

## CHAPTER II--THE ELEMENTS OF DISCORD: FOREIGN

The huge majority of Samoans, like other God-fearing folk in other countries, are perfectly content with their own manners. And upon one condition, it is plain they might enjoy themselves far beyond the average of man. Seated in islands very rich in food, the idleness of the many idle would scarce matter; and the provinces might continue to bestow their names among rival pretenders, and fall into war and enjoy that a while, and drop into peace and enjoy that, in a manner highly to be envied. But the condition--that they should be let alone--is now no longer possible. More than a hundred years ago, and following closely on the heels of Cook, an irregular invasion of adventurers began to swarm about the isles of the Pacific. The seven sleepers of Polynesia stand, still but half aroused, in the midst of the century of competition. And the island races, comparable to a shopful of crockery launched upon the stream of time, now fall to make their desperate voyage among pots of brass and adamant.

Apia, the port and mart, is the seat of the political sickness of Samoa. At the foot of a peaked, woody mountain, the coast makes a deep indent, roughly semicircular. In front the barrier reef is broken by the fresh water of the streams; if the swell be from the north, it enters almost without diminution; and the war-ships roll dizzily at their moorings, and along the fringing coral which follows the configuration of the beach,

the surf breaks with a continuous uproar. In wild weather, as the world knows, the roads are untenable. Along the whole shore, which is everywhere green and level and overlooked by inland mountain-tops, the town lies drawn out in strings and clusters. The western horn is Mulinuu, the eastern, Matautu; and from one to the other of these extremes, I ask the reader to walk. He will find more of the history of Samoa spread before his eyes in that excursion, than has yet been collected in the blue-books or the white-books of the world. Mulinuu (where the walk is to begin) is a flat, wind-swept promontory, planted with palms, backed against a swamp of mangroves, and occupied by a rather miserable village. The reader is informed that this is the proper residence of the Samoan kings; he will be the more surprised to observe a board set up, and to read that this historic village is the property of the German firm. But these boards, which are among the commonest features of the landscape, may be rather taken to imply that the claim has been disputed. A little farther east he skirts the stores, offices, and barracks of the firm itself. Thence he will pass through Matafele, the one really town-like portion of this long string of villages, by German bars and stores and the German consulate; and reach the Catholic mission and cathedral standing by the mouth of a small river. The bridge which crosses here (bridge of Mulivai) is a frontier; behind is Matafele; beyond, Apia proper; behind, Germans are supreme; beyond, with but few exceptions, all is Anglo-Saxon. Here the reader will go forward past the stores of Mr. Moors (American) and Messrs. MacArthur (English); past the English mission, the office of the English newspaper, the English church, and the old American consulate, till he reaches the mouth of a larger

river, the Vaisingano. Beyond, in Matautu, his way takes him in the shade of many trees and by scattered dwellings, and presently brings him beside a great range of offices, the place and the monument of a German who fought the German firm during his life. His house (now he is dead) remains pointed like a discharged cannon at the citadel of his old enemies. Fitly enough, it is at present leased and occupied by Englishmen. A little farther, and the reader gains the eastern flanking angle of the bay, where stands the pilot-house and signal-post, and whence he can see, on the line of the main coast of the island, the British and the new American consulates.

The course of his walk will have been enlivened by a considerable to and fro of pleasure and business. He will have encountered many varieties of whites,--sailors, merchants, clerks, priests, Protestant missionaries in their pith helmets, and the nondescript hangers-on of any island beach. And the sailors are sometimes in considerable force; but not the residents. He will think at times there are more signboards than men to own them. It may chance it is a full day in the harbour; he will then have seen all manner of ships, from men-of-war and deep-sea packets to the labour vessels of the German firm and the cockboat island schooner; and if he be of an arithmetical turn, he may calculate that there are more whites afloat in Apia bay than whites ashore in the whole Archipelago. On the other hand, he will have encountered all ranks of natives, chiefs and pastors in their scrupulous white clothes; perhaps the king himself, attended by guards in uniform; smiling policemen with their pewter stars; girls, women, crowds of cheerful children. And he will have asked himself with some surprise where these reside. Here and

there, in the back yards of European establishments, he may have had a glimpse of a native house elbowed in a corner; but since he left Mulinuu, none on the beach where islanders prefer to live, scarce one on the line of street. The handful of whites have everything; the natives walk in a foreign town. A year ago, on a knoll behind a bar-room, he might have observed a native house guarded by sentries and flanked by the standard of Samoa. He would then have been told it was the seat of government, driven (as I have to relate) over the Mulivai and from beyond the German town into the Anglo-Saxon. To-day, he will learn it has been carted back again to its old quarters. And he will think it significant that the king of the islands should be thus shuttled to and fro in his chief city at the nod of aliens. And then he will observe a feature more significant still: a house with some concourse of affairs, policemen and idlers hanging by, a man at a bank-counter overhauling manifests, perhaps a trial proceeding in the front verandah, or perhaps the council breaking up in knots after a stormy sitting. And he will remember that he is in the Eleele Sa, the "Forbidden Soil," or Neutral Territory of the treaties; that the magistrate whom he has just seen trying native criminals is no officer of the native king's; and that this, the only port and place of business in the kingdom, collects and administers its own revenue for its own behoof by the hands of white councillors and under the supervision of white consuls. Let him go further afield. He will find the roads almost everywhere to cease or to be made impassable by native pig-fences, bridges to be quite unknown, and houses of the whites to become at once a rare exception. Set aside the German plantations, and the frontier is sharp. At the boundary of the Eleele Sa, Europe ends, Samoa begins. Here, then, is a singular state of

affairs: all the money, luxury, and business of the kingdom centred in one place; that place excepted from the native government and administered by whites for whites; and the whites themselves holding it not in common but in hostile camps, so that it lies between them like a bone between two dogs, each growling, each clutching his own end.

Should Apia ever choose a coat of arms, I have a motto ready: "Enter Rumour painted full of tongues." The majority of the natives do extremely little; the majority of the whites are merchants with some four mails in the month, shopkeepers with some ten or twenty customers a day, and gossip is the common resource of all. The town hums to the day's news, and the bars are crowded with amateur politicians. Some are office-seekers, and earwig king and consul, and compass the fall of officials, with an eye to salary. Some are humorists, delighted with the pleasure of faction for itself. "I never saw so good a place as this Apia," said one of these; "you can be in a new conspiracy every day!" Many, on the other hand, are sincerely concerned for the future of the country. The quarters are so close and the scale is so small, that perhaps not any one can be trusted always to preserve his temper. Every one tells everything he knows; that is our country sickness. Nearly every one has been betrayed at times, and told a trifle more; the way our sickness takes the predisposed. And the news flies, and the tongues wag, and fists are shaken. Pot boil and caldron bubble!

Within the memory of man, the white people of Apia lay in the worst squalor of degradation. They are now unspeakably improved, both men and women. To-day they must be called a more than fairly respectable

population, and a much more than fairly intelligent. The whole would probably not fill the ranks of even an English half-battalion, yet there are a surprising number above the average in sense, knowledge, and manners. The trouble (for Samoa) is that they are all here after a livelihood. Some are sharp practitioners, some are famous (justly or not) for foul play in business. Tales fly. One merchant warns you against his neighbour; the neighbour on the first occasion is found to return the compliment: each with a good circumstantial story to the proof. There is so much copra in the islands, and no more; a man's share of it is his share of bread; and commerce, like politics, is here narrowed to a focus, shows its ugly side, and becomes as personal as fisticuffs. Close at their elbows, in all this contention, stands the native looking on. Like a child, his true analogue, he observes, apprehends, misapprehends, and is usually silent. As in a child, a considerable intemperance of speech is accompanied by some power of secrecy. News he publishes; his thoughts have often to be dug for. He looks on at the rude career of the dollar-hunt, and wonders. He sees these men rolling in a luxury beyond the ambition of native kings; he hears them accused by each other of the meanest trickery; he knows some of them to be guilty; and what is he to think? He is strongly conscious of his own position as the common milk-cow; and what is he to do? "Surely these white men on the beach are not great chiefs?" is a common question, perhaps asked with some design of flattering the person questioned. And one, stung by the last incident into an unusual flow of English, remarked to me: "I begin to be weary of white men on the beach."

But the true centre of trouble, the head of the boil of which Samoa

languishes, is the German firm. From the conditions of business, a great island house must ever be an inheritance of care; and it chances that the greatest still afoot has its chief seat in Apia bay, and has sunk the main part of its capital in the island of Upolu. When its founder, John Caesar Godeffroy, went bankrupt over Russian paper and Westphalian iron, his most considerable asset was found to be the South Sea business. This passed (I understand) through the hands of Baring Brothers in London, and is now run by a company rejoicing in the Gargantuan name of the Deutsche Handels und Plantagen Gesellschaft fur Sud-See Inseln zu Hamburg. This piece of literature is (in practice) shortened to the D. H. and P. G., the Old Firm, the German Firm, the Firm, and (among humorists) the Long Handle Firm. Even from the deck of an approaching ship, the island is seen to bear its signature--zones of cultivation showing in a more vivid tint of green on the dark vest of forest. The total area in use is near ten thousand acres. Hedges of fragrant lime enclose, broad avenues intersect them. You shall walk for hours in parks of palm-tree alleys, regular, like soldiers on parade; in the recesses of the hills you may stumble on a mill-house, toiling and trembling there, fathoms deep in superincumbent forest. On the carpet of clean sward, troops of horses and herds of handsome cattle may be seen to browse; and to one accustomed

to the rough luxuriance of the tropics, the appearance is of fairyland.

The managers, many of them German sea-captains, are enthusiastic in their new employment. Experiment is continually afoot: coffee and cacao, both of excellent quality, are among the more recent outputs; and from one plantation quantities of pineapples are sent at a particular season to the Sydney markets. A hundred and fifty thousand pounds of English

money, perhaps two hundred thousand, lie sunk in these magnificent estates. In estimating the expense of maintenance quite a fleet of ships must be remembered, and a strong staff of captains, supercargoes, overseers, and clerks. These last mess together at a liberal board; the wages are high, and the staff is inspired with a strong and pleasing sentiment of loyalty to their employers.

Seven or eight hundred imported men and women toil for the company on contracts of three or of five years, and at a hypothetical wage of a few dollars in the month. I am now on a burning question: the labour traffic; and I shall ask permission in this place only to touch it with the tongs. Suffice it to say that in Queensland, Fiji, New Caledonia, and Hawaii it has been either suppressed or placed under close public supervision. In Samoa, where it still flourishes, there is no regulation of which the public receives any evidence; and the dirty linen of the firm, if there be any dirty, and if it be ever washed at all, is washed in private. This is unfortunate, if Germans would believe it. But they have no idea of publicity, keep their business to themselves, rather affect to "move in a mysterious way," and are naturally incensed by criticisms, which they consider hypocritical, from men who would import "labour" for themselves, if they could afford it, and would probably maltreat them if they dared. It is said the whip is very busy on some of the plantations; it is said that punitive extra-labour, by which the thrall's term of service is extended, has grown to be an abuse; and it is complained that, even where that term is out, much irregularity occurs in the repatriation of the discharged. To all this I can say nothing, good or bad. A certain number of the thralls, many of them wild negritos from



the west, have taken to the bush, harbour there in a state partly bestial, or creep into the back quarters of the town to do a day's stealthy labour under the nose of their proprietors. Twelve were arrested one morning in my own boys' kitchen. Farther in the bush, huts, small patches of cultivation, and smoking ovens, have been found by hunters. There are still three runaways in the woods of Tutuila, whither they escaped upon a raft. And the Samoans regard these dark-skinned rangers with extreme alarm; the fourth refugee in Tutuila was shot down (as I was told in that island) while carrying off the virgin of a village; and tales of cannibalism run round the country, and the natives shudder about the evening fire. For the Samoans are not cannibals, do not seem to remember when they were, and regard the practice with a disfavour equal to our own.

The firm is Gulliver among the Lilliputs; and it must not be forgotten, that while the small, independent traders are fighting for their own hand, and inflamed with the usual jealousy against corporations, the Germans are inspired with a sense of the greatness of their affairs and interests. The thought of the money sunk, the sight of these costly and beautiful plantations, menaced yearly by the returning forest, and the responsibility of administering with one hand so many conjunct fortunes, might well nerve the manager of such a company for desperate and questionable deeds. Upon this scale, commercial sharpness has an air of patriotism; and I can imagine the man, so far from haggling over the scourge for a few Solomon islanders, prepared to oppress rival firms, overthrow inconvenient monarchs, and let loose the dogs of war. Whatever he may decide, he will not want for backing. Every clerk will be eager

to be up and strike a blow; and most Germans in the group, whatever they may babble of the firm over the walnuts and the wine, will rally round the national concern at the approach of difficulty. They are so few--I am ashamed to give their number, it were to challenge contradiction--they are so few, and the amount of national capital buried at their feet is so vast, that we must not wonder if they seem oppressed with greatness and the sense of empire. Other whites take part in our brabbles, while temper holds out, with a certain schoolboy entertainment. In the Germans alone, no trace of humour is to be observed, and their solemnity is accompanied by a touchiness often beyond belief. Patriotism flies in arms about a hen; and if you comment upon the colour of a Dutch umbrella,

you have cast a stone against the German Emperor. I give one instance, typical although extreme. One who had returned from Tutuila on the mail cutter complained of the vermin with which she is infested. He was suddenly and sharply brought to a stand. The ship of which he spoke, he was reminded, was a German ship.

John Caesar Godeffroy himself had never visited the islands; his sons and nephews came, indeed, but scarcely to reap laurels; and the mainspring and headpiece of this great concern, until death took him, was a certain remarkable man of the name of Theodor Weber. He was of an artful and commanding character; in the smallest thing or the greatest, without fear or scruple; equally able to affect, equally ready to adopt, the most engaging politeness or the most imperious airs of domination. It was he who did most damage to rival traders; it was he who most harried the Samoans; and yet I never met any one, white or native, who did not

respect his memory. All felt it was a gallant battle, and the man a great fighter; and now when he is dead, and the war seems to have gone against him, many can scarce remember, without a kind of regret, how much

devotion and audacity have been spent in vain. His name still lives in the songs of Samoa. One, that I have heard, tells of Misi Ueba and a biscuit-box--the suggesting incident being long since forgotten. Another sings plaintively how all things, land and food and property, pass progressively, as by a law of nature, into the hands of Misi Ueba, and soon nothing will be left for Samoans. This is an epitaph the man would have enjoyed.

At one period of his career, Weber combined the offices of director of the firm and consul for the City of Hamburg. No question but he then drove very hard. Germans admit that the combination was unfortunate; and it was a German who procured its overthrow. Captain Zembsch superseded him with an imperial appointment, one still remembered in Samoa as "the gentleman who acted justly." There was no house to be found, and the new consul must take up his quarters at first under the same roof with Weber. On several questions, in which the firm was vitally interested, Zembsch embraced the contrary opinion. Riding one day with an Englishman in Vailele plantation, he was startled by a burst of screaming, leaped from the saddle, ran round a house, and found an overseer beating one of the thralls. He punished the overseer, and, being a kindly and perhaps not a very diplomatic man, talked high of what he felt and what he might consider it his duty to forbid or to enforce. The firm began to look

askance at such a consul; and worse was behind. A number of deeds being brought to the consulate for registration, Zembsch detected certain transfers of land in which the date, the boundaries, the measure, and the consideration were all blank. He refused them with an indignation which he does not seem to have been able to keep to himself; and, whether or not by his fault, some of these unfortunate documents became public. It was plain that the relations between the two flanks of the German invasion, the diplomatic and the commercial, were strained to bursting. But Weber was a man ill to conquer. Zembsch was recalled; and from that time forth, whether through influence at home, or by the solicitations of Weber on the spot, the German consulate has shown itself very apt to play the game of the German firm. That game, we may say, was twofold,--the first part even praiseworthy, the second at least natural. On the one part, they desired an efficient native administration, to open up the country and punish crime; they wished, on the other, to extend their own provinces and to curtail the dealings of their rivals. In the first, they had the jealous and diffident sympathy of all whites; in the second, they had all whites banded together against them for their lives and livelihoods. It was thus a game of Beggar my Neighbour between a large merchant and some small ones. Had it so remained, it would still have been a cut-throat quarrel. But when the consulate appeared to be concerned, when the war-ships of the German Empire were thought to fetch and carry for the firm, the rage of the independent traders broke beyond restraint. And, largely from the national touchiness and the intemperate speech of German clerks, this scramble among dollar-hunters assumed the appearance of an inter-racial war.

The firm, with the indomitable Weber at its head and the consulate at its back--there has been the chief enemy at Samoa. No English reader can fail to be reminded of John Company; and if the Germans appear to have been not so successful, we can only wonder that our own blunders and brutalities were less severely punished. Even on the field of Samoa, though German faults and aggressors make up the burthen of my story, they have been nowise alone. Three nations were engaged in this infinitesimal affray, and not one appears with credit. They figure but as the three ruffians of the elder play-wrights. The United States have the cleanest hands, and even theirs are not immaculate. It was an ambiguous business when a private American adventurer was landed with his pieces of artillery from an American war-ship, and became prime minister to the king. It is true (even if he were ever really supported) that he was soon dropped and had soon sold himself for money to the German firm. I will leave it to the reader whether this trait dignifies or not the wretched story. And the end of it spattered the credit alike of England and the States, when this man (the premier of a friendly sovereign) was kidnapped and deported, on the requisition of an American consul, by the captain of an English war-ship. I shall have to tell, as I proceed, of villages shelled on very trifling grounds by Germans; the like has been done of late years, though in a better quarrel, by ourselves of England. I shall have to tell how the Germans landed and shed blood at Fangalii; it was only in 1876 that we British had our own misconceived little massacre at Mulinuu. I shall have to tell how the Germans bludgeoned Malietoa with a sudden call for money; it was something of the suddenest that Sir Arthur Gordon himself, smarting under a sensible public affront,

made and enforced a somewhat similar demand.

### CHAPTER III--THE SORROWS OF LAUPEPA, 1883 TO 1887

You ride in a German plantation and see no bush, no soul stirring; only acres of empty sward, miles of cocoa-nut alley: a desert of food. In the eyes of the Samoan the place has the attraction of a park for the holiday schoolboy, of a granary for mice. We must add the yet more lively allurements of a haunted house, for over these empty and silent miles there broods the fear of the negrito cannibal. For the Samoan besides, there is something barbaric, unhandsome, and absurd in the idea of thus growing food only to send it from the land and sell it. A man at home who should turn all Yorkshire into one wheatfield, and annually burn his harvest on the altar of Mumbo-Jumbo, might impress ourselves not much otherwise. And the firm which does these things is quite extraneous, a wen that might be excised to-morrow without loss but to itself; few natives drawing from it so much as day's wages; and the rest beholding in it only the occupier of their acres. The nearest villages have suffered most; they see over the hedge the lands of their ancestors waving with useless cocoa-palms; and the sales were often questionable, and must still more often appear so to regretful natives, spinning and improving yarns about the evening lamp. At the worst, then, to help oneself from the plantation will seem to a Samoan very like orchard-breaking to the