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AMERICAN SAMOA

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SAMOA is to some people a political problem; to some a place made memorable by the four years' abiding there of Robert Louis Stevenson; and to a few others a group of tropical islands whose geography and natural history need exploring. To most of us it is simply a map name—a geographical fairyland, without remembered capital, principal town or chief exports. But Samoa does have a capital—at least, in a small thatched hut, under the palms of Mulinuu village, a two-thirds naked king sits on a cocoanut-leaf mat and switches flies from his bare shoulders with a fly-flapper. And it has a principal city named Apia, memorable as the place where an impatient hurricane blew its breath on a certain Gordian knot of world politics and made ropy spindrift of it. And lastly it has chief exports, the name of which is that magic word of South Sea tales, copra. Volcanoes make the mountains and gorges and solid land of Samoa; two hundred inches of rain a year and an ardent tropic sun make its wonderful forest and bush and graceful palms; the "coral insect" makes its white shore-line and cruel reefs; while copra makes its enduring smell and is responsible for its civilization. About it all is the abiding presence of the ocean. From every vantage point one sees the blue water meet the blue sky. Ever in one's ears is the low growl of the water beaten back by the guarding reef. In every direction is it ocean-wide away to the world!

To the geographer the Samoan Islands must be studied from two points of view. First from that of the physio-geographer, and second from that of the politico-geographer. To get to the islands to study them it is simply necessary to embark on a Sydney liner (Oceanic S. S. Co.) at San Francisco, and sit tight for two weeks. You can get off at ¹Pago-pago, the port of Tutuila, one of the American islands, and the only harbor of any real consequence in the whole group. When you have reached Pago-pago, indeed when you are a few hours out of it, you have learned something of the physical geography of Samoa and for that matter, of many other Pacific islands. And this is, that not every South Sea island is a low reef or atoll of coral shining white in the sun with a scattering covering of pandanas and cocoanut palms, the whole thing lifting up but a few yards above the tropic blue ocean. Tutuila rises some twenty-five hundred feet, while certain other similarly formed Pacific islets are much higher. All these are simply volcanoes, now mostly dead (one broke out afresh in Samoa a few weeks ago),

¹In pronouncing Samoan names, wherever *g* is written, pronounce it as *ng* in our word *sing*.

with their steep lava flanks covered with a marvel of beautiful tropic "bush." Around each of these old volcanoes, where it rises from the water, the busy coral polyps have built a reef which is fringing, if no subsidence of the island mass has occurred since its uplift, or barrier if there has. This reef is broken where the fresh water streams pour into the sea, for the coral dies in the face of a stream, and the one or even two hundreds of annual inches of

The Coconut Palms along the Ocean Shore.

water that fall on the steep sides of the island make streams that plunge with strong currents into the quiet sea water. Where the encircling reef meets the steady, trade-wind driven, long swells of the ocean, there is ever a mighty commotion; the roar of the surge and the white line of foam is an ever-present part of the islanders' world of sound and sight.

There are four principal islands in the Samoan group, besides six islets. These first belonged to the Samoans, then to Great Britain, Germany and the United States in common, and now are divided between Germany and us, England having received a *quid pro quo* elsewhere for her interest in Samoa. The largest island lies to the west, the others, progressively smaller and, geologically, progressively older, to the eastward. The first is Savaii, forty-five miles long and thirty miles wide, its primitive creating volcanoes

A Samoan Village under the Coconut Palms.

Lake Larruto, in the summit crater of an extinct volcano. (Note the dense tropical vegetation.)

not yet cold, but with their rugged sides already overrun with liana-bound forests, as yet impassable to man. Next comes Upolu, forty miles by fifteen, richest in cocoanuts and in arable land, with its town Apia, the principal one in the islands, and its green mountain Vaea, with the glossy farm of Vailima on its flanks, securely within the Valhalla of literary fame. Apia harbor, calm and safe in ordinary days when the trades blow across the land, changes into a narrow gorge with jagged jaws of coral in the season of the northwest hurricanes. Then great ships are helpless in its tortuous channels, and the sheltering reefs become themselves the sources of the direst danger. It was in 1889, in this harbor, that a terrible hurricane sank the war ships of Germany and America.

Fifty miles beyond Upolu lies Tutuila, twenty miles long, and from two to five miles wide. Sixty miles still farther to the southeast, out in the sea, is Manua, almost circular, ten miles in diameter, and oldest of all the Samoan Islands in geological time, and once most honored in hereditary leadership. Tutuila and Manua are our islands; Savaii and Upolu belong to Germany.

Tutuila is primarily a huge volcanic crater, which has built up the island with the lava it has ejected. This crater of Pago-pago is fringed about with steep walls from 1,000 to 2,500 feet high, almost vertical on the inner edge after the fashion of craters, sloping away on the outside as the lava flows, two points in its rim, the mountains of Matafao and Peoa, much higher than the rest, and with a break half a mile wide on the south, letting in the sea. The harbor of Pago-pago, thus formed within the crater of Peoa, is nearly two miles deep and a mile wide. This size is, however, much reduced by the fringing reef which occupies half the strait at the entrance, and which forms an unbroken rim about the shore within. But with all this, there is room enough, if not for all the navies of the world, for all the ships likely ever to put in to Samoa. The winding entrance shuts out all surf from the south, and the great walls on every other side make the harbor securely landlocked, whatever the hurricane without. It is, in brief, the one good harbor in all the South Seas, and for that reason it is of high value to a great nation with expansive commercial aspirations. In any case, it is now ours, and is likely to remain so, a mere dock and coaling station in the eyes of our American administrators, but to its people, the colony of Tutuila of the United States of America, a position in their eyes far nobler than to be an independent kingdom.

Of arable land Tutuila has practically none: a few wet places are planted to taro, that curious aroid or tropical jack-in-the-pulpit, whose tuber is the substitute for the potato throughout the Pacific Islands, and for all

The Samoan "Bush." Luxuriant tropic vegetation making the inland forests impassable except where trails have been hewn through.

modern predigested foods, which find their prototype in *poi*. Along the sea-shore and on the lower flanks of the mountains is the cocoanut palm, the most graceful tree that grows. The cocoanut furnishes the only article of export from the island, and is, besides, the chief provider of the native's food, drink, clothes, house and house furnishings. The cocoanut product for export bears the name of copra. This is simply the meat of ripe cocoanuts cut out in little strips, and dried in the sun. The oily, shriveled bits are packed into sacks, and sold to the traders who ship them to Hamburg, to San Francisco, or to Sydney. From this copra is expressed the familiar cocoanut or palm oil used in making certain soaps. All the copra from all of Samoa—and by far the major part of it comes from the German island Upolu—amounts to barely half a million dollars' worth a year. And beyond copra the Samoan exports consist chiefly in much hopeful talk about some future cacao (chocolate). Besides cocoanuts, the banana, bread-fruit, papaya, mango, and a few other food trees grow freely, although but little attention is paid to their cultivation. Without effort on the part of any one, there is fruit enough for all. Add to this fruit, fish, chickens, pigs, *beche de mer*, and squid, and the island contributions to the Samoan's bill of fare are practically all named. As *bonnes bouches* fat larvæ of giant wood-boring beetles, or the uncooked insides of fresh sea-urchins, may be added. Once a year, too, in the full moon of November the strange sea-worm Palolo rises from the depths to spawn, and to furnish the natives with their daintiest tid-bit. An acquired taste for canned salmon—familiarily known as *pea soup*,—the principal American export to this interesting colony of ours—is much in evidence among all Samoans. My farewell gift to royalty consisted of a great tin of ship's biscuit, and a case of Columbia River salmon, and it distinctly had the royal approval.

When your San Francisco-Sydney liner steams slowly into the mouth of Pago-pago harbor, you realize that you have exchanged oak trees for cocoanut palms, prunes for bananas, and tailored men and women for scantily girdled children of nature. Still, the first child of nature I met on Pago beach was smoking a fat cigar and carrying a lantern and a disreputable umbrella. But his clothing was a lava-lava of tapa (mulberry-bark cloth), and his skin was brown and shone with cocoanut oil. He was a Samoan in the process of making over into an American. He wanted to sell me a war club which he had whittled out since seeing the steamer's smoke, and he could say "damn."

Away from the beach, though (and "beach" means only that part of the shore line of a South-Pacific island invaded by whites), the Samoan native is a glorious specimen of kindly, honest, care-free, wholesome, child-witted,

primitive man. Almost uniformly superbly developed physically, holding up straight and free six feet of stature, and looking from clear eyes out of open, intelligent faces, the Samoan men are among the finest of the anthropologists' living specimens. Never confound the tall, brown, straight-haired Polynesians of the Marquesas, Society and Samoan Islands with the under-sized, woolly-haired, black "boys" of most of the hundreds of South Sea islands in Micro- and Melanesia. They are races apart. The Samoan women have the same attractive race-characteristics, but their physical development is not so uniformly good as in the men; the anthropologist, if collecting "methodically at random," will capture more undesirable specimens in the gentler sex.

The missionaries have mostly conquered the South Seas. In each little village of toadstool huts, the biggest mushroom of all is "mijinery house"—South Pacific for church. And Sunday is a day, the South Pacific over, devoted to earnest howlings of adapted gospel hymns by fantastically clothed barbarians. A Samoan attends from four to seven services each Sunday, beginning at seven o'clock in the morning. He comes dressed in a white lava-lava, white duck jacket, fly-flapper, and serious countenance; she comes in a gaudy Mother-Hubbard, gaudier little green ribboned, blue-feather chip hat, and white-toothed smile. Each carries a cocoanut-leaf mat to sit on and hymn book to sing from. All can read, and all can sing. It is mostly singing, though a vociferously spoken sermon by the native preacher finds its appropriate place. And the singing is tuneful for the most part, and oh, so heartily enjoyed! Any South Sea islander will praise God (perhaps any god) willingly if he may sing his praises. And the missionaries have wisely found this line of least resistance.

The missionary and the results of his labors are the subject of constant debate the world over. In the South Pacific the missionaries have wrested the natives from the hands of adventurers and beach-combers, speaking by and large. But they have delivered the natives into the hands of an awful enemy of tropic people, called Clothes. From Monday to Saturday he and she have gone healthfully, naturally and without self-consciousness mostly undressed. The swift showers have beat on their oiled naked shoulders and limbs as harmlessly as on the duck's preened plumage. The perspiration induced by the tropic sun has swiftly and coolingly evaporated as fast as it oozed out. But on Sunday the cheap cotton clothing is put on to make him and her self-conscious and immodest, and to lie soaked with rain, or between showers with perspiration, in sticky folds over the body. Result, morally disastrous self-consciousness, and physically disastrous pneumonia. Truly it is a question whether clothes do not carry the natives as swiftly and

certainly into the presence of their new-found God, as does the awful heritage of loathsome disease bequeathed them by the dissolute whalers and beach-combers of pre-missionary days.

What in the name of sane things have indecent Mother-Hubbards and appalling green-ribboned chip hats to do in the great work of leading tropical heathendom to Christianity?

There is no encouragement for white settlers in American Samoa. In fact there is no particular place for them to settle, nor anything to do after settling. There is no land for agricultural purposes, beyond the little necessary for the raising of taro for the natives to eat, and the dense forests of the mountain side have little value as timber. Over on Upolu, the principal German island, there is some flat or flattish land available for cocoanut culture. The German colonists have tried to introduce the growing of cacao but nothing worth while has yet come from this attempt. On the whole Samoa is a country whose chief interest for us must be its physiography, its marvelous beauty, and its memories as the abiding and burial place of the much-loved Robert Louis Stevenson.

THE WORLD'S HIGHEST DAM

In a narrow ravine on the south fork of South Platte River, forty-eight miles from Denver, Col., there has been completed the Cheesman dam, the highest in the world. Its solid wall of masonry is 221 feet high, and impounds 30,000,000,000 gallons of water the depth of which would cover the sixteen stories of the Home Life Insurance Building on Broadway, New York, leaving only the spire above the surface. It was built by a private corporation and cost only \$3,000,000,—a very modest sum for such a great engineering enterprise.

It almost seems as though Nature itself had intended the site of Cheesman dam to some day be utilized as a great reservoir. The cañon of the South Platte river at this point is not more than thirty-five feet wide at the bottom, and the sides are almost vertical for nearly 100 feet. At this point the cañon begins to widen, so that 200 feet above the bottom it is 600 feet wide, and 220 feet above the bottom its width is about 700 feet. From the bottom of the cañon to the summit of the dam the side walls are of solid granite. Before the masonry was laid, the loose boulders, rocks and the vast accumulation of débris were removed.

The width of this great dam on top is eighteen feet, with a 14-foot roadway. At the bottom it is 176 feet wide. The elevation of the top of the parapet walls above the sea is 6,865 feet.—*The Search Light*.