

# A South Sea Island Kingdom.

THE late King George of Tonga was over 94 years of age at the date of his death, which took place at the end of last month. He was a very fine-looking man in his prime, and from his prowess in battle was named the *Hau*, or conquerer. But not only was he a warrior; he was an enlightened statesman also. When he ascended the throne of Tonga 47 years ago his people were mostly heathens and almost uncivilised. He has now passed to the majority, leaving them, as a recent writer has said, 'well on the high road to civilization, education, and religion.' The same writer, speaking of the natives, says: 'They possess the great boon of constitutional Government, which, however imperfectly it may be worked, is a great advance upon the absolutism of former days, and is the great safeguard of the rights of the people. They possess representative Government, an excellent code of laws, and educational institutions that are a credit to the country. For all this due recognition must undoubtedly be given to the agents of the Wesleyan Church, who during the past sixty years have lived and laboured in Tonga, but not to the exclusion of the sovereign who, as a true Nestor of his people, has fostered the educational and religious influences which have made his reign one of such undoubted progress.'

The news of the death of the old King has been received with great regret throughout Tonga. Crowds of natives flocked into Nukuloafa, all dressed in black where they could procure it, or in the most ragged mats they could find. The lying-in-state was a very impressive affair, the whole ceremonial in connection with it being a curious combination of the ancient funeral rites of the Tongans, and of the solemn pageantry which is found at European Courts on the demise of the reigning monarch. The body was laid on a bed of mats in the throne room, and, on either side of it, sat attendants fanning the air to keep the chamber cool. Outside of the palace were pacing to and fro Tongan guards with reversed arms. Every evening while the body remained unburied, the palace and grounds were decorated with countless lamps and Chinese lanterns, presenting a scene that to a European eye would suggest anything but a people bewailing the death of their monarch. In addition to the light shed by these lamps and lanterns great fires were kept ablaze throughout all the tropic night by some four or five hundred people divided into parties of ten each scattered about the grounds. Onlookers describe the scene as comparable to nothing so much as one of those fêtes we read of in Eastern tales as taking place in the palace gardens of Haroun Al Rashid. But it differed from these displays of the good Caliph in that everything was conducted in perfect silence. As the king had prepared a tomb for himself in the island of Uifa, Haapai, it was concluded that it was his desire to be buried there, and it was not expected that there would

be any objection to such a course. The principal chiefs were, however, strenuously opposed to the dead monarch, whose memory Tonga has cause to cherish, being taken to such an inaccessible island, and it was at length determined that he should be buried in Nukuloafa.

Prince George Taufa'afu, who is the great grandson of the late King, has now succeeded to the throne of Tonga. He is a youth of about nineteen years of age, and inherits the kingdom through his mother. He has been educated at the Government College of Tonga, and at Auckland, where he resided for some time with Mr Baker, the ex-Premier of the little kingdom.

The enthroning of the young prince had not taken place at the date of our last news from Tonga, but probably by this time the ceremony has been performed. This ceremony is one of those native customs, which the introduction of European ideas and habits has not yet destroyed. A 'Kava ring' is formed by the chiefs, at which the principal cup of the liquid is presented to the new King. As the presentation is made, his name—not the one he has hitherto borne, but the new one of Tui Kanokupolu, which is the hereditary name of the Tongan Kings, and therefore belongs to him—is called aloud. From that moment he assumes the family name of Tabou. After he has drunk the cup of kava he is led by the two king-making chiefs and his back placed against a sacred coka tree. At the date of our last news from Tonga it was not determined whether the ceremony would take place at Ahifo or in the late king's new church, because the coka trees in the former place, which was used at the last crowning, was much shattered during a severe storm some years ago. At that time, in order that the tree, which had so many august associations connected with it, might not be totally lost, Mr Baker advised the late king's son, David Ugo, now dead, to get that part of the stem against which the kings of Tonga were wont to recline at the coronations, inlaid in a chair. His advice was taken, with the result that a large, oaken chair, made partly of the sacred coka tree, was placed in the king's private chapel at Rukuhoafa. It is probable that in the future this chair will be used for coronation. To do so would be in harmony with those European ways that are gaining ground in Tonga. At the same time the fact of the chair being made of the historic tree will enable it to be used without rudely offending the prejudices of the natives.

## RECOLLECTIONS OF THE LATE KING GEORGE OF TONGA.

BY 'THE ORPHAN.'

It must be close on thirty-five years ago since I made my first acquaintance with King George of Tonga. I was then a lad of about fifteen, and making my first trip to sea on board of the brig *Spray* of Nelson, Captain Scott, master and owner. We had been engaged for two or three months conveying wool from Rich Robinson's Cheviot Run, Amuri, to Port Cooper for transhipment to England. Upon finishing the brig was chartered by a Mr Young to convey a cargo of sheep from Caverhill's station, Amuri, down to Eaou, one of the Friendly Islands, for which he had obtained a lease from King George of Tonga. After the brig had been fitted up, and the necessary stores and provisions taken on board and all made ready for sea, Mr Young and his bride came on board (they having been married the day before) and we took our departure for the Amuri Bluffs, where we shipped about fourteen hundred sheep of different sexes. The work of shipping occupied the best part of three days, as they all had to be brought off in surf boats. This was rather a tedious operation, as the surf ran pretty high nearly all the time we lay in the offing.

When we made our final departure fine and favourable weather was experienced, and we arrived at our destination in a little over three weeks. But for some unaccountable reason the voyage had proved most disastrous to the live stock. They died in scores, so that we had only three hundred left to put on shore when we dropped anchor, and of these nearly one hundred died within twenty-four hours after they were put on shore. After discharging and waiting three or four days Mr Young was so discouraged at the result of his trial shipment

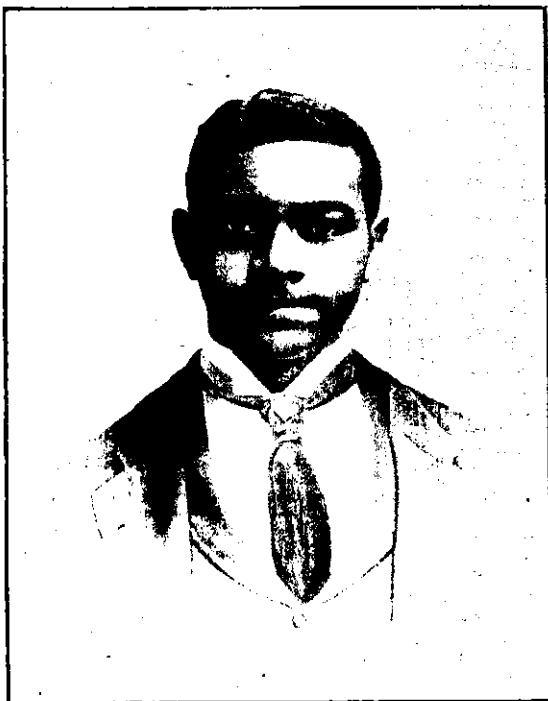


Martin, photo.

Auckland.

THE LATE KING GEORGE TOBIOU OF TONGA.

that he arranged with Captain Scott to sail for Vavau and Haapai, where his brother was in business, and he wished to consult with him as to future movements. After three weeks' pleasant cruise amongst the islands we returned to Eaou, and having spent a day there, made sail for Tongatabou, which is only a short distance from the former island. The day after our arrival Captain Scott, Mr and Mrs Young, and another gentleman passenger we had picked up at one of the islands, paid their respects to King George, making him some presents, and inviting him to come on board to dinner the following day. The invitations were accepted, and on the captain's return the cook and steward and the cabin boy (myself) had to fly around to some tune to get things ready for the royal visit. Next afternoon His Majesty came off in great style in a large double war canoe propelled by one hundred paddles or more. He was dressed in latest style dress suit, chimney pot hat, with well polished Wellington boots to suit, and presented quite an imposing appearance, as he was a strong, powerfully-built man over six feet in height. Soon after his arrival on board dinner was served, and the cabin boy had again to fly around and wait upon the royal guest, who did full justice to a plain, well-cooked dinner, and just tasted of the good liquors provided. After dinner he had a look around the vessel, and was then conveyed ashore in the brig's gig, whose crew were dressed in their best in honour of the occasion. Upon the boat reaching the beach a number of natives caught hold of the gunwale and ran her up high and dry with all on board, so that His Majesty was able to step out on dry land. He was no sooner ashore than off came his sandy clothes and Wellington boots in less time than it takes to tell the story. As each article was taken off, a separate attendant took charge of each. A tarp mat being brought into use, His Majesty appeared to be much more at his ease than when rigged out in European style. The boat's crew on their return, greatly amused the rest of the brig's company by describing the rapid and comical manner in which the disrobing took place. The following day a large double canoe came alongside with a most liberal present of yams, coconuts, oranges, bananas, and every description of island fruit in return for the entertainment of the day before. The fruit, yams, and other articles served the whole ship's company until our arrival at Auckland which was the first port we made after leaving Tonga—I need not say that Auckland presented a very different appearance then to what it does to-day. We next sailed for Nelson, our original port of departure, from there going over to Sydney where the rest of the crew were paid off and I remained on board as ship-keeper some two months or so when she was sold, and I then joined the old Panama and New Zealand S.S. Company's employ.



Martin, photo.

Auckland.

KING GEORGE TOBIOU II. (FORMERLY TAUFA'AFU).