

## CHAPTER VII--THE SAMOAN CAMPS

November 1888

When Brandeis and Tamasese fled by night from Mulinuu, they carried their wandering government some six miles to windward, to a position above Lotoanuu. For some three miles to the eastward of Apia, the shores of Upolu are low and the ground rises with a gentle acclivity, much of which waves with German plantations. A barrier reef encloses a lagoon passable for boats: and the traveller skims there, on smooth, many-tinted shallows, between the wall of the breakers on the one hand, and on the other a succession of palm-tree capes and cheerful beach-side villages. Beyond the great plantation of Vaialele, the character of the coast is changed. The barrier reef abruptly ceases, the surf beats direct upon the shore; and the mountains and untenanted forest of the interior descend sheer into the sea. The first mountain promontory is Letongo. The bay beyond is called Lauili, and became the headquarters of Mataafa. And on the next projection, on steep, intricate ground, veiled in forest and cut up by gorges and defiles, Tamasese fortified his lines. This greenwood citadel, which proved impregnable by Samoan arms, may be regarded as his front; the sea covered his right; and his rear extended along the coast as far as Saluafata, and thus commanded and drew upon a rich country, including the plain of Falefa.

He was left in peace from 11th October till November 6th. But his

adversary is not wholly to be blamed for this delay, which depended upon island etiquette. His Savaii contingent had not yet come in, and to have moved again without waiting for them would have been surely to offend, perhaps to lose them. With the month of November they began to arrive: on the 2nd twenty boats, on the 3rd twenty-nine, on the 5th seventeen. On the 6th the position Mataafa had so long occupied on the skirts of Apia was deserted; all that day and night his force kept streaming eastward to Laulii; and on the 7th the siege of Lotoanuu was opened with a brisk skirmish.

Each side built forts, facing across the gorge of a brook. An endless fusillade and shouting maintained the spirit of the warriors; and at night, even if the firing slackened, the pickets continued to exchange from either side volleys of songs and pungent pleasantries. Nearer hostilities were rendered difficult by the nature of the ground, where men must thread dense bush and clamber on the face of precipices. Apia was near enough; a man, if he had a dollar or two, could walk in before a battle and array himself in silk or velvet. Casualties were not common; there was nothing to cast gloom upon the camps, and no more danger than was required to give a spice to the perpetual firing. For the young warriors it was a period of admirable enjoyment. But the anxiety of Mataafa must have been great and growing. His force was now considerable. It was scarce likely he should ever have more. That he should be long able to supply them with ammunition seemed incredible; at the rates then or soon after current, hundreds of pounds sterling might be easily blown into the air by the skirmishers in the course of a few days. And in the meanwhile, on the mountain opposite, his outnumbered

adversary held his ground unshaken.

By this time the partisanship of the whites was unconcealed. Americans supplied Mataafa with ammunition; English and Americans openly subscribed

together and sent boat-loads of provisions to his camp. One such boat started from Apia on a day of rain; it was pulled by six oars, three being paid by Moors, three by the MacArthurs; Moors himself and a clerk of the MacArthurs' were in charge; and the load included not only beef and biscuit, but three or four thousand rounds of ammunition. They came ashore in Laulii, and carried the gift to Mataafa. While they were yet in his house a bullet passed overhead; and out of his door they could see the Tamasese pickets on the opposite hill. Thence they made their way to the left flank of the Mataafa position next the sea. A Tamasese barricade was visible across the stream. It rained, but the warriors crowded in their shanties, squatted in the mud, and maintained an excited conversation. Balls flew; either faction, both happy as lords, spotting for the other in chance shots, and missing. One point is characteristic of that war; experts in native feeling doubt if it will characterise the next. The two white visitors passed without and between the lines to a rocky point upon the beach. The person of Moors was well known; the purpose of their coming to Laulii must have been already bruited abroad; yet they were not fired upon. From the point they spied a crow's nest, or hanging fortification, higher up; and, judging it was a good position for a general view, obtained a guide. He led them up a steep side of the mountain, where they must climb by roots and tufts of grass; and coming to an open hill-top with some scattered trees, bade them wait, let him

draw the fire, and then be swift to follow. Perhaps a dozen balls whistled about him ere he had crossed the dangerous passage and dropped on the farther side into the crow's-nest; the white men, briskly following, escaped unhurt. The crow's-nest was built like a bartizan on the precipitous front of the position. Across the ravine, perhaps at five hundred yards, heads were to be seen popping up and down in a fort of Tamesese's. On both sides the same enthusiasm without council, the same senseless vigilance, reigned. Some took aim; some blazed before them at a venture. Now--when a head showed on the other side--one would take a crack at it, remarking that it would never do to "miss a chance." Now they would all fire a volley and bob down; a return volley rang across the ravine, and was punctually answered: harmless as lawn-tennis. The whites expostulated in vain. The warriors, drunken with noise, made answer by a fresh general discharge and bade their visitors run while it was time. Upon their return to headquarters, men were covering the front with sheets of coral limestone, two balls having passed through the house in the interval. Mataafa sat within, over his kava bowl, unmoved. The picture is of a piece throughout: excellent courage, super-excellent folly, a war of school-children; expensive guns and cartridges used like squibs or catherine-wheels on Guy Fawkes's Day.

On the 20th Mataafa changed his attack. Tamasese's front was seemingly impregnable. Something must be tried upon his rear. There was his bread-basket; a small success in that direction would immediately curtail his resources; and it might be possible with energy to roll up his line along the beach and take the citadel in reverse. The scheme was carried out as might be expected from these childish soldiers. Mataafa, always uneasy

about Apia, clung with a portion of his force to Laulii; and thus, had the foe been enterprising, exposed himself to disaster. The expedition fell successfully enough on Saluafata and drove out the Tamaseses with a loss of four heads; but so far from improving the advantage, yielded immediately to the weakness of the Samoan warrior, and ranged farther east through unarmed populations, bursting with shouts and blackened faces into villages terrified or admiring, making spoil of pigs, burning houses, and destroying gardens. The Tamasese had at first evacuated several beach towns in succession, and were still in retreat on Lotoanuu; finding themselves unpursued, they reoccupied them one after another, and re-established their lines to the very borders of Saluafata. Night fell; Mataafa had taken Saluafata, Tamasese had lost it; and that was all. But the day came near to have a different and very singular issue. The village was not long in the hands of the Mataafas, when a schooner, flying German colours, put into the bay and was immediately surrounded by their boats. It chanced that Brandeis was on board. Word of it had gone abroad, and the boats as they approached demanded him with threats. The late premier, alone, entirely unarmed, and a prey to natural and painful feelings, concealed himself below. The captain of the schooner remained on deck, pointed to the German colours, and defied approaching boats. Again the prestige of a great Power triumphed; the Samoans fell back before the bunting; the schooner worked out of the bay; Brandeis escaped. He himself apprehended the worst if he fell into Samoan hands; it is my diffident impression that his life would have been safe.

On the 22nd, a new German war-ship, the Eber, of tragic memory, came to Apia from the Gilberts, where she had been disarming turbulent islands.

The rest of that day and all night she loaded stores from the firm, and on the morrow reached Saluafata bay. Thanks to the misconduct of the Mataafas, the most of the foreshore was still in the hands of the Tamaseses; and they were thus able to receive from the Eber both the stores and weapons. The weapons had been sold long since to Tarawa, Apaiang, and Pleasant Island; places unheard of by the general reader, where obscure inhabitants paid for these instruments of death in money or in labour, misused them as it was known they would be misused, and had been disarmed by force. The Eber had brought back the guns to a German counter, whence many must have been originally sold; and was here engaged, like a shopboy, in their distribution to fresh purchasers. Such is the vicious circle of the traffic in weapons of war. Another aid of a more metaphysical nature was ministered by the Eber to Tamasese, in the shape of uncountable German flags. The full history of this epidemic of bunting falls to be told in the next chapter. But the fact has to be chronicled here, for I believe it was to these flags that we owe the visit of the Adams, and my next and best authentic glance into a native camp. The Adams arrived in Saluafata on the 26th. On the morrow Leary and Moors landed at the village. It was still occupied by Mataafas, mostly from Manono and Savaii, few in number, high in spirit. The Tamasese pickets were meanwhile within musket range; there was maintained a steady sputtering of shots; and yet a party of Tamasese women were here on a visit to the women of Manono, with whom they sat talking and smoking, under the fire of their own relatives. It was reported that Leary took part in a council of war, and promised to join with his broadside in the next attack. It is certain he did nothing of the sort:

equally certain that, in Tamasese circles, he was firmly credited with having done so. And this heightens the extraordinary character of what I have now to tell. Prudence and delicacy alike ought to have forbid the camp of Tamasese to the feet of either Leary or Moors. Moors was the original--there was a time when he had been the only--opponent of the puppet king. Leary had driven him from the seat of government; it was but a week or two since he had threatened to bombard him in his present refuge. Both were in close and daily council with his adversary, and it was no secret that Moors was supplying the latter with food. They were partisans; it lacked but a hair that they should be called belligerents; it were idle to try to deny they were the most dangerous of spies. And yet these two now sailed across the bay and landed inside the Tamasese lines at Salelesi. On the very beach they had another glimpse of the artlessness of Samoan war. Hitherto the Tamasese fleet, being hardy and unencumbered, had made a fool of the huge floating forts upon the other side; and here they were toiling, not to produce another boat on their own pattern in which they had always enjoyed the advantage, but to make a new one the type of their enemies', of which they had now proved the uselessness for months. It came on to rain as the Americans landed; and though none offered to oppose their coming ashore, none invited them to take shelter. They were nowise abashed, entered a house unbidden, and were made welcome with obvious reserve. The rain clearing off, they set forth westward, deeper into the heart of the enemies' position. Three or four young men ran some way before them, doubtless to give warning; and Leary, with his indomitable taste for mischief, kept inquiring as he went after "the high chief" Tamasese. The line of the beach was one continuous breastwork; some thirty odd iron cannon of all sizes and

patterns stood mounted in embrasures; plenty grape and canister lay ready; and at every hundred yards or so the German flag was flying. The numbers of the guns and flags I give as I received them, though they test my faith. At the house of Brandeis--a little, weatherboard house, crammed at the time with natives, men, women, and squalling children--Leary and Moors again asked for "the high chief," and, were again assured that he was farther on. A little beyond, the road ran in one place somewhat inland, the two Americans had gone down to the line of the beach to continue their inspection of the breastwork, when Brandeis himself, in his shirt-sleeves and accompanied by several German officers, passed them by the line of the road. The two parties saluted in silence. Beyond Eva Point there was an observable change for the worse in the reception of the Americans; some whom they met began to mutter at Moors; and the adventurers, with tardy but commendable prudence, desisted from their search after the high chief, and began to retrace their steps. On the return, Suatele and some chiefs were drinking kava in a "big house," and called them in to join--their only invitation. But the night was closing, the rain had begun again: they stayed but for civility, and returned on board the Adams, wet and hungry, and I believe delighted with their expedition. It was perhaps the last as it was certainly one of the most extreme examples of that divinity which once hedged the white in Samoa. The feeling was already different in the camp of Mataafa, where the safety of a German loiterer had been a matter of extreme concern. Ten days later, three commissioners, an Englishman, an American, and a German, approached a post of Mataafas, were challenged by an old man with a gun, and mentioned in answer what they were. "Ifea



Siamani? Which is the German?" cried the old gentleman, dancing, and with his finger on the trigger; and the commissioners stood somehow in a very anxious posture, till they were released by the opportune arrival of a chief. It was November the 27th when Leary and Moors completed their absurd excursion; in about three weeks an event was to befall which changed at once, and probably for ever, the relations of the natives and the whites.

By the 28th Tamasese had collected seventeen hundred men in the trenches before Saluafata, thinking to attack next day. But the Mataafas evacuated the place in the night. At half-past five on the morning of the 29th a signal-gun was fired in the trenches at Laulii, and the Tamasese citadel was assaulted and defended with a fury new among Samoans. When the battle ended on the following day, one or more outworks remained in the possession of Mataafa. Another had been taken and lost as many as four times. Carried originally by a mixed force from Savaii and Tuamasanga, the victors, instead of completing fresh defences or pursuing their advantage, fell to eat and smoke and celebrate their victory with impromptu songs. In this humour a rally of the Tamaseses smote them, drove them out pell-mell, and tumbled them into the ravine, where many broke their heads and legs. Again the work was taken, again lost. Ammunition failed the belligerents; and they fought hand to hand in the contested fort with axes, clubs, and clubbed rifles. The sustained ardour of the engagement surprised even those who were engaged; and the butcher's bill was counted extraordinary by Samoans. On December

1st the women of either side collected the headless bodies of the dead, each easily identified by the name tattooed on his forearm. Mataafa is thought to have lost sixty killed; and the de Coetlogons' hospital received three women and forty men. The casualties on the Tamasese side cannot be accepted, but they were presumably much less.