

## CHAPTER IX--"FUROR CONSULARIS"

December 1888 to March 1889

Knappe, in the Adler, with a flag of truce at the fore, was entering Laulii Bay when the Eber brought him the news of the night's reverse. His heart was doubtless wrung for his young countrymen who had been butchered and mutilated in the dark woods, or now lay suffering, and some of them dying, on the ship. And he must have been startled as he recognised his own position. He had gone too far; he had stumbled into war, and, what was worse, into defeat; he had thrown away German lives for less than nothing, and now saw himself condemned either to accept defeat, or to kick and pummel his failure into something like success; either to accept defeat, or take frenzy for a counsellor. Yesterday, in cold blood, he had judged it necessary to have the woods to the westward guarded lest the evacuation of Laulii should prove only the peril of Apia. To-day, in the irritation and alarm of failure, he forgot or despised his previous reasoning, and, though his detachment was beat back to the ships, proceeded with the remainder of his maimed design. The only change he made was to haul down the flag of truce. He had now no wish to meet with Mataafa. Words were out of season, shells must speak.

At this moment an incident befell him which must have been trying to his self-command. The new American ship Nipsic entered Laulii Bay; her commander, Mullan, boarded the Adler to protest, succeeded in wresting

from Knappe a period of delay in order that the women might be spared, and sent a lieutenant to Mataafa with a warning. The camp was already excited by the news and the trophies of Fangalii. Already Tamasese and Lotoanuu seemed secondary objectives to the Germans and Apia. Mullan's message put an end to hesitation. Laulii was evacuated. The troops streamed westward by the mountain side, and took up the same day a strong

position about Tanungamanono and Mangiangi, some two miles behind Apia,

which they threatened with the one hand, while with the other they continued to draw their supplies from the devoted plantations of the German firm. Laulii, when it was shelled, was empty. The British flags were, of course, fired upon; and I hear that one of them was struck down, but I think every one must be privately of the mind that it was fired upon and fell, in a place where it had little business to be shown.

Such was the military epilogue to the ill-judged adventure of Fangalii; it was difficult for failure to be more complete. But the other consequences were of a darker colour and brought the whites immediately face to face in a spirit of ill-favoured animosity. Knappe was mourning the defeat and death of his country-folk, he was standing aghast over the ruin of his own career, when Mullan boarded him. The successor of Leary served himself, in that bitter moment, heir to Leary's part. And in Mullan, Knappe saw more even than the successor of Leary,--he saw in him the representative of Klein. Klein had hailed the praam from the rifle-pits; he had there uttered ill-chosen words, unhappily prophetic; it is even likely that he was present at the time of the first fire. To accuse

him of the design and conduct of the whole attack was but a step forward; his own vapouring served to corroborate the accusation; and it was not long before the German consulate was in possession of sworn native testimony in support. The worth of native testimony is small, the worth of white testimony not overwhelming; and I am in the painful position of not being able to subscribe either to Klein's own account of the affair or to that of his accusers. Klein was extremely flurried; his interest as a reporter must have tempted him at first to make the most of his share in the exploit, the immediate peril in which he soon found himself to stand must have at least suggested to him the idea of minimising it; one way and another, he is not a good witness. As for the natives, they were no doubt cross-examined in that hall of terror, the German consulate, where they might be trusted to lie like schoolboys, or (if the reader prefer it) like Samoans. By outside white testimony, it remains established for me that Klein returned to Apia either before or immediately after the first shots. That he ever sought or was ever allowed a share in the command may be denied peremptorily; but it is more than likely that he expressed himself in an excited manner and with a highly inflammatory effect upon his hearers. He was, at least, severely punished. The Germans, enraged by his provocative behaviour and what they thought to be his German birth, demanded him to be tried before court-martial; he had to skulk inside the sentries of the American consulate, to be smuggled on board a war-ship, and to be carried almost by stealth out of the island; and what with the agitations of his mind, and the results of a marsh fever contracted in the lines of Mataafa, reached Honolulu a very proper object of commiseration. Nor was Klein the only accused: de Coetlogon was himself involved. As the boats passed

Matautu, Knappe declares a signal was made from the British consulate. Perhaps we should rather read "from its neighbourhood"; since, in the general warding of the coast, the point of Matautu could scarce have been neglected. On the other hand, there is no doubt that the Samoans, in the anxiety of that night of watching and fighting, crowded to the friendly consul for advice. Late in the night, the wounded Siteoni, lying on the colonel's verandah, one corner of which had been blinded down that he might sleep, heard the coming and going of bare feet and the voices of eager consultation. And long after, a man who had been discharged from the colonel's employment took upon himself to swear an affidavit as to the nature of the advice then given, and to carry the document to the German consul. It was an act of private revenge; it fell long out of date in the good days of Dr. Stuebel, and had no result but to discredit the gentleman who volunteered it. Colonel de Coetlogon had his faults, but they did not touch his honour; his bare word would always outweigh a waggon-load of such denunciations; and he declares his behaviour on that night to have been blameless. The question was besides inquired into on the spot by Sir John Thurston, and the colonel honourably acquitted. But during the weeks that were now to follow, Knappe believed the contrary; he believed not only that Moors and others had supplied ammunition and Klein commanded in the field, but that de Coetlogon had made the signal of attack; that though his blue-jackets had bled and fallen against the arms of Samoans, these were supplied, inspired, and marshalled by Americans and English.

The legend was the more easily believed because it embraced and was

founded upon so much truth. Germans lay dead, the German wounded groaned

in their cots; and the cartridges by which they fell had been sold by an American and brought into the country in a British bottom. Had the transaction been entirely mercenary, it would already have been hard to swallow; but it was notoriously not so. British and Americans were notoriously the partisans of Mataafa. They rejoiced in the result of Fangalii, and so far from seeking to conceal their rejoicing, paraded and displayed it. Calumny ran high. Before the dead were buried, while the wounded yet lay in pain and fever, cowardly accusations of cowardice were levelled at the German blue-jackets. It was said they had broken and run before their enemies, and that they had huddled helpless like sheep in the plantation house. Small wonder if they had; small wonder had they been utterly destroyed. But the fact was heroically otherwise; and these dastard calumnies cut to the blood. They are not forgotten; perhaps they will never be forgiven.

In the meanwhile, events were pressing towards a still more trenchant opposition. On the 20th, the three consuls met and parted without agreement, Knappe announcing that he had lost men and must take the matter in his own hands to avenge their death. On the 21st the Olga came before Matafangatele, ordered the delivery of all arms within the hour, and at the end of that period, none being brought, shelled and burned the village. The shells fell for the most part innocuous; an eyewitness saw children at play beside the flaming houses; not a soul was injured; and the one noteworthy event was the mutilation of Captain Hamilton's American flag. In one sense an incident too small to be

chronicled, in another this was of historic interest and import. These rags of tattered bunting occasioned the display of a new sentiment in the United States; and the republic of the West, hitherto so apathetic and unwieldy, but already stung by German nonchalance, leaped to its feet for the first time at the news of this fresh insult. As though to make the inefficiency of the war-ships more apparent, three shells were thrown inland at Mangiangi; they flew high over the Mataafa camp, where the natives could "hear them singing" as they flew, and fell behind in the deep romantic valley of the Vaisingano. Mataafa had been already summoned on board the Adler; his life promised if he came, declared "in danger" if he came not; and he had declined in silence the unattractive invitation. These fresh hostile acts showed him that the worst had come. He was in strength, his force posted along the whole front of the mountain behind Apia, Matautu occupied, the Siumu road lined up to the houses of the town with warriors passionate for war. The occasion was unique, and there is no doubt that he designed to seize it. The same day of this bombardment, he sent word bidding all English and Americans wear a black band upon their arm, so that his men should recognise and spare them. The hint was taken, and the band worn for a continuance of days. To have refused would have been insane; but to consent was unhappily to feed the resentment of the Germans by a fresh sign of intelligence with their enemies, and to widen the breach between the races by a fresh and a scarce pardonable mark of their division. The same day again the Germans repeated one of their earlier offences by firing on a boat within the harbour. Times were changed; they were now at war and in peril, the rigour of military advantage might well be seized by them and pardoned by others; but it so chanced that the bullets flew about the ears of Captain

Hand, and that commander is said to have been insatiable of apologies. The affair, besides, had a deplorable effect on the inhabitants. A black band (they saw) might protect them from the Mataafas, not from indiscriminating shots. Panic ensued. The war-ships were open to receive the fugitives, and the gentlemen who had made merry over Fangalii were seen to thrust each other from the wharves in their eagerness to flee Apia. I willingly drop the curtain on the shameful picture.

Meanwhile, on the German side of the bay, a more manly spirit was exhibited in circumstances of alarming weakness. The plantation managers and overseers had all retreated to Matafele, only one (I understand) remaining at his post. The whole German colony was thus collected in one spot, and could count and wonder at its scanty numbers. Knappe declares (to my surprise) that the war-ships could not spare him more than fifty men a day. The great extension of the German quarter, he goes on, did not "allow a full occupation of the outer line"; hence they had shrunk into the western end by the firm buildings, and the inhabitants were warned to fall back on this position, in the case of an alert. So that he who had set forth, a day or so before, to disarm the Mataafas in the open field, now found his resources scarce adequate to garrison the buildings of the firm. But Knappe seemed unteachable by fate. It is probable he thought he had

"Already waded in so deep,  
Returning were as tedious as go o'er";

it is certain that he continued, on the scene of his defeat and in the

midst of his weakness, to bluster and menace like a conqueror. Active war, which he lacked the means of attempting, was continually threatened. On the 22nd he sought the aid of his brother consuls to maintain the neutral territory against Mataafa; and at the same time, as though meditating instant deeds of prowess, refused to be bound by it himself. This singular proposition was of course refused: Blacklock remarking that he had no fear of the natives, if these were let alone; de Coetlogon refusing in the circumstances to recognise any neutral territory at all. In vain Knappe amended and baited his proposal with the offer of forty-eight or ninety-six hours' notice, according as his objective should be near or within the boundary of the Eleele Sa. It was rejected; and he learned that he must accept war with all its consequences--and not that which he desired--war with the immunities of peace.

This monstrous exigence illustrates the man's frame of mind. It has been still further illuminated in the German white-book by printing alongside of his despatches those of the unimpassioned Fritze. On January 8th the consulate was destroyed by fire. Knappe says it was the work of incendiaries, "without doubt"; Fritze admits that "everything seems to show" it was an accident. "Tamasese's people fit to bear arms," writes Knappe, "are certainly for the moment equal to Mataafa's," though restrained from battle by the lack of ammunition. "As for Tamasese," says Fritze of the same date, "he is now but a phantom--dient er nur als Gespenst. His party, for practical purposes, is no longer large. They pretend ammunition to be lacking, but what they lack most is good-will. Captain Brandeis, whose influence is now small, declares they can no longer sustain a serious engagement, and is himself in the intention of



leaving Samoa by the Lubeck of the 5th February." And Knappe, in the same despatch, confutes himself and confirms the testimony of his naval colleague, by the admission that "the re-establishment of Tamasese's government is, under present circumstances, not to be thought of." Plainly, then, he was not so much seeking to deceive others, as he was himself possessed; and we must regard the whole series of his acts and despatches as the agitations of a fever.

The British steamer Richmond returned to Apia, January 15th. On the last voyage she had brought the ammunition already so frequently referred to; as a matter of fact, she was again bringing contraband of war. It is necessary to be explicit upon this, which served as spark to so great a flame of scandal. Knappe was justified in interfering; he would have been worthy of all condemnation if he had neglected, in his posture of semi-investment, a precaution so elementary; and the manner in which he set about attempting it was conciliatory and almost timid. He applied to Captain Hand, and begged him to accept himself the duty of "controlling" the discharge of the Richmond's cargo. Hand was unable to move without his consul; and at night an armed boat from the Germans boarded, searched, and kept possession of, the suspected ship. The next day, as by an after-thought, war and martial law were proclaimed for the Samoan Islands, the introduction of contraband of war forbidden, and ships and boats declared liable to search. "All support of the rebels will be punished by martial law," continued the proclamation, "no matter to what nationality the person [Thater] may belong."

Hand, it has been seen, declined to act in the matter of the Richmond

without the concurrence of his consul; but I have found no evidence that either Hand or Knappe communicated with de Coetlogon, with whom they were both at daggers drawn. First the seizure and next the proclamation seem to have burst on the English consul from a clear sky; and he wrote on the same day, throwing doubt on Knappe's authority to declare war. Knappe replied on the 20th that the Imperial German Government had been at war as a matter of fact since December 19th, and that it was only for the convenience of the subjects of other states that he had been empowered to make a formal declaration. "From that moment," he added, "martial law prevails in Samoa." De Coetlogon instantly retorted, declining martial law for British subjects, and announcing a proclamation in that sense. Instantly, again, came that astonishing document, Knappe's rejoinder, without pause, without reflection--the pens screeching on the paper, the messengers (you would think) running from consulate to consulate: "I have had the honour to receive your Excellency's [Hochwohlgeboren] agreeable communication of to-day. Since, on the ground of received instructions, martial law has been declared in Samoa, British subjects as well as others fall under its application. I warn you therefore to abstain from such a proclamation as you announce in your letter. It will be such a piece of business as shall make yourself answerable under martial law. Besides, your proclamation will be disregarded." De Coetlogon of course issued his proclamation at once, Knappe retorted with another, and night closed on the first stage of this insane collision. I hear the German consul was on this day prostrated with fever; charity at least must suppose him hardly answerable for his language.

Early on the 21st, Mr. Mansfield Gallien, a passing traveller, was seized in his berth on board the Richmond, and carried, half-dressed, on board a German war-ship. His offence was, in the circumstances and after the proclamation, substantial. He had gone the day before, in the spirit of a tourist to Mataafa's camp, had spoken with the king, and had even recommended him an appeal to Sir George Grey. Fritze, I gather, had been long uneasy; this arrest on board a British ship fitted the measure. Doubtless, as he had written long before, the consul alone was responsible "on the legal side"; but the captain began to ask himself, "What next?"--telegraphed direct home for instructions, "Is arrest of foreigners on foreign vessels legal?"--and was ready, at a word from Captain Hand, to discharge his dangerous prisoner. The word in question (so the story goes) was not without a kind of wit. "I wish you would set that man ashore," Hand is reported to have said, indicating Gallien; "I wish you would set that man ashore, to save me the trouble." The same day de Coetlogon published a proclamation requesting captains to submit to search for contraband of war.

On the 22nd the Samoa Times and South Sea Advertiser was suppressed by order of Fritze. I have hitherto refrained from mentioning the single paper of our islands, that I might deal with it once for all. It is of course a tiny sheet; but I have often had occasion to wonder at the ability of its articles, and almost always at the decency of its tone. Officials may at times be a little roughly, and at times a little captiously, criticised; private persons are habitually respected; and there are many papers in England, and still more in the States, even of leading organs in chief cities, that might envy, and would do well to

imitate, the courtesy and discretion of the Samoa Times. Yet the editor, Cusack, is only an amateur in journalism, and a carpenter by trade. His chief fault is one perhaps inevitable in so small a place--that he seems a little in the leading of a clique; but his interest in the public weal is genuine and generous. One man's meat is another man's poison: Anglo-Saxons and Germans have been differently brought up. To our galled experience the paper appears moderate; to their untried sensations it seems violent. We think a public man fair game; we think it a part of his duty, and I am told he finds it a part of his reward, to be continually canvassed by the press. For the Germans, on the other hand, an official wears a certain sacredness; when he is called over the coals, they are shocked, and (if the official be a German) feel that Germany itself has been insulted. The Samoa Times had been long a mountain of offence. Brandeis had imported from the colonies another printer of the name of Jones, to deprive Cusack of the government printing. German sailors had come ashore one day, wild with offended patriotism, to punish the editor with stripes, and the result was delightfully amusing. The champions asked for the English printer. They were shown the wrong man, and the blows intended for Cusack had hailed on the shoulders of his rival Jones. On the 12th, Cusack had reprinted an article from a San Francisco paper; the Germans had complained; and de Coetlogon, in a moment of weakness, had fined the editor twenty pounds. The judgment was afterwards reversed in Fiji; but even at the time it had not satisfied the Germans. And so now, on the third day of martial law, the paper was suppressed. Here we have another of these international obscurities. To Fritze the step seemed natural and obvious; for Anglo-

Saxons it was a hand laid upon the altar; and the month was scarce out before the voice of Senator Frye announced to his colleagues that free speech had been suppressed in Samoa.

Perhaps we must seek some similar explanation for Fritze's short-lived code, published and withdrawn the next day, the 23rd. Fritze himself was in no humour for extremities. He was much in the position of a lieutenant who should perceive his captain urging the ship upon the rocks. It is plain he had lost all confidence in his commanding officer "upon the legal side"; and we find him writing home with anxious candour. He had understood that martial law implied military possession; he was in military possession of nothing but his ship, and shrewdly suspected that his martial jurisdiction should be confined within the same limits. "As a matter of fact," he writes, "we do not occupy the territory, and cannot give foreigners the necessary protection, because Mataafa and his people can at any moment forcibly interrupt me in my jurisdiction." Yet in the eyes of Anglo-Saxons the severity of his code appeared burlesque. I give but three of its provisions. The crime of inciting German troops "by any means, as, for instance, informing them of proclamations by the enemy," was punishable with death; that of "publishing or secretly distributing anything, whether printed or written, bearing on the war," with prison or deportation; and that of calling or attending a public meeting, unless permitted, with the same. Such were the tender mercies of Knappe, lurking in the western end of the German quarter, where Mataafa could "at any moment" interrupt his jurisdiction.

On the 22nd (day of the suppression of the Times) de Coetlogon wrote to

inquire if hostilities were intended against Great Britain, which Knappe on the same day denied. On the 23rd de Coetlogon sent a complaint of hostile acts, such as the armed and forcible entry of the Richmond before the declaration and arrest of Gallien. In his reply, dated the 24th, Knappe took occasion to repeat, although now with more self-command, his former threat against de Coetlogon. "I am still of the opinion," he writes, "that even foreign consuls are liable to the application of martial law, if they are guilty of offences against the belligerent state." The same day (24th) de Coetlogon complained that Fletcher, manager for Messrs. MacArthur, had been summoned by Fritze. In answer, Knappe had "the honour to inform your Excellency that since the declaration of the state of war, British subjects are liable to martial law, and Mr. Fletcher will be arrested if he does not appear." Here, then, was the gauntlet thrown down, and de Coetlogon was burning to accept it. Fletcher's offence was this. Upon the 22nd a steamer had come in from Wellington, specially chartered to bring German despatches to Apia. The rumour came along with her from New Zealand that in these despatches Knappe would find himself rebuked, and Fletcher was accused of having "interested himself in the spreading of this rumour." His arrest was actually ordered, when Hand succeeded in persuading him to surrender.

At the German court, the case was dismissed "wegen Nichtigkeit"; and the acute stage of these distempers may be said to have ended. Blessed are the peacemakers. Hand had perhaps averted a collision. What is more certain, he had offered to the world a perfectly original reading of the part of British seaman.

Hand may have averted a collision, I say; but I am tempted to believe otherwise. I am tempted to believe the threat to arrest Fletcher was the last mutter of the declining tempest and a mere sop to Knappe's self-respect. I am tempted to believe the rumour in question was substantially correct, and the steamer from Wellington had really brought the German consul grounds for hesitation, if not orders to retreat. I believe the unhappy man to have awakened from a dream, and to have read ominous writing on the wall. An enthusiastic popularity surrounded him among the Germans. It was natural. Consul and colony had passed through an hour of serious peril, and the consul had set the example of undaunted courage. He was entertained at dinner. Fritze, who was known to have secretly opposed him, was scorned and avoided. But the clerks of the German firm were one thing, Prince Bismarck was another; and on a cold review of these events, it is not improbable that Knappe may have envied the position of his naval colleague. It is certain, at least, that he set himself to shuffle and capitulate; and when the blow fell, he was able to reply that the martial law business had in the meanwhile come right; that the English and American consular courts stood open for ordinary cases and that in different conversations with Captain Hand, "who has always maintained friendly intercourse with the German authorities," it had been repeatedly explained that only the supply of weapons and ammunition, or similar aid and support, was to come under German martial law. Was it weapons or ammunition that Fletcher had supplied? But it is unfair to criticise these wriggings of an unfortunate in a false position.

In a despatch of the 23rd, which has not been printed, Knappe had told his story: how he had declared war, subjected foreigners to martial law, and been received with a counter-proclamation by the English consul; and how (in an interview with Mataafa chiefs at the plantation house of Motuotua, of which I cannot find the date) he had demanded the cession of arms and of ringleaders for punishment, and proposed to assume the government of the islands. On February 12th he received Bismarck's answer: "You had no right to take foreigners from the jurisdiction of their consuls. The protest of your English colleague is grounded. In disputes which may arise from this cause you will find yourself in the wrong. The demand formulated by you, as to the assumption of the government of Samoa by Germany, lay outside of your instructions and of our design. Take it immediately back. If your telegram is here rightly understood, I cannot call your conduct good." It must be a hard heart that does not sympathise with Knappe in the hour when he received this document. Yet it may be said that his troubles were still in the beginning. Men had contended against him, and he had not prevailed; he was now to be at war with the elements, and find his name identified with an immense disaster.

One more date, however, must be given first. It was on February 27th that Fritze formally announced martial law to be suspended, and himself to have relinquished the control of the police.