

Chapter Seven--THE FEATHERS OF THE SUN

I

It was the island of Fitu-Iva--the last independent Polynesian stronghold in the South Seas. Three factors conduced to Fitu-Iva's independence. The first and second were its isolation and the warlikeness of its population. But these would not have saved it in the end had it not been for the fact that Japan, France, Great Britain, Germany, and the United States discovered its desirableness simultaneously. It was like gamins scrambling for a penny. They got in one another's way. The war vessels of the five Powers cluttered Fitu-Iva's one small harbour. There were rumours of war and threats of war. Over its morning toast all the world read columns about Fitu-Iva. As a Yankee blue jacket epitomized it at the time, they all got their feet in the trough at once.

So it was that Fitu-Iva escaped even a joint protectorate, and King Tulifau, otherwise Tui Tulifau, continued to dispense the high justice and the low in the frame-house palace built for him by a Sydney trader out of California redwood. Not only was Tui Tulifau every inch a king, but he was every second a king. When he had ruled fifty-eight years and five months, he was only fifty-eight years and three months old. That

is to say, he had ruled over five million seconds more than he had breathed, having been crowned two months before he was born.

He was a kingly king, a royal figure of a man, standing six feet and a half, and, without being excessively fat, weighing three hundred and twenty pounds. But this was not unusual for Polynesian "chief stock." Sepeli, his queen, was six feet three inches and weighed two hundred and sixty, while her brother, Uiliami, who commanded the army in the intervals of resignation from the premiership, topped her by an inch and notched her an even half-hundredweight. Tui Tulifau was a merry soul, a great feaster and drinker. So were all his people merry souls, save in anger, when, on occasion, they could be guilty even of throwing dead pigs at those who made them wroth. Nevertheless, on occasion, they could fight like Maoris, as piratical sandalwood traders and Blackbirders in the old days learned to their cost.

II

Grief's schooner, the Cantani, had passed the Pillar Rocks at the entrance two hours before and crept up the harbour to the whispering flutters of a breeze that could not make up its mind to blow. It was a cool, starlight evening, and they lolled about the poop waiting till their snail's pace would bring them to the anchorage. Willie Smee, the supercargo, emerged from the cabin, conspicuous in his shore clothes. The mate glanced at his shirt, of the finest and whitest silk, and giggled significantly.

"Dance, to-night, I suppose?" Grief observed.

"No," said the mate. "It's Taitua. Willie's stuck on her."

"Catch me," the supercargo disclaimed.

"Then she's stuck on you, and it's all the same," the mate went on. "You won't be ashore half an hour before you'll have a flower behind your ear, a wreath on your head, and your arm around Taitua."

"Simple jealousy," Willie Smee sniffed. "You'd like to have her yourself, only you can't."

"I can't find shirts like that, that's why. I'll bet you half a crown you won't sail from Fitu-Iva with that shirt."

"And if Taitua doesn't get it, it's an even break Tui Tulifau does," Grief warned. "Better not let him spot that shirt, or it's all day with it."

"That's right," Captain Boig agreed, turning his head from watching the house lights on the shore. "Last voyage he fined one of my Kanakas out of a fancy belt and sheath-knife." He turned to the mate. "You can let go any time, Mr. Marsh. Don't give too much slack. There's no sign of wind, and in the morning we may shift opposite the copra-sheds."

A minute later the anchor rumbled down. The whaleboat, already hoisted out, lay alongside, and the shore-going party dropped into it. Save for the Kanakas, who were all bent for shore, only Grief and the supercargo were in the boat. At the head of the little coral-stone pier Willie Smee, with an apologetic gurgle, separated from his employer and disappeared down an avenue of palms. Grief turned in the opposite direction past the front of the old mission church. Here, among the graves on the beach, lightly clad in ahu's and lava-lavas, flower-crowned and garlanded, with great phosphorescent hibiscus blossoms in their hair, youths and maidens were dancing. Farther on, Grief passed the long, grass-built himine house, where a few score of the elders sat in long rows chanting the old hymns taught them by forgotten missionaries. He passed also the palace of Tui Tulifau, where, by the lights and sounds, he knew the customary revelry was going on. For of the happy South Sea isles, Fitu-Iva was the happiest. They

feasted and frolicked at births and deaths, and the dead and the unborn were likewise feasted.

Grief held steadily along the Broom Road, which curved and twisted through a lush growth of flowers and fern-like algarobas. The warm air was rich with perfume, and overhead, outlined against the stars, were fruit-burdened mangoes, stately avocado trees, and slender-tufted palms. Every here and there were grass houses. Voices and laughter rippled through the darkness. Out on the water flickering lights and soft-voiced choruses marked the fishers returning from the reef.

At last Grief stepped aside from the road, stumbling over a pig that grunted indignantly. Looking through an open door, he saw a stout and elderly native sitting on a heap of mats a dozen deep. From time to time, automatically, he brushed his naked legs with a cocoa-nut-fibre fly-flicker. He wore glasses, and was reading methodically in what Grief knew to be an English Bible. For this was Ieremia, his trader, so named from the prophet Jeremiah.

Ieremia was lighter-skinned than the Fitu-Ivans, as was natural in a full-blooded Samoan. Educated by the missionaries, as lay teacher he had served their cause well over in the cannibal atolls to the westward. As a reward, he had been sent to the paradise of Fitu-Iva, where all were or had been good converts, to gather in the backsliders. Unfortunately, Ieremia had become too well educated. A stray volume of Darwin, a nagging wife, and a pretty Fitu-Ivan widow had driven him into the ranks

of the backsliders. It was not a case of apostasy. The effect of Darwin had been one of intellectual fatigue. What was the use of trying to understand this vastly complicated and enigmatical world, especially when one was married to a nagging woman? As Ieremia slackened in his labours, the mission board threatened louder and louder to send him back to the atolls, while his wife's tongue grew correspondingly sharper. Tui Tulifau was a sympathetic monarch, whose queen, on occasions when he was particularly drunk, was known to beat him. For political reasons--the queen belonging to as royal stock as himself and her brother commanding the army--Tui Tulifau could not divorce her, but he could and did divorce Ieremia, who promptly took up with commercial life and the lady of his choice. As an independent trader he had failed, chiefly because of the disastrous patronage of Tui Tulifau. To refuse credit to that merry monarch was to invite confiscation; to grant him credit was certain bankruptcy. After a year's idleness on the beach, Ieremia had become David Grief's trader, and for a dozen years his service had been honourable and efficient, for Grief had proven the first man who successfully refused credit to the king or who collected when it had been accorded.

Ieremia looked gravely over the rims of his glasses when his employer entered, gravely marked the place in the Bible and set it aside, and gravely shook hands.

"I am glad you came in person," he said.

"How else could I come?" Grief laughed.

But Ieremia had no sense of humour, and he ignored the remark.

"The commercial situation on the island is damn bad," he said with great solemnity and an unctuous mouthing of the many-syllabled words. "My ledger account is shocking."

"Trade bad?"

"On the contrary. It has been excellent. The shelves are empty, exceedingly empty. But----" His eyes glistened proudly. "But there are many goods remaining in the storehouse; I have kept it carefully locked."

"Been allowing Tui Tulifau too much credit?"

"On the contrary. There has been no credit at all. And every old account has been settled up."

"I don't follow you, Ieremia," Grief confessed. "What's the joke?--shelves empty, no credit, old accounts all square, storehouse carefully locked--what's the answer?"

Ieremia did not reply immediately. Reaching under the rear corner of the mats, he drew forth a large cash-box. Grief noted and wondered that

it was not locked. The Samoan had always been fastidiously cautious in guarding cash. The box seemed filled with paper money. He skinned off the top note and passed it over.

"There is the answer."

Grief glanced at a fairly well executed banknote. "The First Royal Bank of Fitu-Iva will pay to bearer on demand one pound sterling," he read. In the centre was the smudged likeness of a native face. At the bottom was the signature of Tui Tulifau, and the signature of Fulualea, with the printed information appended, "Chancellor of the Exchequer."

"Who the deuce is Fulualea?" Grief demanded. "It's Fijian, isn't it?--meaning the feathers of the sun?"

"Just so. It means the feathers of the sun. Thus does this base interloper caption himself. He has come up from Fiji to turn Fitu-Iva upside down--that is, commercially."

"Some one of those smart Levuka boys, I suppose?"

Ieremia shook his head sadly. "No, this low fellow is a white man and a scoundrel. He has taken a noble and high-sounding Fijian name and dragged it in the dirt to suit his nefarious purposes. He has made Tui Tulifau drunk. He has made him very drunk. He has kept him very drunk all the time. In return, he has been made Chancellor of the Exchequer

and other things. He has issued this false paper and compelled the people to receive it. He has levied a store tax, a copra tax, and a tobacco tax. There are harbour dues and regulations, and other taxes. But the people are not taxed--only the traders. When the copra tax was levied, I lowered the purchasing price accordingly. Then the people began to grumble, and Feathers of the Sun passed a new law, setting the old price back and forbidding any man to lower it. Me he fined two pounds and five pigs, it being well known that I possessed five pigs. You will find them entered in the ledger. Hawkins, who is trader for the Fulcrum Company, was fined first pigs, then gin, and, because he continued to make loud conversation, the army came and burned his store. When I declined to sell, this Feathers of the Sun fined me once more and promised to burn the store if again I offended. So I sold all that was on the shelves, and there is the box full of worthless paper. I shall be chagrined if you pay me my salary in paper, but it would be just, no more than just. Now, what is to be done?"

Grief shrugged his shoulders. "I must first see this Feathers of the Sun and size up the situation."

"Then you must see him soon," Ieremia advised. "Else he will have an accumulation of many fines against you. Thus does he absorb all the coin of the realm. He has it all now, save what has been buried in the ground."

III

On his way back along the Broom Road, under the lighted lamps that marked the entrance to the palace grounds, Grief encountered a short, rotund gentleman, in unstarched ducks, smooth-shaven and of florid complexion, who was just emerging. Something about his tentative, saturated gait was familiar. Grief knew it on the instant. On the beaches of a dozen South Sea ports had he seen it before.

"Of all men, Cornelius Deasy!" he cried.

"If it ain't Grief himself, the old devil," was the return greeting, as they shook hands.

"If you'll come on board I've some choice smoky Irish," Grief invited.

Cornelius threw back his shoulders and stiffened.

"Nothing doin', Mr. Grief. 'Tis Fulualea I am now. No blarneyin' of old times for me. Also, and by the leave of his gracious Majesty King Tulifau, 'tis Chancellor of the Exchequer I am, an' Chief Justice I am, save in moments of royal sport when the king himself chooses to toy with the wheels of justice."

Grief whistled his amazement. "So you're Feathers of the Sun!"

"I prefer the native idiom," was the correction. "Fulualea, an' it please you. Not forgettin' old times, Mr. Grief, it sorrows the heart of me to break you the news. You'll have to pay your legitimate import duties same as any other trader with mind intent on robbin' the gentle Polynesian savage on coral isles implanted. ----Where was I? Ah! I remember. You've violated the regulations. With malice intent have you entered the port of Fitu-Iva after sunset without sidelights burnin'. Don't interrupt. With my own eyes did I see you. For which offence are you fined the sum of five pounds. Have you any gin? 'Tis a serious offence. Not lightly are the lives of the mariners of our commodious port to be risked for the savin' of a penny'orth of oil. Did I ask: have you any gin? Tis the harbour master that asks."

"You've taken a lot on your shoulders," Grief grinned.

"'Tis the white man's burden. These rascalion traders have been puttin' it all over poor Tui Tulif, the best-hearted old monarch that ever sat a South Sea throne an' mopped grog-root from the imperial calabash. 'Tis I, Cornelius--Fulualea, rather--that am here to see justice done. Much as I dislike the doin' of it, as harbour master 'tis my duty to find you guilty of breach of quarantine."

"Quarantine?"

"'Tis the rulin' of the port doctor. No intercourse with the shore till

the ship is passed. What dire calamity to the confidin' native if chicken pox or whoopin' cough was aboard of you! Who is there to protect the gentle, confidin' Polynesian? I, Fulualea, the Feathers of the Sun, on my high mission."

"Who in hell is the port doctor?" Grief queried.

"'Tis me, Fulualea. Your offence is serious. Consider yourself fined five cases of first-quality Holland gin."

Grief laughed heartily. "We'll compromise, Cornelius. Come aboard and have a drink."

The Feathers of the Sun waved the proffer aside grandly. "'Tis bribery. I'll have none of it--me faithful to my salt. And wherefore did you not present your ship's papers? As chief of the custom house you are fined five pounds and two more cases of gin."

"Look here, Cornelius. A joke's a joke, but this one has gone far enough. This is not Levuka. I've half a mind to pull your nose for you. You can't buck me."

The Feathers of the Sun retreated unsteadily and in alarm.

"Lay no violence on me," he threatened. "You're right. This is not Levuka. And by the same token, with Tui Tulifau and the royal army

behind me, buck you is just the thing I can and will. You'll pay them fines promptly, or I'll confiscate your vessel. You're not the first. What does that Chink pearl-buyer, Peter Gee, do but slip into harbour, violatin' all regulations an' makin' rough house for the matter of a few paltry fines. No; he wouldn't pay 'em, and he's on the beach now thinkin' it over."

"You don't mean to say----"

"Sure an' I do. In the high exercise of office I seized his schooner. A fifth of the loyal army is now in charge on board of her. She'll be sold this day week. Some ten tons of shell in the hold, and I'm wonderin' if I can trade it to you for gin. I can promise you a rare bargain. How much gin did you say you had?"

"Still more gin, eh?"

"An' why not? 'Tis a royal souse is Tui Tulifau. Sure it keeps my wits workin' overtime to supply him, he's that amazin' liberal with it. The whole gang of hanger-on chiefs is perpetually loaded to the guards. It's disgraceful. Are you goin' to pay them fines, Mr. Grief, or is it to harsher measures I'll be forced?"

Grief turned impatiently on his heel.

"Cornelius, you're drunk. Think it over and come to your senses. The

old rollicking South Sea days are gone. You can't play tricks like that now."

"If you think you're goin' on board, Mr. Grief, I'll save you the trouble. I know your kind, I foresaw your stiff-necked stubbornness. An' it's forestalled you are. 'Tis on the beach you'll find your crew. The vessel's seized."

Grief turned back on him in the half-belief still that he was joking. Fulualea again retreated in alarm. The form of a large man loomed beside him in the darkness.

"Is it you, Uiliami?" Fulualea crooned. "Here is another sea pirate. Stand by me with the strength of thy arm, O Herculean brother."

"Greeting, Uiliami," Grief said. "Since when has Fitu-Iva come to be run by a Levuka beachcomber? He says my schooner has been seized. Is it true?"

"It is true," Uiliami boomed from his deep chest. "Have you any more silk shirts like Willie Smee's? Tui Tulifau would like such a shirt. He has heard of it."

"'Tis all the same," Fulualea interrupted. "Shirts or schooners, the king shall have them."

"Rather high-handed, Cornelius," Grief murmured. "It's rank piracy. You seized my vessel without giving me a chance."

"A chance is it? As we stood here, not five minutes gone, didn't you refuse to pay your fines?"

"But she was already seized."

"Sure, an' why not? Didn't I know you'd refuse? 'Tis all fair, an' no injustice done--Justice, the bright, particular star at whose shining altar Cornelius Deasy--or Fulualea, 'tis the same thing--ever worships. Get thee gone, Mr. Trader, or I'll set the palace guards on you. Uiliami, 'tis a desperate character, this trader man. Call the guards."

Uiliami blew the whistle suspended on his broad bare chest by a cord of cocoanut sennit. Grief reached out an angry hand for Cornelius, who titubated into safety behind Uiliami's massive bulk. A dozen strapping Polynesians, not one under six feet, ran down the palace walk and ranged behind their commander.

"Get thee gone, Mr. Trader," Cornelius ordered. "The interview is terminated. We'll try your several cases in the mornin'. Appear promptly at the palace at ten o'clock to answer to the followin' charges, to wit: breach of the peace; seditious and treasonable utterance; violent assault on the chief magistrate with intent to cut, wound, maim, an' bruise; breach of quarantine; violation of harbour regulations; and

gross breakage of custom house rules. In the mornin', fellow, in the mornin', justice shall be done while the breadfruit falls. And the Lord have mercy on your soul."

III

Before the hour set for the trial Grief, accompanied by Peter Gee, won access to Tui Tulifau. The king, surrounded by half a dozen chiefs, lay on mats under the shade of the avocados in the palace compound. Early as was the hour, palace maids were industriously serving squarefaces of gin. The king was glad to see his old friend Davida, and regretful that he had run foul of the new regulations. Beyond that he steadfastly avoided discussion of the matter in hand. All protests of the expropriated traders were washed away in proffers of gin. "Have a drink," was his invariable reply, though once he unbosomed himself enough to say that Feathers of the Sun was a wonderful man. Never had palace affairs been so prosperous. Never had there been so much money in the treasury, nor so much gin in circulation. "Well pleased am I with Fulualea," he concluded. "Have a drink."

"We've got to get out of this pronto," Grief whispered to Peter Gee a few minutes later, "or we'll be a pair of boiled owls. Also, I am to be tried for arson, or heresy, or leprosy, or something, in a few minutes, and I must control my wits."

As they withdrew from the royal presence, Grief caught a glimpse of Sepeli, the queen. She was peering out at her royal spouse and his fellow tipplers, and the frown on her face gave Grief his cue. Whatever was to be accomplished must be through her.

In another shady corner of the big compound Cornelius was holding court. He had been at it early, for when Grief arrived the case of Willie Smee was being settled. The entire royal army, save that portion in charge of the seized vessels, was in attendance.

"Let the defendant stand up," said Cornelius, "and receive the just and merciful sentence of the Court for licentious and disgraceful conduct unbecomin' a supercargo. The defendant says he has no money. Very well. The Court regrets it has no calaboose. In lieu thereof, and in view of the impoverished condition of the defendant, the Court fines said defendant one white silk shirt of the same kind, make and quality at present worn by defendant."

Cornelius nodded to several of the soldiers, who led the supercargo away behind an avocado tree. A minute later he emerged, minus the garment in question, and sat down beside Grief.

"What have you been up to?" Grief asked.

"Blessed if I know. What crimes have you committed?"

"Next case," said Cornelius in his most extra-legal tones. "David Grief, defendant, stand up. The Court has considered the evidence in the case, or cases, and renders the following judgment, to wit:--Shut up!" he thundered at Grief, who had attempted to interrupt. "I tell you the evidence has been considered, deeply considered. It is no wish of the

Court to lay additional hardship on the defendant, and the Court takes this opportunity to warn the defendant that he is liable for contempt. For open and wanton violation of harbour rules and regulations, breach of quarantine, and disregard of shipping laws, his schooner, the Cantani, is hereby declared confiscated to the Government of Fitu-Iva, to be sold at public auction, ten days from date, with all appurtenances, fittings, and cargo thereunto pertaining. For the personal crimes of the defendant, consisting of violent and turbulent conduct and notorious disregard of the laws of the realm, he is fined in the sum of one hundred pounds sterling and fifteen cases of gin. I will not ask you if you have anything to say. But will you pay? That is the question."

Grief shook his head.

"In the meantime," Cornelius went on, "consider yourself a prisoner at large. There is no calaboose in which to confine you. And finally, it has come to the knowledge of the Court, that at an early hour of this morning, the defendant did wilfully and deliberately send Kanakas in his employ out on the reef to catch fish for breakfast. This is distinctly an infringement of the rights of the fisherfolk of Fitu-Iva. Home industries must be protected. This conduct of the defendant is severely reprehended by the Court, and on any repetition of the offence the offender and offenders, all and sundry, shall be immediately put to hard labour on the improvement of the Broom Road. The court is dismissed."

As they left the compound, Peter Gee nudged Grief to look where Tui Tulifau reclined on the mats. The supercargo's shirt, stretched and bulged, already encased the royal fat.

IV

"The thing is clear," said Peter Gee, at a conference in Ieremia's house. "Deasy has about gathered in all the coin. In the meantime he keeps the king going on the gin he's captured, on our vessels. As soon as he can maneuver it he'll take the cash and skin out on your craft or mine."

"He is a low fellow," Ieremia declared, pausing in the polishing of his spectacles. "He is a scoundrel and a blackguard. He should be struck by a dead pig, by a particularly dead pig."

"The very thing," said Grief. "He shall be struck by a dead pig. Ieremia, I should not be surprised if you were the man to strike him with the dead pig. Be sure and select a particularly dead one. Tui Tulifau is down at the boat house broaching a case of my Scotch. I'm going up to the palace to work kitchen politics with the queen. In the meantime you get a few things on your shelves from the store-room. I'll lend you some, Hawkins. And you, Peter, see the German store. Start in all of you, selling for paper. Remember, I'll back the losses. If I'm not mistaken, in three days we'll have a national council or a revolution. You, Ieremia, start messengers around the island to the fishers and farmers, everywhere, even to the mountain goat-hunters. Tell them to assemble at the palace three days from now."

"But the soldiers," Ieremia objected.

"I'll take care of them. They haven't been paid for two months. Besides, Uiliami is the queen's brother. Don't have too much on your shelves at a time. As soon as the soldiers show up with paper, stop selling."

"Then will they burn the stores," said Ieremia.

"Let them. King Tulifau will pay for it if they do."

"Will he pay for my shirt?" Willie Smee demanded.

"That is purely a personal and private matter between you and Tui Tulifau," Grief answered.

"It's beginning to split up the back," the supercargo lamented. "I noticed that much this morning when he hadn't had it on ten minutes. It cost me thirty shillings and I only wore it once."

"Where shall I get a dead pig?" Ieremia asked.

"Kill one, of course," said Grief. "Kill a small one."

"A small one is worth ten shillings."

"Then enter it in your ledger under operating expenses." Grief paused a moment. "If you want it particularly dead, it would be well to kill it

at once."

V

"You have spoken well, Davida," said Queen Sepeli. "This Fulualea has brought a madness with him, and Tui Tulifau is drowned in gin. If he does not grant the big council, I shall give him a beating. He is easy to beat when he is in drink."

She doubled up her fist, and such were her Amazonian proportions and the determination in her face that Grief knew the council would be called. So akin was the Fitu-Ivan tongue to the Samoan that he spoke it like a native.

"And you, Uiliami," he said, "have pointed out that the soldiers have demanded coin and refused the paper Fulualea has offered them. Tell them to take the paper and see that they be paid to-morrow."

"Why trouble?" Uiliami objected. "The king remains happily drunk. There is much money in the treasury. And I am content. In my house are two cases of gin and much goods from Hawkins's store."

"Excellent pig, O my brother!" Sepeli erupted. "Has not Davida spoken? Have you no ears? When the gin and the goods in your house are gone, and no more traders come with gin and goods, and Feathers of the Sun has run away to Levuka with all the cash money of Fitu-Iva, what then will you do? Cash money is silver and gold, but paper is only paper. I tell you the people are grumbling. There is no fish in the palace. Yams and

sweet potatoes seem to have fled from the soil, for they come not. The mountain dwellers have sent no wild goat in a week. Though Feathers of the Sun compels the traders to buy copra at the old price, the people sell not, for they will have none of the paper money. Only to-day have I sent messengers to twenty houses. There are no eggs. Has Feathers of the Sun put a blight upon the hens? I do not know. All I know is that there are no eggs. Well it is that those who drink much eat little, else would there be a palace famine. Tell your soldiers to receive their pay. Let it be in his paper money."

"And remember," Grief warned, "though there be selling in the stores, when the soldiers come with their paper it will be refused. And in three days will be the council, and Feathers of the Sun will be as dead as a dead pig."

VI

The day of the council found the population of the island crowded into the capital. By canoe and whaleboat, on foot and donkey-back, the five thousand inhabitants of Fitu-Iva had trooped in. The three intervening days had had their share of excitement. At first there had been much selling from the sparse shelves of the traders. But when the soldiers appeared, their patronage was declined and they were told to go to Fulualea for coin. "Says it not so on the face of the paper," the traders demanded, "that for the asking the coin will be given in exchange?"

Only the strong authority of Uiliami had prevented the burning of the traders' houses. As it was, one of Grief's copra-sheds went up in smoke and was duly charged by Ieremia to the king's account. Ieremia himself had been abused and mocked, and his spectacles broken. The skin was off Willie Smee's knuckles. This had been caused by three boisterous soldiers who violently struck their jaws thereon in quick succession. Captain Boig was similarly injured. Peter Gee had come off undamaged, because it chanced that it was bread-baskets and not jaws that struck him on the fists.

Tui Tulifau, with Sepeli at his side and surrounded by his convivial chiefs, sat at the head of the council in the big compound. His right eye and jaw were swollen as if he too had engaged in assaulting somebody's fist. It was palace gossip that morning that Sepeli had

administered a conjugal beating. At any rate, her spouse was sober, and his fat bulged spiritlessly through the rips in Willie Smee's silk shirt. His thirst was prodigious, and he was continually served with young drinking nuts. Outside the compound, held back by the army, was the mass of the common people. Only the lesser chiefs, village maids, village beaux, and talking men with their staffs of office were permitted inside. Cornelius Deasy, as befitted a high and favoured official, sat near to the right hand of the king. On the left of the queen, opposite Cornelius and surrounded by the white traders he was to represent, sat Ieremia. Bereft of his spectacles, he peered short-sightedly across at the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

In turn, the talking man of the windward coast, the talking man of the leeward coast, and the talking man of the mountain villages, each backed by his group of lesser talking men and chiefs, arose and made oration. What they said was much the same. They grumbled about the paper money. Affairs were not prosperous. No more copra was being smoked. The people were suspicious. To such a pass had things come that all people wanted to pay their debts and no one wanted to be paid. Creditors made a practice of running away from debtors. The money was cheap. Prices were going up and commodities were getting scarce. It cost three times the ordinary price to buy a fowl, and then it was tough and like to die of old age if not immediately sold. The outlook was gloomy. There were signs and omens. There was a plague of rats in some districts. The crops were bad. The custard apples were small. The best-bearing avocado on the windward coast had mysteriously shed all its leaves. The taste had

gone from the mangoes. The plantains were eaten by a worm. The fish had forsaken the ocean and vast numbers of tiger-sharks appeared. The wild goats had fled to inaccessible summits. The poi in the poi-pits had turned bitter. There were rumblings in the mountains, night-walking of spirits; a woman of Punta-Puna had been struck speechless, and a five-legged she-goat had been born in the village of Eiho. And that all was due to the strange money of Fulualea was the firm conviction of the elders in the village councils assembled.

Uiliami spoke for the army. His men were discontented and mutinous. Though by royal decree the traders were bidden accept the money, yet did they refuse it. He would not say, but it looked as if the strange money of Fulualea had something to do with it.

Ieremia, as talking man of the traders, next spoke. When he arose, it was noticeable that he stood with legs spraddled over a large grass basket. He dwelt upon the cloth of the traders, its variety and beauty and durability, which so exceeded the Fitu-Ivan wet-pounded tapa, fragile and coarse. No one wore tapa any more. Yet all had worn tapa, and nothing but tapa, before the traders came. There was the mosquito-netting, sold for a song, that the cleverest Fitu-Ivan net-weaver could not duplicate in a thousand years. He enlarged on the incomparable virtues of rifles, axes, and steel fishhooks, down through needles, thread and cotton fish-lines to white flour and kerosene oil.

He expounded at length, with firstlies and secondlies and all minor

subdivisions of argument, on organization, and order, and civilization. He contended that the trader was the bearer of civilization, and that the trader must be protected in his trade else he would not come. Over to the westward were islands which would not protect the traders. What was the result? The traders would not come, and the people were like wild animals. They wore no clothes, no silk shirts (here he peered and blinked significantly at the king), and they ate one another.

The queer paper of the Feathers of the Sun was not money. The traders knew what money was, and they would not receive it. If Fitu-Iva persisted in trying to make them receive it they would go away and never come back. And then the Fitu-Ivans, who had forgotten how to make tapa, would run around naked and eat one another.

Much more he said, talking a solid hour, and always coming back to what their dire condition would be when the traders came no more. "And in that day," he perorated, "how will the Fitu-Ivan be known in the great world? Kai-kanak* will men call him. 'Kiakanak! Kai-kanak!'"

* Man-eater.

Tui Tulifau spoke briefly. The case had been presented, he said, for the people, the army, and the traders. It was now time for Feathers of the Sun to present his side. It could not be denied that he had wrought wonders with his financial system. "Many times has he explained to me the working of his system," Tui Tulif au concluded. "It is very simple.

And now he will explain it to you."

It was a conspiracy of the white traders, Cornelius contended. Ieremia was right so far as concerned the manifold blessings of white flour and kerosene oil. Fitu-Iva did not want to become kai-kanak. Fitu-Iva wanted civilization; it wanted more and more civilization. Now that was the very point, and they must follow him closely. Paper money was an earmark of higher civilization. That was why he, the Feathers of the Sun, had introduced it. And that was why the traders opposed it. They did not want to see Fitu-Iva civilized. Why did they come across the far ocean stretches with their goods to Fitu-Iva? He, the Feathers of the Sun, would tell them why, to their faces, in grand council assembled. In their own countries men were too civilized to let the traders make the immense profits that they made out of the Fitu-Ivans. If the Fitu-Ivans became properly civilized, the trade of the traders would be gone. In that day every Fitu-Ivan could become a trader if he pleased.

That was why the white traders fought the system of paper money, that he, the Feathers of the Sun, had brought. Why was he called the Feathers of the Sun? Because he was the Light-Bringer from the World Beyond the Sky. The paper money was the light. The robbing white traders could not flourish in the light. Therefore they fought the light.

He would prove it to the good people of Fitu-Iva, and he would prove it out of the mouths of his enemies. It was a well-known fact that all highly civilized countries had paper-money systems. He would ask Ieremia

if this was not so.

Ieremia did not answer.

"You see," Cornelius went on, "he makes no answer. He cannot deny what is true. England, France, Germany, America, all the great Papalangi countries, have the paper-money system. It works. From century to century it works. I challenge you, Ieremia, as an honest man, as one who was once a zealous worker in the Lord's vineyard, I challenge you to deny that in the great Papalangi countries the system works."

Ieremia could not deny, and his fingers played nervously with the fastening of the basket on his knees.

"You see, it is as I have said," Cornelius continued. "Ieremia agrees that it is so. Therefore, I ask you, all good people of Fitu-Iva, if a system is good for the Papalangi countries, why is it not good for Fitu-Iva?"

"It is not the same!" Ieremia cried. "The paper of the Feathers of the Sun is different from the paper of the great countries."

That Cornelius had been prepared for this was evident. He held up a Fitu-Ivan note that was recognized by all.

"What is that?" he demanded.

"Paper, mere paper," was Ieremia's reply.

"And that?"

This time Cornelius held up a Bank of England note.

"It is the paper money of the English," he explained to the Council, at the same time extending it for Ieremia to examine. "Is it not true, Ieremia, that it is paper money of the English?"

Ieremia nodded reluctantly.

"You have said that the paper money of Fitu-Iva was paper, now how about this of the English? What is it?... You must answer like a true man... All wait for your answer, Ieremia."

"It is--it is----" the puzzled Ieremia began, then spluttered helplessly, the fallacy beyond his penetration.

"Paper, mere paper," Cornelius concluded for him, imitating his halting utterance.

Conviction sat on the faces of all. The king clapped his hands admiringly and murmured, "It is most clear, very clear."

"You see, he himself acknowledges it." Assured triumph was in Deasy's voice and bearing. "He knows of no difference. There is no difference. 'Tis the very image of money. 'Tis money itself."

In the meantime Grief was whispering in Ieremia's ear, who nodded and began to speak.

"But it is well known to all the Papalangi that the English Government will pay coin money for the paper."

Deasy's victory was now absolute. He held aloft a Fitu-Ivan note.

"Is it not so written on this paper as well?"

Again Grief whispered.

"That Fitu-Iva will pay coin money?" asked Ieremia

"It is so written."

A third time Grief prompted.

"On demand?" asked Ieremia.

"On demand," Cornelius assured him.

"Then I demand coin money now," said Ieremia, drawing a small package of notes from the pouch at his girdle.

Cornelius scanned the package with a quick, estimating eye.

"Very well," he agreed. "I shall give you the coin money now. How much?"

"And we will see the system work," the king proclaimed, partaking in his Chancellor's triumph.

"You have heard!--He will give coin money now!" Ieremia cried in a loud voice to the assemblage.

At the same time he plunged both hands in the basket and drew forth many packages of Fitu-Ivan notes. It was noticed that a peculiar odour was adrift about the council.

"I have here," Ieremia announced, "one thousand and twenty-eight pounds twelve shillings and sixpence. Here is a sack to put the coin money in."

Cornelius recoiled. He had not expected such a sum, and everywhere about the council his uneasy eyes showed him chiefs and talking men drawing out bundles of notes. The army, its two months' pay in its hands, pressed forward to the edge of the council, while behind it the populace, with more money, invaded the compound.

"'Tis a run on the bank you've precipitated," he said reproachfully to Grief.

"Here is the sack to put the coin money in," Ieremia urged.

"It must be postponed," Cornelius said desperately, "'Tis not in banking hours."

Ieremia flourished a package of money. "Nothing of banking hours is written here. It says on demand, and I now demand."

"Let them come to-morrow, O Tui Tulifau," Cornelius appealed to the king. "They shall be paid to-morrow."

Tui Tulifau hesitated, but his spouse glared at him, her brawny arm tensing as the fist doubled into a redoubtable knot, Tui Tulifau tried to look away, but failed. He cleared his throat nervously.

"We will see the system work," he decreed. "The people have come far."

"'Tis good money you're asking me to pay out," Deasy muttered in a low voice to the king.

Sepeli caught what he said, and grunted so savagely as to startle the king, who involuntarily shrank away from her.

"Forget not the pig," Grief whispered to Ieremia, who immediately stood up.

With a sweeping gesture he stilled the babel of voices that was beginning to rise.

"It was an ancient and honourable custom of Fitu-Iva," he said, "that when a man was proved a notorious evildoer his joints were broken with a club and he was staked out at low water to be fed upon alive by the sharks. Unfortunately, that day is past. Nevertheless another ancient and honourable custom remains with us. You all know what it is. When a man is a proven thief and liar he shall be struck with a dead pig."

His right hand went into the basket, and, despite the lack of his spectacles, the dead pig that came into view landed accurately on Deasy's neck. With such force was it thrown that the Chancellor, in his sitting position, toppled over sidewise. Before he could recover, Sepeli, with an agility unexpected of a woman who weighed two hundred and sixty pounds, had sprung across to him. One hand clutched his shirt collar, the other hand brandished the pig, and amid the vast uproar of a delighted kingdom she royally swatted him.

There remained nothing for Tui Tulifau but to put a good face on his favourite's disgrace, and his mountainous fat lay back on the mats and shook in a gale of Gargantuan laughter.

When Sepeli dropped both pig and Chancellor, a talking man from the windward coast picked up the carcass. Cornelius was on his feet and running, when the pig caught him on the legs and tripped him. The people and the army, with shouts and laughter, joined in the sport.

Twist and dodge as he would, everywhere the ex-Chancellor of the Exchequer was met or overtaken by the flying pig. He scuttled like a frightened rabbit in and out among the avocados and the palms. No hand was laid upon him, and his tormentors made way before him, but ever they pursued, and ever the pig flew as fast as hands could pick it up.

As the chase died away down the Broom Road, Grief led the traders to the royal treasury, and the day was well over ere the last Fitu-Ivan bank note had been redeemed with coin.

VII

Through the mellow cool of twilight a man paddled out from a clump of jungle to the Cantani. It was a leaky and abandoned dugout, and he paddled slowly, desisting from time to time in order to bale. The Kanaka sailors giggled gleefully as he came alongside and painfully drew himself over the rail. He was bedraggled and filthy, and seemed half-dazed.

"Could I speak a word with you, Mr. Grief?" he asked sadly and humbly.

"Sit to leeward and farther away," Grief answered. "A little farther away. That's better."

Cornelius sat down on the rail and held his head in both his hands.

"'Tis right," he said. "I'm as fragrant as a recent battlefield. My head aches to burstin'. My neck is fair broken. The teeth are loose in my jaws. There's nests of hornets buzzin' in my ears. My medulla oblongata is dislocated. I've been through earthquake and pestilence, and the heavens have rained pigs." He paused with a sigh that ended in a groan.

"'Tis a vision of terrible death. One that the poets never dreamed. To be eaten by rats, or boiled in oil, or pulled apart by wild horses--that would be unpleasant. But to be beaten to death with a dead pig!"

He shuddered at the awfulness of it. "Sure it transcends the human imagination."

Captain Boig sniffed audibly, moved his canvas chair farther to windward, and sat down again.

"I hear you're runnin' over to Yap, Mr. Grief," Cornelius went on. "An' two things I'm wantin' to beg of you: a passage an' the nip of the old smoky I refused the night you landed."

Grief clapped his hands for the black steward and ordered soap and towels.

"Go for'ard, Cornelius, and take a scrub first," he said. "The boy will bring you a pair of dungarees and a shirt. And by the way, before you go, how was it we found more coin in the treasury than paper you had issued?"

"'Twas the stake of my own I'd brought with me for the adventure."

"We've decided to charge the demurrage and other expenses and loss to Tui Tulifau," Grief said. "So the balance we found will be turned over to you. But ten shillings must be deducted."

"For what?"

"Do you think dead pigs grow on trees? The sum of ten shillings for that pig is entered in the accounts."

Cornelius bowed his assent with a shudder.

"Sure it's grateful I am it wasn't a fifteen-shilling pig or a twenty-shilling one."