PART II: THE PAUMOTUS

CHAPTER I--THE DANGEROUS ARCHIPELAGO--ATOLLS AT A DISTANCE

In the early morning of 4th September a whale-boat manned by natives dragged us down the green lane of the anchorage and round the spouting promontory. On the shore level it was a hot, breathless, and yet crystal morning; but high overhead the hills of Atuona were all cowled in cloud, and the ocean-river of the trades streamed without pause. As we crawled from under the immediate shelter of the land, we reached at last the limit of their influence. The wind fell upon our sails in puffs, which strengthened and grew more continuous; presently the Casco heeled down to her day's work; the whale-boat, quite outstripped, clung for a noisy moment to her quarter; the stipulated bread, rum, and tobacco were passed in; a moment more and the boat was in our wake, and our late pilots were cheering our departure.

This was the more inspiriting as we were bound for scenes so different, and though on a brief voyage, yet for a new province of creation. That wide field of ocean, called loosely the South Seas, extends from tropic to tropic, and from perhaps 123 degrees W. to

150 degrees E., a parallelogram of one hundred degrees by forty-seven, where degrees are the most spacious. Much of it lies vacant, much is closely sown with isles, and the isles are of two sorts. No distinction is so continually dwelt upon in South Sea talk as that between the 'low' and the 'high' island, and there is none more broadly marked in nature. The Himalayas are not more different from the Sahara. On the one hand, and chiefly in groups of from eight to a dozen, volcanic islands rise above the sea; few reach an altitude of less than 4000 feet; one exceeds 13,000; their tops are often obscured in cloud, they are all clothed with various forests, all abound in food, and are all remarkable for picturesque and solemn scenery. On the other hand, we have the atoll; a thing of problematic origin and history, the reputed creature of an insect apparently unidentified; rudely annular in shape; enclosing a lagoon; rarely extending beyond a quarter of a mile at its chief width; often rising at its highest point to less than the stature of a man--man himself, the rat and the land crab, its chief inhabitants; not more variously supplied with plants; and offering to the eye, even when perfect, only a ring of glittering beach and verdant foliage, enclosing and enclosed by the blue sea.

In no quarter are the atolls so thickly congregated, in none are they so varied in size from the greatest to the least, and in none is navigation so beset with perils, as in that archipelago that we were now to thread. The huge system of the trades is, for some reason, quite confounded by this multiplicity of reefs, the wind intermits, squalls are frequent from the west and south-west,

hurricanes are known. The currents are, besides, inextricably intermixed; dead reckoning becomes a farce; the charts are not to be trusted; and such is the number and similarity of these islands that, even when you have picked one up, you may be none the wiser. The reputation of the place is consequently infamous; insurance offices exclude it from their field, and it was not without misgiving that my captain risked the Casco in such waters. I believe, indeed, it is almost understood that yachts are to avoid this baffling archipelago; and it required all my instances--and all Mr. Otis's private taste for adventure--to deflect our course across its midst.

For a few days we sailed with a steady trade, and a steady westerly current setting us to leeward; and toward sundown of the seventh it was supposed we should have sighted Takaroa, one of Cook's so-called King George Islands. The sun set; yet a while longer the old moon--semi-brilliant herself, and with a silver belly, which was her successor--sailed among gathering clouds; she, too, deserted us; stars of every degree of sheen, and clouds of every variety of form disputed the sub-lustrous night; and still we gazed in vain for Takaroa. The mate stood on the bowsprit, his tall grey figure slashing up and down against the stars, and still

'nihil astra praeter
Vidit et undas.

The rest of us were grouped at the port anchor davit, staring with no less assiduity, but with far less hope on the obscure horizon. Islands we beheld in plenty, but they were of 'such stuff as dreams are made on,' and vanished at a wink, only to appear in other places; and by and by not only islands, but refulgent and revolving lights began to stud the darkness; lighthouses of the mind or of the wearied optic nerve, solemnly shining and winking as we passed. At length the mate himself despaired, scrambled on board again from his unrestful perch, and announced that we had missed our destination. He was the only man of practice in these waters, our sole pilot, shipped for that end at Tai-o-hae. If he declared we had missed Takaroa, it was not for us to quarrel with the fact, but, if we could, to explain it. We had certainly run down our southing. Our canted wake upon the sea and our somewhat drunken-looking course upon the chart both testified with no less certainty to an impetuous westward current. We had no choice but to conclude we were again set down to leeward; and the best we could do was to bring the Casco to the wind, keep a good watch, and expect morning.

I slept that night, as was then my somewhat dangerous practice, on deck upon the cockpit bench. A stir at last awoke me, to see all the eastern heaven dyed with faint orange, the binnacle lamp already dulled against the brightness of the day, and the steersman leaning eagerly across the wheel. 'There it is, sir!' he cried, and pointed in the very eyeball of the dawn. For awhile I could see nothing but the bluish ruins of the morning bank, which lay far

along the horizon, like melting icebergs. Then the sun rose, pierced a gap in these debris of vapours, and displayed an inconsiderable islet, flat as a plate upon the sea, and spiked with palms of disproportioned altitude.

So far, so good. Here was certainly an atoll; and we were certainly got among the archipelago. But which? And where? The isle was too small for either Takaroa: in all our neighbourhood, indeed, there was none so inconsiderable, save only Tikei; and Tikei, one of Roggewein's so-called Pernicious Islands, seemed beside the question. At that rate, instead of drifting to the west, we must have fetched up thirty miles to windward. And how about the current? It had been setting us down, by observation, all these days: by the deflection of our wake, it should be setting us down that moment. When had it stopped? When had it begun again? and what kind of torrent was that which had swept us eastward in the interval? To these questions, so typical of navigation in that range of isles, I have no answer. Such were at least the facts; Tikei our island turned out to be; and it was our first experience of the dangerous archipelago, to make our landfall thirty miles out.

The sight of Tikei, thrown direct against the splendour of the morning, robbed of all its colour, and deformed with disproportioned trees like bristles on a broom, had scarce prepared us to be much in love with atolls. Later the same day we saw under more fit conditions the island of Taiaro. Lost in the Sea is

possibly the meaning of the name. And it was so we saw it; lost in blue sea and sky: a ring of white beach, green underwood, and tossing palms, gem-like in colour; of a fairy, of a heavenly prettiness. The surf ran all around it, white as snow, and broke at one point, far to seaward, on what seems an uncharted reef. There was no smoke, no sign of man; indeed, the isle is not inhabited, only visited at intervals. And yet a trader (Mr. Narii Salmon) was watching from the shore and wondering at the unexpected ship. I have spent since then long months upon low islands; I know the tedium of their undistinguished days; I know the burden of their diet. With whatever envy we may have looked from the deck on these green coverts, it was with a tenfold greater that Mr. Salmon and his comrades saw us steer, in our trim ship, to seaward.

The night fell lovely in the extreme. After the moon went down, the heaven was a thing to wonder at for stars. And as I lay in the cockpit and looked upon the steersman I was haunted by Emerson's verses:

'And the lone seaman all the night
Sails astonished among stars.'

By this glittering and imperfect brightness, about four bells in the first watch we made our third atoll, Raraka. The low line of the isle lay straight along the sky; so that I was at first

reminded of a towpath, and we seemed to be mounting some engineered and navigable stream. Presently a red star appeared, about the height and brightness of a danger signal, and with that my simile was changed; we seemed rather to skirt the embankment of a railway, and the eye began to look instinctively for the telegraph-posts, and the ear to expect the coming of a train. Here and there, but rarely, faint tree-tops broke the level. And the sound of the surf accompanied us, now in a drowsy monotone, now with a menacing swing.

The isle lay nearly east and west, barring our advance on Fakarava. We must, therefore, hug the coast until we gained the western end, where, through a passage eight miles wide, we might sail southward between Raraka and the next isle, Kauehi. We had the wind free, a lightish air; but clouds of an inky blackness were beginning to arise, and at times it lightened--without thunder. Something, I know not what, continually set us up upon the island. We lay more and more to the nor'ard; and you would have thought the shore copied our manoeuvre and outsailed us. Once and twice Raraka headed us again--again, in the sea fashion, the quite innocent steersman was abused--and again the Casco kept away. Had I been called on, with no more light than that of our experience, to draw the configuration of that island, I should have shown a series of bow-window promontories, each overlapping the other to the nor'ard, and the trend of the land from the south-east to the north-west, and behold, on the chart it lay near east and west in a straight line.

We had but just repeated our manoeuvre and kept away--for not more than five minutes the railway embankment had been lost to view and the surf to hearing--when I was aware of land again, not only on the weather bow, but dead ahead. I played the part of the judicious landsman, holding my peace till the last moment; and presently my mariners perceived it for themselves.

'Land ahead!' said the steersman.

'By God, it's Kauehi!' cried the mate.

And so it was. And with that I began to be sorry for cartographers. We were scarce doing three and a half; and they asked me to believe that (in five minutes) we had dropped an island, passed eight miles of open water, and run almost high and dry upon the next. But my captain was more sorry for himself to be afloat in such a labyrinth; laid the Casco to, with the log line up and down, and sat on the stern rail and watched it till the morning. He had enough of night in the Paumotus.

By daylight on the 9th we began to skirt Kauehi, and had now an opportunity to see near at hand the geography of atolls. Here and there, where it was high, the farther side loomed up; here and there the near side dipped entirely and showed a broad path of water into the lagoon; here and there both sides were equally abased, and we could look right through the discontinuous ring to the sea horizon on the south. Conceive, on a vast scale, the

submerged hoop of the duck-hunter, trimmed with green rushes to conceal his head--water within, water without--you have the image of the perfect atoll. Conceive one that has been partly plucked of its rush fringe; you have the atoll of Kauehi. And for either shore of it at closer quarters, conceive the line of some old Roman highway traversing a wet morass, and here sunk out of view and there re-arising, crowned with a green tuft of thicket; only instead of the stagnant waters of a marsh, the live ocean now boiled against, now buried the frail barrier. Last night's impression in the dark was thus confirmed by day, and not corrected. We sailed indeed by a mere causeway in the sea, of nature's handiwork, yet of no greater magnitude than many of the works of man.

The isle was uninhabited; it was all green brush and white sand, set in transcendently blue water; even the coco-palms were rare, though some of these completed the bright harmony of colour by hanging out a fan of golden yellow. For long there was no sign of life beyond the vegetable, and no sound but the continuous grumble of the surf. In silence and desertion these fair shores slipped past, and were submerged and rose again with clumps of thicket from the sea. And then a bird or two appeared, hovering and crying; swiftly these became more numerous, and presently, looking ahead, we were aware of a vast effervescence of winged life. In this place the annular isle was mostly under water, carrying here and there on its submerged line a wooded islet. Over one of these the birds hung and flew with an incredible density like that of gnats

or hiving bees; the mass flashed white and black, and heaved and quivered, and the screaming of the creatures rose over the voice of the surf in a shrill clattering whirr. As you descend some inland valley a not dissimilar sound announces the nearness of a mill and pouring river. Some stragglers, as I said, came to meet our approach; a few still hung about the ship as we departed. The crying died away, the last pair of wings was left behind, and once more the low shores of Kauehi streamed past our eyes in silence like a picture. I supposed at the time that the birds lived, like ants or citizens, concentred where we saw them. I have been told since (I know not if correctly) that the whole isle, or much of it, is similarly peopled; and that the effervescence at a single spot would be the mark of a boat's crew of egg-hunters from one of the neighbouring inhabited atolls. So that here at Kauehi, as the day before at Taiaro, the Casco sailed by under the fire of unsuspected eyes. And one thing is surely true, that even on these ribbons of land an army might lie hid and no passing mariner divine its presence.

CHAPTER II--FAKARAVA: AN ATOLL AT HAND

By a little before noon we were running down the coast of our destination, Fakarava: the air very light, the sea near smooth; though still we were accompanied by a continuous murmur from the beach, like the sound of a distant train. The isle is of a huge longitude, the enclosed lagoon thirty miles by ten or twelve, and the coral tow-path, which they call the land, some eighty or ninety miles by (possibly) one furlong. That part by which we sailed was all raised; the underwood excellently green, the topping wood of coco-palms continuous--a mark, if I had known it, of man's intervention. For once more, and once more unconsciously, we were within hail of fellow-creatures, and that vacant beach was but a pistol-shot from the capital city of the archipelago. But the life of an atoll, unless it be enclosed, passes wholly on the shores of the lagoon; it is there the villages are seated, there the canoes ply and are drawn up; and the beach of the ocean is a place accursed and deserted, the fit scene only for wizardry and shipwreck, and in the native belief a haunting ground of murderous spectres.

By and by we might perceive a breach in the low barrier; the woods ceased; a glittering point ran into the sea, tipped with an emerald shoal the mark of entrance. As we drew near we met a little run of sea--the private sea of the lagoon having there its origin and end,

and here, in the jaws of the gateway, trying vain conclusions with the more majestic heave of the Pacific. The Casco scarce avowed a shock; but there are times and circumstances when these harbour mouths of inland basins vomit floods, deflecting, burying, and dismasting ships. For, conceive a lagoon perfectly sealed but in the one point, and that of merely navigable width; conceive the tide and wind to have heaped for hours together in that coral fold a superfluity of waters, and the tide to change and the wind fall-- the open sluice of some great reservoirs at home will give an image of the unstemmable effluxion.

We were scarce well headed for the pass before all heads were craned over the rail. For the water, shoaling under our board, became changed in a moment to surprising hues of blue and grey; and in its transparency the coral branched and blossomed, and the fish of the inland sea cruised visibly below us, stained and striped, and even beaked like parrots. I have paid in my time to view many curiosities; never one so curious as that first sight over the ship's rail in the lagoon of Fakarava. But let not the reader be deceived with hope. I have since entered, I suppose, some dozen atolls in different parts of the Pacific, and the experience has never been repeated. That exquisite hue and transparency of submarine day, and these shoals of rainbow fish, have not enraptured me again.

Before we could raise our eyes from that engaging spectacle the schooner had slipped betwixt the pierheads of the reef, and was

already quite committed to the sea within. The containing shores are so little erected, and the lagoon itself is so great, that, for the more part, it seemed to extend without a check to the horizon. Here and there, indeed, where the reef carried an inlet, like a signet-ring upon a finger, there would be a pencilling of palms; here and there, the green wall of wood ran solid for a length of miles; and on the port hand, under the highest grove of trees, a few houses sparkled white--Rotoava, the metropolitan settlement of the Paumotus. Hither we beat in three tacks, and came to an anchor close in shore, in the first smooth water since we had left San Francisco, five fathoms deep, where a man might look overboard all day at the vanishing cable, the coral patches, and the many-coloured fish.

Fakarava was chosen to be the seat of Government from nautical considerations only. It is eccentrically situate; the productions, even for a low island, poor; the population neither many nor--for Low Islanders--industrious. But the lagoon has two good passages, one to leeward, one to windward, so that in all states of the wind it can be left and entered, and this advantage, for a government of scattered islands, was decisive. A pier of coral, landing-stairs, a harbour light upon a staff and pillar, and two spacious Government bungalows in a handsome fence, give to the northern end of Rotoava a great air of consequence. This is confirmed on the one hand by an empty prison, on the other by a gendarmerie pasted over with hand-bills in Tahitian, land-law notices from Papeete, and republican sentiments from Paris, signed (a little after date)

'Jules Grevy, Perihidente.' Quite at the far end a belfried Catholic chapel concludes the town; and between, on a smooth floor of white coral sand and under the breezy canopy of coco-palms, the houses of the natives stand irregularly scattered, now close on the lagoon for the sake of the breeze, now back under the palms for love of shadow.

Not a soul was to be seen. But for the thunder of the surf on the far side, it seemed you might have heard a pin drop anywhere about that capital city. There was something thrilling in the unexpected silence, something yet more so in the unexpected sound. Here before us a sea reached to the horizon, rippling like an inland mere; and behold! close at our back another sea assaulted with assiduous fury the reverse of the position. At night the lantern was run up and lit a vacant pier. In one house lights were seen and voices heard, where the population (I was told) sat playing cards. A little beyond, from deep in the darkness of the palm-grove, we saw the glow and smelt the aromatic odour of a coal of cocoa-nut husk, a relic of the evening kitchen. Crickets sang; some shrill thing whistled in a tuft of weeds; and the mosquito hummed and stung. There was no other trace that night of man, bird, or insect in the isle. The moon, now three days old, and as yet but a silver crescent on a still visible sphere, shone through the palm canopy with vigorous and scattered lights. The alleys where we walked were smoothed and weeded like a boulevard; here and there were plants set out; here and there dusky cottages clustered in the shadow, some with verandahs. A public garden by night, a

rich and fashionable watering-place in a by-season, offer sights and vistas not dissimilar. And still, on the one side, stretched the lapping mere, and from the other the deep sea still growled in the night. But it was most of all on board, in the dead hours, when I had been better sleeping, that the spell of Fakarava seized and held me. The moon was down. The harbour lantern and two of the greater planets drew vari-coloured wakes on the lagoon. From shore the cheerful watch-cry of cocks rang out at intervals above the organ-point of surf. And the thought of this depopulated capital, this protracted thread of annular island with its crest of coco-palms and fringe of breakers, and that tranquil inland sea that stretched before me till it touched the stars, ran in my head for hours with delight.

So long as I stayed upon that isle these thoughts were constant. I lay down to sleep, and woke again with an unblunted sense of my surroundings. I was never weary of calling up the image of that narrow causeway, on which I had my dwelling, lying coiled like a serpent, tail to mouth, in the outrageous ocean, and I was never weary of passing--a mere quarter-deck parade--from the one side to the other, from the shady, habitable shores of the lagoon to the blinding desert and uproarious breakers of the opposite beach. The sense of insecurity in such a thread of residence is more than fanciful. Hurricanes and tidal waves over-leap these humble obstacles; Oceanus remembers his strength, and, where houses stood and palms flourished, shakes his white beard again over the barren coral. Fakarava itself has suffered; the trees immediately beyond

my house were all of recent replantation; and Anaa is only now recovered from a heavier stroke. I knew one who was then dwelling in the isle. He told me that he and two ship captains walked to the sea beach. There for a while they viewed the oncoming breakers, till one of the captains clapped suddenly his hand before his eyes and cried aloud that he could endure no longer to behold them. This was in the afternoon; in the dark hours of the night the sea burst upon the island like a flood; the settlement was razed all but the church and presbytery; and, when day returned, the survivors saw themselves clinging in an abattis of uprooted coco-palms and ruined houses.

Danger is but a small consideration. But men are more nicely sensible of a discomfort; and the atoll is a discomfortable home. There are some, and these probably ancient, where a deep soil has formed and the most valuable fruit-trees prosper. I have walked in one, with equal admiration and surprise, through a forest of huge breadfruits, eating bananas and stumbling among taro as I went. This was in the atoll of Namorik in the Marshall group, and stands alone in my experience. To give the opposite extreme, which is yet far more near the average, I will describe the soil and productions of Fakarava. The surface of that narrow strip is for the more part of broken coral lime-stone, like volcanic clinkers, and excruciating to the naked foot; in some atolls, I believe, not in Fakarava, it gives a fine metallic ring when struck. Here and there you come upon a bank of sand, exceeding fine and white, and these parts are the least productive. The plants (such as they

are) spring from and love the broken coral, whence they grow with that wonderful verdancy that makes the beauty of the atoll from the sea. The coco-palm in particular luxuriates in that stern solum, striking down his roots to the brackish, percolated water, and bearing his green head in the wind with every evidence of health and pleasure. And yet even the coco-palm must be helped in infancy with some extraneous nutriment, and through much of the low archipelago there is planted with each nut a piece of ship's biscuit and a rusty nail. The pandanus comes next in importance, being also a food tree; and he, too, does bravely. A green bush called miki runs everywhere; occasionally a purao is seen; and there are several useless weeds. According to M. Cuzent, the whole number of plants on an atoll such as Fakarava will scarce exceed, even if it reaches to, one score. Not a blade of grass appears; not a grain of humus, save when a sack or two has been imported to make the semblance of a garden; such gardens as bloom in cities on the window-sill. Insect life is sometimes dense; a cloud o' mosquitoes, and, what is far worse, a plague of flies blackening our food, has sometimes driven us from a meal on Apemama; and even in Fakarava the mosquitoes were a pest. The land crab may be seen scuttling to his hole, and at night the rats besiege the houses and the artificial gardens. The crab is good eating; possibly so is the rat; I have not tried. Pandanus fruit is made, in the Gilberts, into an agreeable sweetmeat, such as a man may trifle with at the end of a long dinner; for a substantial meal I have no use for it. The rest of the food-supply, in a destitute atoll such as Fakarava, can be summed up in the favourite jest of the

archipelago--cocoa-nut beefsteak. Cocoa-nut green, cocoa-nut ripe, cocoa-nut germinated; cocoa-nut to eat and cocoa-nut to drink; cocoa-nut raw and cooked, cocoa-nut hot and cold--such is the bill of fare. And some of the entrees are no doubt delicious. The germinated nut, cooked in the shell and eaten with a spoon, forms a good pudding; cocoa-nut milk--the expressed juice of a ripe nut, not the water of a green one--goes well in coffee, and is a valuable adjunct in cookery through the South Seas; and cocoa-nut salad, if you be a millionaire, and can afford to eat the value of a field of corn for your dessert, is a dish to be remembered with affection. But when all is done there is a sameness, and the Israelites of the low islands murmur at their manna.

The reader may think I have forgot the sea. The two beaches do certainly abound in life, and they are strangely different. In the lagoon the water shallows slowly on a bottom of the fine slimy sand, dotted with clumps of growing coral. Then comes a strip of tidal beach on which the ripples lap. In the coral clumps the great holy-water clam (Tridacna) grows plentifully; a little deeper lie the beds of the pearl-oyster and sail the resplendent fish that charmed us at our entrance; and these are all more or less vigorously coloured. But the other shells are white like lime, or faintly tinted with a little pink, the palest possible display; many of them dead besides, and badly rolled. On the ocean side, on the mounds of the steep beach, over all the width of the reef right out to where the surf is bursting, in every cranny, under every scattered fragment of the coral, an incredible plenty of marine

life displays the most wonderful variety and brilliancy of hues. The reef itself has no passage of colour but is imitated by some shell. Purple and red and white, and green and yellow, pied and striped and clouded, the living shells wear in every combination the livery of the dead reef--if the reef be dead--so that the eye is continually baffled and the collector continually deceived. I have taken shells for stones and stones for shells, the one as often as the other. A prevailing character of the coral is to be dotted with small spots of red, and it is wonderful how many varieties of shell have adopted the same fashion and donned the disguise of the red spot. A shell I had found in plenty in the Marquesas I found here also unchanged in all things else, but there were the red spots. A lively little crab wore the same markings. The case of the hermit or soldier crab was more conclusive, being the result of conscious choice. This nasty little wrecker, scavenger, and squatter has learned the value of a spotted house; so it be of the right colour he will choose the smallest shard, tuck himself in a mere corner of a broken whorl, and go about the world half naked; but I never found him in this imperfect armour unless it was marked with the red spot.

Some two hundred yards distant is the beach of the lagoon. Collect the shells from each, set them side by side, and you would suppose they came from different hemispheres; the one so pale, the other so brilliant; the one prevalently white, the other of a score of hues, and infected with the scarlet spot like a disease. This seems the more strange, since the hermit crabs pass and repass the island,

and I have met them by the Residency well, which is about central, journeying either way. Without doubt many of the shells in the lagoon are dead. But why are they dead? Without doubt the living shells have a very different background set for imitation. But why are these so different? We are only on the threshold of the mysteries.

Either beach, I have said, abounds with life. On the sea-side and in certain atolls this profusion of vitality is even shocking: the rock under foot is mined with it. I have broken off--notably in Funafuti and Arorai--great lumps of ancient weathered rock that rang under my blows like iron, and the fracture has been full of pendent worms as long as my hand, as thick as a child's finger, of a slightly pinkish white, and set as close as three or even four to the square inch. Even in the lagoon, where certain shell-fish seem to sicken, others (it is notorious) prosper exceedingly and make the riches of these islands. Fish, too, abound; the lagoon is a closed fish-pond, such as might rejoice the fancy of an abbot; sharks swarm there, and chiefly round the passages, to feast upon this plenty, and you would suppose that man had only to prepare his angle. Alas! it is not so. Of these painted fish that came in hordes about the entering Casco, some bore poisonous spines, and others were poisonous if eaten. The stranger must refrain, or take his chance of painful and dangerous sickness. The native, on his own isle, is a safe guide; transplant him to the next, and he is helpless as yourself. For it is a question both of time and place. A fish caught in a lagoon may be deadly; the same fish caught the

same day at sea, and only a few hundred yards without the passage, will be wholesome eating: in a neighbouring isle perhaps the case will be reversed; and perhaps a fortnight later you shall be able to eat of them indifferently from within and from without. According to the natives, these bewildering vicissitudes are ruled by the movement of the heavenly bodies. The beautiful planet Venus plays a great part in all island tales and customs; and among other functions, some of them more awful, she regulates the season of good fish. With Venus in one phase, as we had her, certain fish were poisonous in the lagoon: with Venus in another, the same fish was harmless and a valued article of diet. White men explain these changes by the phases of the coral.

It adds a last touch of horror to the thought of this precarious annular gangway in the sea, that even what there is of it is not of honest rock, but organic, part alive, part putrescent; even the clean sea and the bright fish about it poisoned, the most stubborn boulder burrowed in by worms, the lightest dust venomous as an apothecary's drugs.

CHAPTER III--A HOUSE TO LET IN A LOW ISLAND

Never populous, it was yet by a chapter of accidents that I found the island so deserted that no sound of human life diversified the hours; that we walked in that trim public garden of a town, among closed houses, without even a lodging-bill in a window to prove some tenancy in the back quarters; and, when we visited the Government bungalow, that Mr. Donat, acting Vice-Resident, greeted us alone, and entertained us with cocoa-nut punches in the Sessions Hall and seat of judgment of that widespread archipelago, our glasses standing arrayed with summonses and census returns. The unpopularity of a late Vice-Resident had begun the movement of exodus, his native employes resigning court appointments and retiring each to his own coco-patch in the remoter districts of the isle. Upon the back of that, the Governor in Papeete issued a decree: All land in the Paumotus must be defined and registered by a certain date. Now, the folk of the archipelago are half nomadic; a man can scarce be said to belong to a particular atoll; he belongs to several, perhaps holds a stake and counts cousinship in half a score; and the inhabitants of Rotoava in particular, man, woman, and child, and from the gendarme to the Mormon prophet and the schoolmaster, owned--I was going to say land--owned at least coral blocks and growing coco-palms in some adjacent isle. Thither--from the gendarme to the babe in arms, the pastor followed by his flock, the schoolmaster carrying along with him his

scholars, and the scholars with their books and slates--they had taken ship some two days previous to our arrival, and were all now engaged disputing boundaries. Fancy overhears the shrillness of their disputation mingle with the surf and scatter sea-fowl. It was admirable to observe the completeness of their flight, like that of hibernating birds; nothing left but empty houses, like old nests to be reoccupied in spring; and even the harmless necessary dominie borne with them in their transmigration. Fifty odd set out, and only seven, I was informed, remained. But when I made a feast on board the Casco, more than seven, and nearer seven times seven, appeared to be my guests. Whence they appeared, how they were summoned, whither they vanished when the feast was eaten, I have no guess. In view of Low Island tales, and that awful frequentation which makes men avoid the seaward beaches of an atoll, some two score of those that ate with us may have returned, for the occasion, from the kingdom of the dead.

It was this solitude that put it in our minds to hire a house, and become, for the time being, indwellers of the isle--a practice I have ever since, when it was possible, adhered to. Mr. Donat placed us, with that intent, under the convoy of one Taniera Mahinui, who combined the incongruous characters of catechist and convict. The reader may smile, but I affirm he was well qualified for either part. For that of convict, first of all, by a good substantial felony, such as in all lands casts the perpetrator in chains and dungeons. Taniera was a man of birth--the chief a while ago, as he loved to tell, of a district in Anaa of 800 souls. In

an evil hour it occurred to the authorities in Papeete to charge the chiefs with the collection of the taxes. It is a question if much were collected; it is certain that nothing was handed on; and Taniera, who had distinguished himself by a visit to Papeete and some high living in restaurants, was chosen for the scapegoat. The reader must understand that not Taniera but the authorities in Papeete were first in fault. The charge imposed was disproportioned. I have not yet heard of any Polynesian capable of such a burden; honest and upright Hawaiians--one in particular, who was admired even by the whites as an inflexible magistrate--have stumbled in the narrow path of the trustee. And Taniera, when the pinch came, scorned to denounce accomplices; others had shared the spoil, he bore the penalty alone. He was condemned in five years. The period, when I had the pleasure of his friendship, was not yet expired; he still drew prison rations, the sole and not unwelcome reminder of his chains, and, I believe, looked forward to the date of his enfranchisement with mere alarm. For he had no sense of shame in the position; complained of nothing but the defective table of his place of exile; regretted nothing but the fowls and eggs and fish of his own more favoured island. And as for his parishioners, they did not think one hair the less of him. A schoolboy, mulcted in ten thousand lines of Greek and dwelling sequestered in the dormitories, enjoys unabated consideration from his fellows. So with Taniera: a marked man, not a dishonoured; having fallen under the lash of the unthinkable gods; a Job, perhaps, or say a Taniera in the den of lions. Songs are likely made and sung about this saintly Robin Hood. On the other hand, he

was even highly qualified for his office in the Church; being by nature a grave, considerate, and kindly man; his face rugged and serious, his smile bright; the master of several trades, a builder both of boats and houses; endowed with a fine pulpit voice; endowed besides with such a gift of eloquence that at the grave of the late chief of Fakarava he set all the assistants weeping. I never met a man of a mind more ecclesiastical; he loved to dispute and to inform himself of doctrine and the history of sects; and when I showed him the cuts in a volume of Chambers's Encyclopaedia--except for one of an ape--reserved his whole enthusiasm for cardinals' hats, censers, candlesticks, and cathedrals. Methought when he looked upon the cardinal's hat a voice said low in his ear: 'Your foot is on the ladder.'

Under the guidance of Taniera we were soon installed in what I believe to have been the best-appointed private house in Fakarava. It stood just beyond the church in an oblong patch of cultivation. More than three hundred sacks of soil were imported from Tahiti for the Residency garden; and this must shortly be renewed, for the earth blows away, sinks in crevices of the coral, and is sought for at last in vain. I know not how much earth had gone to the garden of my villa; some at least, for an alley of prosperous bananas ran to the gate, and over the rest of the enclosure, which was covered with the usual clinker-like fragments of smashed coral, not only coco-palms and mikis but also fig-trees flourished, all of a delicious greenness. Of course there was no blade of grass. In front a picket fence divided us from the white road, the palm-

fringed margin of the lagoon, and the lagoon itself, reflecting clouds by day and stars by night. At the back, a bulwark of uncemented coral enclosed us from the narrow belt of bush and the nigh ocean beach where the seas thundered, the roar and wash of them still humming in the chambers of the house.

This itself was of one story, verandahed front and back. It contained three rooms, three sewing-machines, three sea-chests, chairs, tables, a pair of beds, a cradle, a double-barrelled gun, a pair of enlarged coloured photographs, a pair of coloured prints after Wilkie and Mulready, and a French lithograph with the legend: 'Le brigade du General Lepasset brulant son drapeau devant Metz.' Under the stilts of the house a stove was rusting, till we drew it forth and put it in commission. Not far off was the burrow in the coral whence we supplied ourselves with brackish water. There was live stock, besides, on the estate--cocks and hens and a brace of ill-regulated cats, whom Taniera came every morning with the sun to feed on grated cocoa-nut. His voice was our regular reveille, ringing pleasantly about the garden: 'Pooty--pooty--poo--poo--poo!'

Far as we were from the public offices, the nearness of the chapel made our situation what is called eligible in advertisements, and gave us a side look on some native life. Every morning, as soon as he had fed the fowls, Taniera set the bell agoing in the small belfry; and the faithful, who were not very numerous, gathered to prayers. I was once present: it was the Lord's day, and seven

females and eight males composed the congregation. A woman played precentor, starting with a longish note; the catechist joined in upon the second bar; and then the faithful in a body. Some had printed hymn-books which they followed; some of the rest filled up with 'eh--eh--eh,' the Paumotuan tol-de-rol. After the hymn, we had an antiphonal prayer or two; and then Taniera rose from the front bench, where he had been sitting in his catechist's robes, passed within the altar-rails, opened his Tahitian Bible, and began to preach from notes. I understood one word--the name of God; but the preacher managed his voice with taste, used rare and expressive gestures, and made a strong impression of sincerity. The plain service, the vernacular Bible, the hymn-tunes mostly on an English pattern--'God save the Queen,' I was informed, a special favourite,--all, save some paper flowers upon the altar, seemed not merely but austerely Protestant. It is thus the Catholics have met their low island proselytes half-way.

Taniera had the keys of our house; it was with him I made my bargain, if that could be called a bargain in which all was remitted to my generosity; it was he who fed the cats and poultry, he who came to call and pick a meal with us like an acknowledged friend; and we long fondly supposed he was our landlord. This belief was not to bear the test of experience; and, as my chapter has to relate, no certainty succeeded it.

We passed some days of airless quiet and great heat; shell-gatherers were warned from the ocean beach, where sunstroke waited

them from ten till four; the highest palm hung motionless, there was no voice audible but that of the sea on the far side. At last, about four of a certain afternoon, long cat's-paws flawed the face of the lagoon; and presently in the tree-tops there awoke the grateful bustle of the trades, and all the houses and alleys of the island were fanned out. To more than one enchanted ship, that had lain long becalmed in view of the green shore, the wind brought deliverance; and by daylight on the morrow a schooner and two cutters lay moored in the port of Rotoava. Not only in the outer sea, but in the lagoon itself, a certain traffic woke with the reviving breeze; and among the rest one Francois, a half-blood, set sail with the first light in his own half-decked cutter. He had held before a court appointment; being, I believe, the Residency sweeper-out. Trouble arising with the unpopular Vice-Resident, he had thrown his honours down, and fled to the far parts of the atoll to plant cabbages--or at least coco-palms. Thence he was now driven by such need as even a Cincinnatus must acknowledge, and fared for the capital city, the seat of his late functions, to exchange half a ton of copra for necessary flour. And here, for a while, the story leaves to tell of his voyaging.

It must tell, instead, of our house, where, toward seven at night, the catechist came suddenly in with his pleased air of being welcome; armed besides with a considerable bunch of keys. These he proceeded to try on the sea-chests, drawing each in turn from its place against the wall. Heads of strangers appeared in the doorway and volunteered suggestions. All in vain. Either they were the

wrong keys or the wrong boxes, or the wrong man was trying them. For a little Taniera fumed and fretted; then had recourse to the more summary method of the hatchet; one of the chests was broken open, and an armful of clothing, male and female, baled out and handed to the strangers on the verandah.

These were Francois, his wife, and their child. About eight a.m., in the midst of the lagoon, their cutter had capsized in jibbing. They got her righted, and though she was still full of water put the child on board. The mainsail had been carried away, but the jib still drew her sluggishly along, and Francois and the woman swam astern and worked the rudder with their hands. The cold was cruel; the fatigue, as time went on, became excessive; and in that preserve of sharks, fear hunted them. Again and again, Francois, the half-breed, would have desisted and gone down; but the woman, whole blood of an amphibious race, still supported him with cheerful words. I am reminded of a woman of Hawaii who swam with her husband, I dare not say how many miles, in a high sea, and came ashore at last with his dead body in her arms. It was about five in the evening, after nine hours' swimming, that Francois and his wife reached land at Rotoava. The gallant fight was won, and instantly the more childish side of native character appears. They had supped, and told and retold their story, dripping as they came; the flesh of the woman, whom Mrs. Stevenson helped to shift, was cold as stone; and Francois, having changed to a dry cotton shirt and trousers, passed the remainder of the evening on my floor and between open doorways, in a thorough draught. Yet Francois, the

son of a French father, speaks excellent French himself and seems intelligent.

It was our first idea that the catechist, true to his evangelical vocation, was clothing the naked from his superfluity. Then it came out that Francois was but dealing with his own. The clothes were his, so was the chest, so was the house. Francois was in fact the landlord. Yet you observe he had hung back on the verandah while Taniera tried his 'prentice hand upon the locks: and even now, when his true character appeared, the only use he made of the estate was to leave the clothes of his family drying on the fence. Taniera was still the friend of the house, still fed the poultry, still came about us on his daily visits, Francois, during the remainder of his stay, holding bashfully aloof. And there was stranger matter. Since Francois had lost the whole load of his cutter, the half ton of copra, an axe, bowls, knives, and clothes--since he had in a manner to begin the world again, and his necessary flour was not yet bought or paid for--I proposed to advance him what he needed on the rent. To my enduring amazement he refused, and the reason he gave--if that can be called a reason which but darkens counsel--was that Taniera was his friend. His friend, you observe; not his creditor. I inquired into that, and was assured that Taniera, an exile in a strange isle, might possibly be in debt himself, but certainly was no man's creditor.

Very early one morning we were awakened by a bustling presence in the yard, and found our camp had been surprised by a tall, lean old

native lady, dressed in what were obviously widow's weeds. You could see at a glance she was a notable woman, a housewife, sternly practical, alive with energy, and with fine possibilities of temper. Indeed, there was nothing native about her but the skin; and the type abounds, and is everywhere respected, nearer home. It did us good to see her scour the grounds, examining the plants and chickens; watering, feeding, trimming them; taking angry, purpose-like possession. When she neared the house our sympathy abated; when she came to the broken chest I wished I were elsewhere. We had scarce a word in common; but her whole lean body spoke for her with indignant eloquence. 'My chest!' it cried, with a stress on the possessive. 'My chest--broken open! This is a fine state of things!' I hastened to lay the blame where it belonged--on Francois and his wife--and found I had made things worse instead of better. She repeated the names at first with incredulity, then with despair. A while she seemed stunned, next fell to disembowelling the box, piling the goods on the floor, and visibly computing the extent of Francois's ravages; and presently after she was observed in high speech with Taniera, who seemed to hang an ear like one reproved.

Here, then, by all known marks, should be my land-lady at last; here was every character of the proprietor fully developed. Should I not approach her on the still depending question of my rent? I carried the point to an adviser. 'Nonsense!' he cried. 'That's the old woman, the mother. It doesn't belong to her. I believe that's the man the house belongs to,' and he pointed to one of the

coloured photographs on the wall. On this I gave up all desire of understanding; and when the time came for me to leave, in the judgment-hall of the archipelago, and with the awful countenance of the acting Governor, I duly paid my rent to Taniera. He was satisfied, and so was I. But what had he to do with it? Mr. Donat, acting magistrate and a man of kindred blood, could throw no light upon the mystery; a plain private person, with a taste for letters, cannot be expected to do more.

CHAPTER IV--TRAITS AND SECTS IN THE PAUMOTUS

The most careless reader must have remarked a change of air since the Marquesas. The house, crowded with effects, the bustling housewife counting her possessions, the serious, indoctrinated island pastor, the long fight for life in the lagoon: here are traits of a new world. I read in a pamphlet (I will not give the author's name) that the Marquesan especially resembles the Paumotuan. I should take the two races, though so near in neighbourhood, to be extremes of Polynesian diversity. The Marquesan is certainly the most beautiful of human races, and one of the tallest--the Paumotuan averaging a good inch shorter, and not even handsome; the Marquesan open-handed, inert, insensible to religion, childishly self-indulgent--the Paumotuan greedy, hardy, enterprising, a religious disputant, and with a trace of the ascetic character.

Yet a few years ago, and the people of the archipelago were crafty savages. Their isles might be called sirens' isles, not merely from the attraction they exerted on the passing mariner, but from the perils that awaited him on shore. Even to this day, in certain outlying islands, danger lingers; and the civilized Paumotuan dreads to land and hesitates to accost his backward brother. But, except in these, to-day the peril is a memory. When our generation were yet in the cradle and playroom it was still a living fact.

Between 1830 and 1840, Hao, for instance, was a place of the most dangerous approach, where ships were seized and crews kidnapped. As late as 1856, the schooner Sarah Ann sailed from Papeete and was seen no more. She had women on board, and children, the captain's wife, a nursemaid, a baby, and the two young sons of a Captain Steven on their way to the mainland for schooling. All were supposed to have perished in a squall. A year later, the captain of the Julia, coasting along the island variously called Bligh, Lagoon, and Tematangi saw armed natives follow the course of his schooner, clad in many-coloured stuffs. Suspicion was at once aroused; the mother of the lost children was profuse of money; and one expedition having found the place deserted, and returned content with firing a few shots, she raised and herself accompanied another. None appeared to greet or to oppose them; they roamed a while among abandoned huts and empty thickets; then formed two parties and set forth to beat, from end to end, the pandanus jungle of the island. One man remained alone by the landing-place--Teina, a chief of Anaa, leader of the armed natives who made the strength of the expedition. Now that his comrades were departed this way and that, on their laborious exploration, the silence fell profound; and this silence was the ruin of the islanders. A sound of stones rattling caught the ear of Teina. He looked, thinking to perceive a crab, and saw instead the brown hand of a human being issue from a fissure in the ground. A shout recalled the search parties and announced their doom to the buried caitiffs. In the cave below, sixteen were found crouching among human bones and singular and horrid curiosities. One was a head of golden hair,

supposed to be a relic of the captain's wife; another was half of the body of a European child, sun-dried and stuck upon a stick, doubtless with some design of wizardry.

The Paumotuan is eager to be rich. He saves, grudges, buries money, fears not work. For a dollar each, two natives passed the hours of daylight cleaning our ship's copper. It was strange to see them so indefatigable and so much at ease in the water--working at times with their pipes lighted, the smoker at times submerged and only the glowing bowl above the surface; it was stranger still to think they were next congeners to the incapable Marquesan. But the Paumotuan not only saves, grudges, and works, he steals besides; or, to be more precise, he swindles. He will never deny a debt, he only flees his creditor. He is always keen for an advance; so soon as he has fingered it he disappears. He knows your ship; so soon as it nears one island, he is off to another. You may think you know his name; he has already changed it. Pursuit in that infinity of isles were fruitless. The result can be given in a nutshell. It has been actually proposed in a Government report to secure debts by taking a photograph of the debtor; and the other day in Papeete credits on the Paumotus to the amount of sixteen thousand pounds were sold for less than forty--quatre cent mille francs pour moins de mille francs. Even so, the purchase was thought hazardous; and only the man who made it and who had special opportunities could have dared to give so much.

The Paumotuan is sincerely attached to those of his own blood and

household. A touching affection sometimes unites wife and husband. Their children, while they are alive, completely rule them; after they are dead, their bones or their mummies are often jealously preserved and carried from atoll to atoll in the wanderings of the family. I was told there were many houses in Fakarava with the mummy of a child locked in a sea-chest; after I heard it, I would glance a little jealously at those by my own bed; in that cupboard, also, it was possible there was a tiny skeleton.

The race seems in a fair way to survive. From fifteen islands, whose rolls I had occasion to consult, I found a proportion of 59 births to 47 deaths for 1887. Dropping three out of the fifteen, there remained for the other twelve the comfortable ratio of 50 births to 32 deaths. Long habits of hardship and activity doubtless explain the contrast with Marquesan figures. But the Paumotuan displays, besides, a certain concern for health and the rudiments of a sanitary discipline. Public talk with these free-spoken people plays the part of the Contagious Diseases Act; in-comers to fresh islands anxiously inquire if all be well; and syphilis, when contracted, is successfully treated with indigenous herbs. Like their neighbours of Tahiti, from whom they have perhaps imbibed the error, they regard leprosy with comparative indifference, elephantiasis with disproportionate fear. But, unlike indeed to the Tahitian, their alarm puts on the guise of self-defence. Any one stricken with this painful and ugly malady is confined to the ends of villages, denied the use of paths and highways, and condemned to transport himself between his house and

coco-patch by water only, his very footprint being held infectious. Fe'efe'e, being a creature of marshes and the sequel of malarial fever, is not original in atolls. On the single isle of Makatea, where the lagoon is now a marsh, the disease has made a home. Many suffer; they are excluded (if Mr. Wilmot be right) from much of the comfort of society; and it is believed they take a secret vengeance. The defections of the sick are considered highly poisonous. Early in the morning, it is narrated, aged and malicious persons creep into the sleeping village, and stealthily make water at the doors of the houses of young men. Thus they propagate disease; thus they breathe on and obliterate comeliness and health, the objects of their envy. Whether horrid fact or more abominable legend, it equally depicts that something bitter and energetic which distinguishes Paumotuan man.

The archipelago is divided between two main religions, Catholic and Mormon. They front each other proudly with a false air of permanence; yet are but shapes, their membership in a perpetual flux. The Mormon attends mass with devotion: the Catholic sits attentive at a Mormon sermon, and to-morrow each may have transferred allegiance. One man had been a pillar of the Church of Rome for fifteen years; his wife dying, he decided that must be a poor religion that could not save a man his wife, and turned Mormon. According to one informant, Catholicism was the more fashionable in health, but on the approach of sickness it was judged prudent to secede. As a Mormon, there were five chances out of six you might recover; as a Catholic, your hopes were small; and

this opinion is perhaps founded on the comfortable rite of unction.

We all know what Catholics are, whether in the Paumotus or at home. But the Paumotuan Mormon seemed a phenomenon apart. He marries but the one wife, uses the Protestant Bible, observes Protestant forms of worship, forbids the use of liquor and tobacco, practises adult baptism by immersion, and after every public sin, rechristens the backslider. I advised with Mahinui, whom I found well informed in the history of the American Mormons, and he declared against the least connection. 'Pour moi,' said he, with a fine charity, 'les Mormons ici un petit Catholiques.' Some months later I had an opportunity to consult an orthodox fellow-countryman, an old dissenting Highlander, long settled in Tahiti, but still breathing of the heather of Tiree. 'Why do they call themselves Mormons?' I asked. 'My dear, and that is my question!' he exclaimed. 'For by all that I can hear of their doctrine, I have nothing to say against it, and their life, it is above reproach.' And for all that, Mormons they are, but of the earlier sowing: the so-called Josephites, the followers of Joseph Smith, the opponents of Brigham Young.

Grant, then, the Mormons to be Mormons. Fresh points at once arise: What are the Israelites? and what the Kanitus? For a long while back the sect had been divided into Mormons proper and so-called Israelites, I never could hear why. A few years since there came a visiting missionary of the name of Williams, who made an excellent collection, and retired, leaving fresh disruption

imminent. Something irregular (as I was told) in his way of 'opening the service' had raised partisans and enemies; the church was once more rent asunder; and a new sect, the Kanitu, issued from the division. Since then Kanitus and Israelites, like the Cameronians and the United Presbyterians, have made common cause; and the ecclesiastical history of the Paumotus is, for the moment, uneventful. There will be more doing before long, and these isles bid fair to be the Scotland of the South. Two things I could never learn. The nature of the innovations of the Rev. Mr. Williams none would tell me, and of the meaning of the name Kanitu none had a guess. It was not Tahitian, it was not Marquesan; it formed no part of that ancient speech of the Paumotus, now passing swiftly into obsolescence. One man, a priest, God bless him! said it was the Latin for a little dog. I have found it since as the name of a god in New Guinea; it must be a bolder man than I who should hint at a connection. Here, then, is a singular thing: a brand-new sect, arising by popular acclamation, and a nonsense word invented for its name.

The design of mystery seems obvious, and according to a very intelligent observer, Mr. Magee of Mangareva, this element of the mysterious is a chief attraction of the Mormon Church. It enjoys some of the status of Freemasonry at home, and there is for the convert some of the exhilaration of adventure. Other attractions are certainly conjoined. Perpetual rebaptism, leading to a succession of baptismal feasts, is found, both from the social and the spiritual side, a pleasing feature. More important is the fact

that all the faithful enjoy office; perhaps more important still, the strictness of the discipline. 'The veto on liquor,' said Mr. Magee, 'brings them plenty members.' There is no doubt these islanders are fond of drink, and no doubt they refrain from the indulgence; a bout on a feast-day, for instance, may be followed by a week or a month of rigorous sobriety. Mr. Wilmot attributes this to Paumotuan frugality and the love of hoarding; it goes far deeper. I have mentioned that I made a feast on board the Casco. To wash down ship's bread and jam, each guest was given the choice of rum or syrup, and out of the whole number only one man voted--in a defiant tone, and amid shouts of mirth--for 'Trum'! This was in public. I had the meanness to repeat the experiment, whenever I had a chance, within the four walls of my house; and three at least, who had refused at the festival, greedily drank rum behind a door. But there were others thoroughly consistent. I said the virtues of the race were bourgeois and puritan; and how bourgeois is this! how puritanic! how Scottish! and how Yankee!--the temptation, the resistance, the public hypocritical conformity, the Pharisees, the Holy Willies, and the true disciples. With such a people the popularity of an ascetic Church appears legitimate; in these strict rules, in this perpetual supervision, the weak find their advantage, the strong a certain pleasure; and the doctrine of rebaptism, a clean bill and a fresh start, will comfort many staggering professors.

There is yet another sect, or what is called a sect--no doubt improperly--that of the Whistlers. Duncan Cameron, so clear in

favour of the Mormons, was no less loud in condemnation of the Whistlers. Yet I do not know; I still fancy there is some connection, perhaps fortuitous, probably disavowed. Here at least are some doings in the house of an Israelite clergyman (or prophet) in the island of Anaa, of which I am equally sure that Duncan would disclaim and the Whistlers hail them for an imitation of their own. My informant, a Tahitian and a Catholic, occupied one part of the house; the prophet and his family lived in the other. Night after night the Mormons, in the one end, held their evening sacrifice of song; night after night, in the other, the wife of the Tahitian lay awake and listened to their singing with amazement. At length she could contain herself no longer, woke her husband, and asked him what he heard. 'I hear several persons singing hymns,' said he. 'Yes,' she returned, 'but listen again! Do you not hear something supernatural?' His attention thus directed, he was aware of a strange buzzing voice--and yet he declared it was beautiful--which justly accompanied the singers. The next day he made inquiries. 'It is a spirit,' said the prophet, with entire simplicity, 'which has lately made a practice of joining us at family worship.' It did not appear the thing was visible, and like other spirits raised nearer home in these degenerate days, it was rudely ignorant, at first could only buzz, and had only learned of late to bear a part correctly in the music.

The performances of the Whistlers are more business-like. Their meetings are held publicly with open doors, all being 'cordially invited to attend.' The faithful sit about the room--according to

one informant, singing hymns; according to another, now singing and now whistling; the leader, the wizard--let me rather say, the medium--sits in the midst, enveloped in a sheet and silent; and presently, from just above his head, or sometimes from the midst of the roof, an aerial whistling proceeds, appalling to the inexperienced. This, it appears, is the language of the dead; its purport is taken down progressively by one of the experts, writing, I was told, 'as fast as a telegraph operator'; and the communications are at last made public. They are of the baldest triviality; a schooner is, perhaps, announced, some idle gossip reported of a neighbour, or if the spirit shall have been called to consultation on a case of sickness, a remedy may be suggested. One of these, immersion in scalding water, not long ago proved fatal to the patient. The whole business is very dreary, very silly, and very European; it has none of the picturesque qualities of similar conjurations in New Zealand; it seems to possess no kernel of possible sense, like some that I shall describe among the Gilbert islanders. Yet I was told that many hardy, intelligent natives were inveterate Whistlers. 'Like Mahinui?' I asked, willing to have a standard; and I was told 'Yes.' Why should I wonder? Men more enlightened than my convict-catechist sit down at home to follies equally sterile and dull.

The medium is sometimes female. It was a woman, for instance, who introduced these practices on the north coast of Taiarapu, to the scandal of her own connections, her brother-in-law in particular declaring she was drunk. But what shocked Tahiti might seem fit

enough in the Paumotus, the more so as certain women there possess, by the gift of nature, singular and useful powers. They say they are honest, well-intentioned ladies, some of them embarrassed by their weird inheritance. And indeed the trouble caused by this endowment is so great, and the protection afforded so infinitesimally small, that I hesitate whether to call it a gift or a hereditary curse. You may rob this lady's coco-patch, steal her canoes, burn down her house, and slay her family scatheless; but one thing you must not do: you must not lay a hand upon her sleeping-mat, or your belly will swell, and you can only be cured by the lady or her husband. Here is the report of an eye-witness, Tasmanian born, educated, a man who has made money--certainly no fool. In 1886 he was present in a house on Makatea, where two lads began to skylark on the mats, and were (I think) ejected. Instantly after, their bellies began to swell; pains took hold on them; all manner of island remedies were exhibited in vain, and rubbing only magnified their sufferings. The man of the house was called, explained the nature of the visitation, and prepared the cure. A cocoa-nut was husked, filled with herbs, and with all the ceremonies of a launch, and the utterance of spells in the Paumotuan language, committed to the sea. From that moment the pains began to grow more easy and the swelling to subside. The reader may stare. I can assure him, if he moved much among old residents of the archipelago, he would be driven to admit one thing of two--either that there is something in the swollen bellies or nothing in the evidence of man.

I have not met these gifted ladies; but I had an experience of my own, for I have played, for one night only, the part of the whistling spirit. It had been blowing wearily all day, but with the fall of night the wind abated, and the moon, which was then full, rolled in a clear sky. We went southward down the island on the side of the lagoon, walking through long-drawn forest aisles of palm, and on a floor of snowy sand. No life was abroad, nor sound of life; till in a clear part of the isle we spied the embers of a fire, and not far off, in a dark house, heard natives talking softly. To sit without a light, even in company, and under cover, is for a Paumotuan a somewhat hazardous extreme. The whole scene--the strong moonlight and crude shadows on the sand, the scattered coals, the sound of the low voices from the house, and the lap of the lagoon along the beach--put me (I know not how) on thoughts of superstition. I was barefoot, I observed my steps were noiseless, and drawing near to the dark house, but keeping well in shadow, began to whistle. 'The Heaving of the Lead' was my air--no very tragic piece. With the first note the conversation and all movement ceased; silence accompanied me while I continued; and when I passed that way on my return I found the lamp was lighted in the house, but the tongues were still mute. All night, as I now think, the wretches shivered and were silent. For indeed, I had no guess at the time at the nature and magnitude of the terrors I inflicted, or with what grisly images the notes of that old song had peopled the dark house.

CHAPTER V--A PAUMOTUAN FUNERAL

No, I had no guess of these men's terrors. Yet I had received ere that a hint, if I had understood; and the occasion was a funeral.

A little apart in the main avenue of Rotoava, in a low hut of leaves that opened on a small enclosure, like a pigsty on a pen, an old man dwelt solitary with his aged wife. Perhaps they were too old to migrate with the others; perhaps they were too poor, and had no possessions to dispute. At least they had remained behind; and it thus befell that they were invited to my feast. I dare say it was quite a piece of politics in the pigsty whether to come or not to come, and the husband long swithered between curiosity and age, till curiosity conquered, and they came, and in the midst of that last merrymaking death tapped him on the shoulder. For some days, when the sky was bright and the wind cool, his mat would be spread in the main highway of the village, and he was to be seen lying there inert, a mere handful of a man, his wife inertly seated by his head. They seemed to have outgrown alike our needs and faculties; they neither spoke nor listened; they suffered us to pass without a glance; the wife did not fan, she seemed not to attend upon her husband, and the two poor antiques sat juxtaposed under the high canopy of palms, the human tragedy reduced to its bare elements, a sight beyond pathos, stirring a thrill of

curiosity. And yet there was one touch of the pathetic haunted me: that so much youth and expectation should have run in these starved veins, and the man should have squandered all his lees of life on a pleasure party.

On the morning of 17th September the sufferer died, and, time pressing, he was buried the same day at four. The cemetery lies to seaward behind Government House; broken coral, like so much road-metal, forms the surface; a few wooden crosses, a few inconsiderable upright stones, designate graves; a mortared wall, high enough to lean on, rings it about; a clustering shrub surrounds it with pale leaves. Here was the grave dug that morning, doubtless by uneasy diggers, to the sound of the nigh sea and the cries of sea-birds; meanwhile the dead man waited in his house, and the widow and another aged woman leaned on the fence before the door, no speech upon their lips, no speculation in their eyes.

Sharp at the hour the procession was in march, the coffin wrapped in white and carried by four bearers; mourners behind--not many, for not many remained in Rotoava, and not many in black, for these were poor; the men in straw hats, white coats, and blue trousers or the gorgeous parti-coloured pariu, the Tahitian kilt; the women, with a few exceptions, brightly habited. Far in the rear came the widow, painfully carrying the dead man's mat; a creature aged beyond humanity, to the likeness of some missing link.

The dead man had been a Mormon; but the Mormon clergyman was gone with the rest to wrangle over boundaries in the adjacent isle, and a layman took his office. Standing at the head of the open grave, in a white coat and blue pariu, his Tahitian Bible in his hand and one eye bound with a red handkerchief, he read solemnly that chapter in Job which has been read and heard over the bones of so many of our fathers, and with a good voice offered up two prayers. The wind and the surf bore a burthen. By the cemetery gate a mother in crimson suckled an infant rolled in blue. In the midst the widow sat upon the ground and polished one of the coffin-stretchers with a piece of coral; a little later she had turned her back to the grave and was playing with a leaf. Did she understand? God knows. The officiant paused a moment, stooped, and gathered and threw reverently on the coffin a handful of rattling coral. Dust to dust: but the grains of this dust were gross like cherries, and the true dust that was to follow sat near by, still cohering (as by a miracle) in the tragic semblance of a female ape.

So far, Mormon or not, it was a Christian funeral. The well-known passage had been read from Job, the prayers had been rehearsed, the grave was filled, the mourners straggled homeward. With a little coarser grain of covering earth, a little nearer outcry of the sea, a stronger glare of sunlight on the rude enclosure, and some incongruous colours of attire, the well-remembered form had been observed.

By rights it should have been otherwise. The mat should have been

buried with its owner; but, the family being poor, it was thriftily reserved for a fresh service. The widow should have flung herself upon the grave and raised the voice of official grief, the neighbours have chimed in, and the narrow isle rung for a space with lamentation. But the widow was old; perhaps she had forgotten, perhaps never understood, and she played like a child with leaves and coffin-stretchers. In all ways my guest was buried with maimed rites. Strange to think that his last conscious pleasure was the Casco and my feast; strange to think that he had limped there, an old child, looking for some new good. And the good thing, rest, had been allotted him.

But though the widow had neglected much, there was one part she must not utterly neglect. She came away with the dispersing funeral; but the dead man's mat was left behind upon the grave, and I learned that by set of sun she must return to sleep there. This vigil is imperative. From sundown till the rising of the morning star the Paumotuan must hold his watch above the ashes of his kindred. Many friends, if the dead have been a man of mark, will keep the watchers company; they will be well supplied with coverings against the weather; I believe they bring food, and the rite is persevered in for two weeks. Our poor survivor, if, indeed, she properly survived, had little to cover, and few to sit with her; on the night of the funeral a strong squall chased her from her place of watch; for days the weather held uncertain and outrageous; and ere seven nights were up she had desisted, and returned to sleep in her low roof. That she should be at the pains

of returning for so short a visit to a solitary house, that this borderer of the grave should fear a little wind and a wet blanket, filled me at the time with musings. I could not say she was indifferent; she was so far beyond me in experience that the court of my criticism waived jurisdiction; but I forged excuses, telling myself she had perhaps little to lament, perhaps suffered much, perhaps understood nothing. And lo! in the whole affair there was no question whether of tenderness or piety, and the sturdy return of this old remnant was a mark either of uncommon sense or of uncommon fortitude.

Yet one thing had occurred that partly set me on the trail. I have said the funeral passed much as at home. But when all was over, when we were trooping in decent silence from the graveyard gate and down the path to the settlement, a sudden inbreak of a different spirit startled and perhaps dismayed us. Two people walked not far apart in our procession: my friend Mr. Donat--Donat-Rimarau: 'Donat the much-handed'--acting Vice-Resident, present ruler of the archipelago, by far the man of chief importance on the scene, but known besides for one of an unshakable good temper; and a certain comely, strapping young Paumotuan woman, the comeliest on the isle, not (let us hope) the bravest or the most polite. Of a sudden, ere yet the grave silence of the funeral was broken, she made a leap at the Resident, with pointed finger, shrieked a few words, and fell back again with a laughter, not a natural mirth. 'What did she say to you?' I asked. 'She did not speak to ME,' said Donat, a shade perturbed; 'she spoke to the ghost of the dead man.' And the

purport of her speech was this: 'See there! Donat will be a fine feast for you to-night.'

'M. Donat called it a jest,' I wrote at the time in my diary. 'It seemed to me more in the nature of a terrified conjuration, as though she would divert the ghost's attention from herself. A cannibal race may well have cannibal phantoms.' The guesses of the traveller appear foredoomed to be erroneous; yet in these I was precisely right. The woman had stood by in terror at the funeral, being then in a dread spot, the graveyard. She looked on in terror to the coming night, with that ogre, a new spirit, loosed upon the isle. And the words she had cried in Donat's face were indeed a terrified conjuration, basely to shield herself, basely to dedicate another in her stead. One thing is to be said in her excuse. Doubtless she partly chose Donat because he was a man of great good-nature, but partly, too, because he was a man of the half-caste. For I believe all natives regard white blood as a kind of talisman against the powers of hell. In no other way can they explain the unpunished recklessness of Europeans.

CHAPTER VI--GRAVEYARD STORIES

WITH my superstitious friend, the islander, I fear I am not wholly frank, often leading the way with stories of my own, and being always a grave and sometimes an excited hearer. But the deceit is scarce mortal, since I am as pleased to hear as he to tell, as pleased with the story as he with the belief; and, besides, it is entirely needful. For it is scarce possible to exaggerate the extent and empire of his superstitions; they mould his life, they colour his thinking; and when he does not speak to me of ghosts, and gods, and devils, he is playing the dissembler and talking only with his lips. With thoughts so different, one must indulge the other; and I would rather that I should indulge his superstition than he my incredulity. Of one thing, besides, I may be sure: Let me indulge it as I please, I shall not hear the whole; for he is already on his guard with me, and the amount of the lore is boundless.

I will give but a few instances at random, chiefly from my own doorstep in Upolu, during the past month (October 1890). One of my workmen was sent the other day to the banana patch, there to dig; this is a hollow of the mountain, buried in woods, out of all sight and cry of mankind; and long before dusk Lafaele was back again beside the cook-house with embarrassed looks; he dared not longer stay alone, he was afraid of 'spirits in the bush.' It seems these

are the souls of the unburied dead, haunting where they fell, and wearing woodland shapes of pig, or bird, or insect; the bush is full of them, they seem to eat nothing, slay solitary wanderers apparently in spite, and at times, in human form, go down to villages and consort with the inhabitants undetected. So much I learned a day or so after, walking in the bush with a very intelligent youth, a native. It was a little before noon; a grey day and squally; and perhaps I had spoken lightly. A dark squall burst on the side of the mountain; the woods shook and cried; the dead leaves rose from the ground in clouds, like butterflies; and my companion came suddenly to a full stop. He was afraid, he said, of the trees falling; but as soon as I had changed the subject of our talk he proceeded with alacrity. A day or two before a messenger came up the mountain from Apia with a letter; I was in the bush, he must await my return, then wait till I had answered: and before I was done his voice sounded shrill with terror of the coming night and the long forest road. These are the commons. Take the chiefs. There has been a great coming and going of signs and omens in our group. One river ran down blood; red eels were captured in another; an unknown fish was thrown upon the coast, an ominous word found written on its scales. So far we might be reading in a monkish chronicle; now we come on a fresh note, at once modern and Polynesian. The gods of Upolu and Savaii, our two chief islands, contended recently at cricket. Since then they are at war. Sounds of battle are heard to roll along the coast. A woman saw a man swim from the high seas and plunge direct into the bush; he was no man of that neighbourhood; and it was known he was

one of the gods, speeding to a council. Most perspicuous of all, a missionary on Savaii, who is also a medical man, was disturbed late in the night by knocking; it was no hour for the dispensary, but at length he woke his servant and sent him to inquire; the servant, looking from a window, beheld crowds of persons, all with grievous wounds, lopped limbs, broken heads, and bleeding bullet-holes; but when the door was opened all had disappeared. They were gods from the field of battle. Now these reports have certainly significance; it is not hard to trace them to political grumblers or to read in them a threat of coming trouble; from that merely human side I found them ominous myself. But it was the spiritual side of their significance that was discussed in secret council by my rulers. I shall best depict this mingled habit of the Polynesian mind by two connected instances. I once lived in a village, the name of which I do not mean to tell. The chief and his sister were persons perfectly intelligent: gentlefolk, apt of speech. The sister was very religious, a great church-goer, one that used to reprove me if I stayed away; I found afterwards that she privately worshipped a shark. The chief himself was somewhat of a freethinker; at the least, a latitudinarian: he was a man, besides, filled with European knowledge and accomplishments; of an impassive, ironical habit; and I should as soon have expected superstition in Mr. Herbert Spencer. Hear the sequel. I had discovered by unmistakable signs that they buried too shallow in the village graveyard, and I took my friend, as the responsible authority, to task. 'There is something wrong about your graveyard,' said I, 'which you must attend to, or it may have very

bad results.' 'Something wrong? What is it?' he asked, with an emotion that surprised me. 'If you care to go along there any evening about nine o'clock you can see for yourself,' said I. He stepped backward. 'A ghost!' he cried.

In short, in the whole field of the South Seas, there is not one to blame another. Half blood and whole, pious and debauched, intelligent and dull, all men believe in ghosts, all men combine with their recent Christianity fear of and a lingering faith in the old island deities. So, in Europe, the gods of Olympus slowly dwindled into village bogies; so to-day, the theological Highlander sneaks from under the eye of the Free Church divine to lay an offering by a sacred well.

I try to deal with the whole matter here because of a particular quality in Paumotuan superstitions. It is true I heard them told by a man with a genius for such narrations. Close about our evening lamp, within sound of the island surf, we hung on his words, thrilling. The reader, in far other scenes, must listen close for the faint echo.

This bundle of weird stories sprang from the burial and the woman's selfish conjuration. I was dissatisfied with what I heard, harped upon questions, and struck at last this vein of metal. It is from sundown to about four in the morning that the kinsfolk camp upon the grave; and these are the hours of the spirits' wanderings. At any time of the night--it may be earlier, it may be later--a sound

is to be heard below, which is the noise of his liberation; at four sharp, another and a louder marks the instant of the re-imprisonment; between-whiles, he goes his malignant rounds. 'Did you ever see an evil spirit?' was once asked of a Paumotuan. 'Once.' 'Under what form?' 'It was in the form of a crane.' 'And how did you know that crane to be a spirit?' was asked. 'I will tell you,' he answered; and this was the purport of his inconclusive narrative. His father had been dead nearly a fortnight; others had wearied of the watch; and as the sun was setting, he found himself by the grave alone. It was not yet dark, rather the hour of the afterglow, when he was aware of a snow-white crane upon the coral mound; presently more cranes came, some white, some black; then the cranes vanished, and he saw in their place a white cat, to which there was silently joined a great company of cats of every hue conceivable; then these also disappeared, and he was left astonished.

This was an anodyne appearance. Take instead the experience of Rua-a-mariterangi on the isle of Katiu. He had a need for some pandanus, and crossed the isle to the sea-beach, where it chiefly flourishes. The day was still, and Rua was surprised to hear a crashing sound among the thickets, and then the fall of a considerable tree. Here must be some one building a canoe; and he entered the margin of the wood to find and pass the time of day with this chance neighbour. The crashing sounded more at hand; and then he was aware of something drawing swiftly near among the tree-tops. It swung by its heels downward, like an ape, so that its

hands were free for murder; it depended safely by the slightest twigs; the speed of its coming was incredible; and soon Rua recognised it for a corpse, horrible with age, its bowels hanging as it came. Prayer was the weapon of Christian in the Valley of the Shadow, and it is to prayer that Rua-a-mariterangi attributes his escape. No merely human expedition had availed.

This demon was plainly from the grave; yet you will observe he was abroad by day. And inconsistent as it may seem with the hours of the night watch and the many references to the rising of the morning star, it is no singular exception. I could never find a case of another who had seen this ghost, diurnal and arboreal in its habits; but others have heard the fall of the tree, which seems the signal of its coming. Mr. Donat was once pearling on the uninhabited isle of Haraiki. It was a day without a breath of wind, such as alternate in the archipelago with days of contumelious breezes. The divers were in the midst of the lagoon upon their employment; the cook, a boy of ten, was over his pots in the camp. Thus were all souls accounted for except a single native who accompanied Donat into the wood in quest of sea-fowls' eggs. In a moment, out of the stillness, came the sound of the fall of a great tree. Donat would have passed on to find the cause. 'No,' cried his companion, 'that was no tree. It was something NOT RIGHT. Let us go back to camp.' Next Sunday the divers were turned on, all that part of the isle was thoroughly examined, and sure enough no tree had fallen. A little later Mr. Donat saw one of his divers flee from a similar sound, in similar unaffected

panic, on the same isle. But neither would explain, and it was not till afterwards, when he met with Rua, that he learned the occasion of their terrors.

But whether by day or night, the purpose of the dead in these abhorred activities is still the same. In Samoa, my informant had no idea of the food of the bush spirits; no such ambiguity would exist in the mind of a Paumotuan. In that hungry archipelago, living and dead must alike toil for nutriment; and the race having been cannibal in the past, the spirits are so still. When the living ate the dead, horrified nocturnal imagination drew the shocking inference that the dead might eat the living. Doubtless they slay men, doubtless even mutilate them, in mere malice. Marquesan spirits sometimes tear out the eyes of travellers; but even that may be more practical than appears, for the eye is a cannibal dainty. And certainly the root-idea of the dead, at least in the far eastern islands, is to prowl for food. It was as a dainty morsel for a meal that the woman denounced Donat at the funeral. There are spirits besides who prey in particular not on the bodies but on the souls of the dead. The point is clearly made in a Tahitian story. A child fell sick, grew swiftly worse, and at last showed signs of death. The mother hastened to the house of a sorcerer, who lived hard by. 'You are yet in time,' said he; 'a spirit has just run past my door carrying the soul of your child wrapped in the leaf of a purao; but I have a spirit stronger and swifter who will run him down ere he has time to eat it.' Wrapped in a leaf: like other things edible and corruptible.

Or take an experience of Mr. Donat's on the island of Anaa. It was a night of a high wind, with violent squalls; his child was very sick, and the father, though he had gone to bed, lay wakeful, hearkening to the gale. All at once a fowl was violently dashed on the house wall. Supposing he had forgot to put it in shelter with the rest, Donat arose, found the bird (a cock) lying on the verandah, and put it in the hen-house, the door of which he securely fastened. Fifteen minutes later the business was repeated, only this time, as it was being dashed against the wall, the bird crew. Again Donat replaced it, examining the hen-house thoroughly and finding it quite perfect; as he was so engaged the wind puffed out his light, and he must grope back to the door a good deal shaken. Yet a third time the bird was dashed upon the wall; a third time Donat set it, now near dead, beside its mates; and he was scarce returned before there came a rush, like that of a furious strong man, against the door, and a whistle as loud as that of a railway engine rang about the house. The sceptical reader may here detect the finger of the tempest; but the women gave up all for lost and clustered on the beds lamenting. Nothing followed, and I must suppose the gale somewhat abated, for presently after a chief came visiting. He was a bold man to be abroad so late, but doubtless carried a bright lantern. And he was certainly a man of counsel, for as soon as he heard the details of these disturbances he was in a position to explain their nature. 'Your child,' said he, 'must certainly die. This is the evil spirit of our island who lies in wait to eat the spirits of the newly dead.' And then he

went on to expatiate on the strangeness of the spirit's conduct. He was not usually, he explained, so open of assault, but sat silent on the house-top waiting, in the guise of a bird, while within the people tended the dying and bewailed the dead, and had no thought of peril. But when the day came and the doors were opened, and men began to go abroad, blood-stains on the wall betrayed the tragedy.

This is the quality I admire in Paumotuan legend. In Tahiti the spirit-eater is said to assume a vesture which has much more of pomp, but how much less of horror. It has been seen by all sorts and conditions, native and foreign; only the last insist it is a meteor. My authority was not so sure. He was riding with his wife about two in the morning; both were near asleep, and the horses not much better. It was a brilliant and still night, and the road wound over a mountain, near by a deserted marae (old Tahitian temple). All at once the appearance passed above them: a form of light; the head round and greenish; the body long, red, and with a focus of yet redder brilliancy about the midst. A buzzing hoot accompanied its passage; it flew direct out of one marae, and direct for another down the mountain side. And this, as my informant argued, is suggestive. For why should a mere meteor frequent the altars of abominable gods? The horses, I should say, were equally dismayed with their riders. Now I am not dismayed at all--not even agreeably. Give me rather the bird upon the house-top and the morning blood-gouts on the wall.

But the dead are not exclusive in their diet. They carry with them to the grave, in particular, the Polynesian taste for fish, and enter at times with the living into a partnership in fishery. Rua-a-mariterangi is again my authority; I feel it diminishes the credit of the fact, but how it builds up the image of this inveterate ghost-seer! He belongs to the miserably poor island of Taenga, yet his father's house was always well supplied. As Rua grew up he was called at last to go a-fishing with this fortunate parent. They rowed the lagoon at dusk, to an unlikely place, and the lay down in the stern, and the father began vainly to cast his line over the bows. It is to be supposed that Rua slept; and when he awoke there was the figure of another beside his father, and his father was pulling in the fish hand over hand. 'Who is that man, father?' Rua asked. 'It is none of your business,' said the father; and Rua supposed the stranger had swum off to them from shore. Night after night they fared into the lagoon, often to the most unlikely places; night after night the stranger would suddenly be seen on board, and as suddenly be missed; and morning after morning the canoe returned laden with fish. 'My father is a very lucky man,' thought Rua. At last, one fine day, there came first one boat party and then another, who must be entertained; father and son put off later than usual into the lagoon; and before the canoe was landed it was four o'clock, and the morning star was close on the horizon. Then the stranger appeared seized with some distress; turned about, showing for the first time his face, which was that of one long dead, with shining eyes; stared into the east, set the tips of his fingers to his mouth like one a-cold, uttered a

strange, shuddering sound between a whistle and a moan--a thing to freeze the blood; and, the day-star just rising from the sea, he suddenly was not. Then Rua understood why his father prospered, why his fishes rotted early in the day, and why some were always carried to the cemetery and laid upon the graves. My informant is a man not certainly averse to superstition, but he keeps his head, and takes a certain superior interest, which I may be allowed to call scientific. The last point reminding him of some parallel practice in Tahiti, he asked Rua if the fish were left, or carried home again after a formal dedication. It appears old Mariterangi practised both methods; sometimes treating his shadowy partner to a mere oblation, sometimes honestly leaving his fish to rot upon the grave.

It is plain we have in Europe stories of a similar complexion; and the Polynesian varua ino or aitu o le vao is clearly the near kinsman of the Transylvanian vampire. Here is a tale in which the kinship appears broadly marked. On the atoll of Penrhyn, then still partly savage, a certain chief was long the salutary terror of the natives. He died, he was buried; and his late neighbours had scarce tasted the delights of licence ere his ghost appeared about the village. Fear seized upon all; a council was held of the chief men and sorcerers; and with the approval of the Rarotongan missionary, who was as frightened as the rest, and in the presence of several whites--my friend Mr. Ben Hird being one--the grave was opened, deepened until water came, and the body re-interred face down. The still recent staking of suicides in England and the

decapitation of vampires in the east of Europe form close parallels.

So in Samoa only the spirits of the unburied awake fear. During the late war many fell in the bush; their bodies, sometimes headless, were brought back by native pastors and interred; but this (I know not why) was insufficient, and the spirit still lingered on the theatre of death. When peace returned a singular scene was enacted in many places, and chiefly round the high gorges of Lotoanuu, where the struggle was long centred and the loss had been severe. Kinswomen of the dead came carrying a mat or sheet and guided by survivors of the fight. The place of death was earnestly sought out; the sheet was spread upon the ground; and the women, moved with pious anxiety, sat about and watched it. If any living thing alighted it was twice brushed away; upon the third coming it was known to be the spirit of the dead, was folded in, carried home and buried beside the body; and the aitu rested. The rite was practised beyond doubt in simple piety; the repose of the soul was its object: its motive, reverent affection. The present king disowns indeed all knowledge of a dangerous aitu; he declares the souls of the unburied were only wanderers in limbo, lacking an entrance to the proper country of the dead, unhappy, nowise hurtful. And this severely classic opinion doubtless represents the views of the enlightened. But the flight of my Lafaele marks the grosser terrors of the ignorant.

This belief in the exorcising efficacy of funeral rites perhaps

explains a fact, otherwise amazing, that no Polynesian seems at all to share our European horror of human bones and mummies. Of the first they made their cherished ornaments; they preserved them in houses or in mortuary caves; and the watchers of royal sepulchres dwelt with their children among the bones of generations. The mummy, even in the making, was as little feared. In the Marquesas, on the extreme coast, it was made by the household with continual unction and exposure to the sun; in the Carolines, upon the farthest west, it is still cured in the smoke of the family hearth. Head-hunting, besides, still lives around my doorstep in Samoa. And not ten years ago, in the Gilberts, the widow must disinter, cleanse, polish, and thenceforth carry about her, by day and night, the head of her dead husband. In all these cases we may suppose the process, whether of cleansing or drying, to have fully exorcised the aitu.

But the Paumotuan belief is more obscure. Here the man is duly buried, and he has to be watched. He is duly watched, and the spirit goes abroad in spite of watches. Indeed, it is not the purpose of the vigils to prevent these wanderings; only to mollify by polite attention the inveterate malignity of the dead. Neglect (it is supposed) may irritate and thus invite his visits, and the aged and weakly sometimes balance risks and stay at home. Observe, it is the dead man's kindred and next friends who thus deprecate his fury with nocturnal watchings. Even the placatory vigil is held perilous, except in company, and a boy was pointed out to me in Rotoava, because he had watched alone by his own father. Not

the ties of the dead, nor yet their proved character, affect the issue. A late Resident, who died in Fakarava of sunstroke, was beloved in life and is still remembered with affection; none the less his spirit went about the island clothed with terrors, and the neighbourhood of Government House was still avoided after dark. We may sum up the cheerful doctrine thus: All men become vampires, and the vampire spares none. And here we come face to face with a tempting inconsistency. For the whistling spirits are notoriously clannish; I understood them to wait upon and to enlighten kinsfolk only, and that the medium was always of the race of the communicating spirit. Here, then, we have the bonds of the family, on the one hand, severed at the hour of death; on the other, helpfully persisting.

The child's soul in the Tahitian tale was wrapped in leaves. It is the spirits of the newly dead that are the dainty. When they are slain, the house is stained with blood. Rua's dead fisherman was decomposed; so--and horribly--was his arboreal demon. The spirit, then, is a thing material; and it is by the material ensigns of corruption that he is distinguished from the living man. This opinion is widespread, adds a gross terror to the more ugly Polynesian tales, and sometimes defaces the more engaging with a painful and incongruous touch. I will give two examples sufficiently wide apart, one from Tahiti, one from Samoa.

And first from Tahiti. A man went to visit the husband of his sister, then some time dead. In her life the sister had been

dainty in the island fashion, and went always adorned with a coronet of flowers. In the midst of the night the brother awoke and was aware of a heavenly fragrance going to and fro in the dark house. The lamp I must suppose to have burned out; no Tahitian would have lain down without one lighted. A while he lay wondering and delighted; then called upon the rest. 'Do none of you smell flowers?' he asked. 'O,' said his brother-in-law, 'we are used to that here.' The next morning these two men went walking, and the widower confessed that his dead wife came about the house continually, and that he had even seen her. She was shaped and dressed and crowned with flowers as in her lifetime; only she moved a few inches above the earth with a very easy progress, and flitted dryshod above the surface of the river. And now comes my point: It was always in a back view that she appeared; and these brothers-in-law, debating the affair, agreed that this was to conceal the inroads of corruption.

Now for the Samoan story. I owe it to the kindness of Dr. F. Otto Sierich, whose collection of folk-tales I expect with a high degree of interest. A man in Manu'a was married to two wives and had no issue. He went to Savaii, married there a third, and was more fortunate. When his wife was near her time he remembered he was in a strange island, like a poor man; and when his child was born he must be shamed for lack of gifts. It was in vain his wife dissuaded him. He returned to his father in Manu'a seeking help; and with what he could get he set off in the night to re-embark. Now his wives heard of his coming; they were incensed that he did

not stay to visit them; and on the beach, by his canoe, intercepted and slew him. Now the third wife lay asleep in Savaii;--her babe was born and slept by her side; and she was awakened by the spirit of her husband. 'Get up,' he said, 'my father is sick in Manu'a and we must go to visit him.' 'It is well,' said she; 'take you the child, while I carry its mats.' 'I cannot carry the child,' said the spirit; 'I am too cold from the sea.' When they were got on board the canoe the wife smelt carrion. 'How is this?' she said. 'What have you in the canoe that I should smell carrion?' 'It is nothing in the canoe,' said the spirit. 'It is the land-wind blowing down the mountains, where some beast lies dead.' It appears it was still night when they reached Manu'a--the swiftest passage on record--and as they entered the reef the bale-fires burned in the village. Again she asked him to carry the child; but now he need no more dissemble. 'I cannot carry your child,' said he, 'for I am dead, and the fires you see are burning for my funeral.'

The curious may learn in Dr. Sierich's book the unexpected sequel of the tale. Here is enough for my purpose. Though the man was but new dead, the ghost was already putrefied, as though putrefaction were the mark and of the essence of a spirit. The vigil on the Paumotuan grave does not extend beyond two weeks, and they told me this period was thought to coincide with that of the resolution of the body. The ghost always marked with decay--the danger seemingly ending with the process of dissolution--here is tempting matter for the theorist. But it will not do. The lady of

the flowers had been long dead, and her spirit was still supposed to bear the brand of perishability. The Resident had been more than a fortnight buried, and his vampire was still supposed to go the rounds.

Of the lost state of the dead, from the lurid Mangaian legend, in which infernal deities hocus and destroy the souls of all, to the various submarine and aerial limbos where the dead feast, float idle, or resume the occupations of their life on earth, it would be wearisome to tell. One story I give, for it is singular in itself, is well-known in Tahiti, and has this of interest, that it is post-Christian, dating indeed from but a few years back. A princess of the reigning house died; was transported to the neighbouring isle of Raiatea; fell there under the empire of a spirit who condemned her to climb coco-palms all day and bring him the nuts; was found after some time in this miserable servitude by a second spirit, one of her own house; and by him, upon her lamentations, reconveyed to Tahiti, where she found her body still waked, but already swollen with the approaches of corruption. It is a lively point in the tale that, on the sight of this dishonoured tabernacle, the princess prayed she might continue to be numbered with the dead. But it seems it was too late, her spirit was replaced by the least dignified of entrances, and her startled family beheld the body move. The seemingly purgatorial labours, the helpful kindred spirit, and the horror of the princess at the sight of her tainted body, are all points to be remarked.

The truth is, the tales are not necessarily consistent in themselves; and they are further darkened for the stranger by an ambiguity of language. Ghosts, vampires, spirits, and gods are all confounded. And yet I seem to perceive that (with exceptions) those whom we would count gods were less maleficent. Permanent spirits haunt and do murder in corners of Samoa; but those legitimate gods of Upolu and Savaii, whose wars and cricketings of late convulsed society, I did not gather to be dreaded, or not with a like fear. The spirit of Aana that ate souls is certainly a fearsome inmate; but the high gods, even of the archipelago, seem helpful. Mahinui--from whom our convict-catechist had been named--the spirit of the sea, like a Proteus endowed with endless avatars, came to the assistance of the shipwrecked and carried them ashore in the guise of a ray fish. The same divinity bore priests from isle to isle about the archipelago, and by his aid, within the century, persons have been seen to fly. The tutelar deity of each isle is likewise helpful, and by a particular form of wedge-shaped cloud on the horizon announces the coming of a ship.

To one who conceives of these atolls, so narrow, so barren, so beset with sea, here would seem a superfluity of ghostly denizens. And yet there are more. In the various brackish pools and ponds, beautiful women with long red hair are seen to rise and bathe; only (timid as mice) on the first sound of feet upon the coral they dive again for ever. They are known to be healthy and harmless living people, dwellers of an underworld; and the same fancy is current in Tahiti, where also they have the hair red. Tetea is the Tahitian

name; the Paumotuan, Mokurea.