in the public schools. There is a night school at the town of Levuka and another at Suva. There is an industrial school near the latter place where carpentering, boat building and iron working are taught. There are seventy students in the school, who have been entered for terms of five years. There is also a medical school, and altogether the people are well equipped as to educational matters.

It seems strange to think of newspapers being published in such an out-of-the-way part of the world. There are, however, four different journals set up and printed in the islands. The Fiji Times is issued twice a week, and it costs 12 cents a number. The Royal Gazette appears five times a month at 25 cents a copy, while the Na Mata, a Fijian newspaper, is published by the government at 75 cents a year, or 6 cents a copy. In addition to these there is the Fiji Colonist, published in Levuka, at \$5 per year.

### What the Fijis Are.

But before I go further let me give you some idea as to the extent of the islands. You know that they lie south of the equator and a little to the west of our possessions in Samoa, but you may not know that they are scattered over the sea for a distance of several hundred miles and that

in order to have it stand straight, and this in connection with the sun bleaches it to an auburn and makes it look very curious.

The men are tall and well formed. The women, when young, are fine looking, having handsome eyes and well-molded faces. In the settled regions the women wear loose cotton gowns, but back in the interior the usual attire of a breechcloth and a string of beads and a fan. The men wear little more.

The Fijians are a good-natured people. They are cleanly and spend more than half their time in the water. After every bath they rub themselves down with coconut oil, the rancid smell of which enables you to tell them if the wind is blowing right before you can see them.

### Fiji Houses and Towns.

There are a number of Fiji villages scattered over the islands, and there are many natives who live in and about Suva and Levuka, the principal places where the foreigners are located.

The Fiji villages are made almost entirely of thatched huts, the walls made of woven bamboo. The roofs are very thick and the thatch is so beautifully put on that it seems to be woven. No nails are used in building, the walls being tied together with strings. Some of the houses are conical in shape, others oblong and others oval. The usual hut has but one room, in which the whole family stays in the daytime, when it rains, and where all sleep at night. The usual bed is a mat on the floor and the pillow a bamboo log, which is placed under the neck in order to keep the sleeper's head well up from the ground. There is but little cooking and fruit forms a large part of the diet of the people.

In the mountains there live savage Fijians who keep themselves apart from the civilized natives. Here the men for full dress wear a strip of bark about their waists tied at the front in a bow, while the women have a fringe of grass about four inches long. Both sexes take a great deal of pride in their headdresses, and you frequently see one with a long pin thrust through his hair as a scratcher. This weapon is to make war upon certain unmentionable insects with which almost every head is infested. Sometimes the irritation gets beyond the scratching point, however, and in desperation the man so attacked kindles a fire of banana leaves and lying down upon his wooden pillow on the side toward which the wind blows thus smokes out the surplus.

There is a close connection between New  
(Continued on Seventh Page.)



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