

PART IV: THE GILBERTS--APEMAMA

CHAPTER I--THE KING OF APEMAMA: THE ROYAL TRADER

There is one great personage in the Gilberts: Tembinok' of Apemama: solely conspicuous, the hero of song, the butt of gossip. Through the rest of the group the kings are slain or fallen in tutelage: Tembinok' alone remains, the last tyrant, the last erect vestige of a dead society. The white man is everywhere else, building his houses, drinking his gin, getting in and out of trouble with the weak native governments. There is only one white on Apemama, and he on sufferance, living far from court, and hearkening and watching his conduct like a mouse in a cat's ear. Through all the other islands a stream of native visitors comes and goes, travelling by families, spending years on the grand tour. Apemama alone is left upon one side, the tourist dreading to risk himself within the clutch of Tembinok'. And fear of the same Gorgon follows and troubles them at home. Maiana once paid him tribute; he once fell upon and seized Nonuti: first steps to the empire of the archipelago. A British warship coming on the scene, the conqueror was driven to disgorge, his career checked in the outset, his dear-bought armoury sunk in his own lagoon. But the

impression had been made; periodical fear of him still shakes the islands; rumour depicts him mustering his canoes for a fresh onfall; rumour can name his destination; and Tembinok' figures in the patriotic war-songs of the Gilberts like Napoleon in those of our grandfathers.

We were at sea, bound from Mariki to Nonuti and Tapituea, when the wind came suddenly fair for Apemama. The course was at once changed; all hands were turned-to to clean ship, the decks hollystoned, all the cabin washed, the trade-room overhauled. In all our cruising we never saw the Equator so smart as she was made for Tembinok'. Nor was Captain Reid alone in these coquetries; for, another schooner chancing to arrive during my stay in Apemama, I found that she also was dandified for the occasion. And the two cases stand alone in my experience of South Sea traders.

We had on board a family of native tourists, from the grandsire to the babe in arms, trying (against an extraordinary series of ill-luck) to regain their native island of Peru. Five times already they had paid their fare and taken ship; five times they had been disappointed, dropped penniless upon strange islands, or carried back to Butaritari, whence they sailed. This last attempt had been no better-starred; their provisions were exhausted. Peru was beyond hope, and they had cheerfully made up their minds to a fresh stage of exile in Tapituea or Nonuti. With this slant of wind their random destination became once more changed; and like the Calendar's pilot, when the 'black mountains' hove in view, they

changed colour and beat upon their breasts. Their camp, which was on deck in the ship's waist, resounded with complaint. They would be set to work, they must become slaves, escape was hopeless, they must live and toil and die in Apemama, in the tyrant's den. With this sort of talk they so greatly terrified their children, that one (a big hulking boy) must at last be torn screaming from the schooner's side. And their fears were wholly groundless. I have little doubt they were not suffered to be idle; but I can vouch for it that they were kindly and generously used. For, the matter of a year later, I was once more shipmate with these inconsistent wanderers on board the Janet Nicoll. Their fare was paid by Tembinok'; they who had gone ashore from the Equator destitute, reappeared upon the Janet with new clothes, laden with mats and presents, and bringing with them a magazine of food, on which they lived like fighting-cocks throughout the voyage; I saw them at length repatriated, and I must say they showed more concern on quitting Apemama than delight at reaching home.

We entered by the north passage (Sunday, September 1st), dodging among shoals. It was a day of fierce equatorial sunshine; but the breeze was strong and chill; and the mate, who conned the schooner from the cross-trees, returned shivering to the deck. The lagoon was thick with many-tinted wavelets; a continuous roaring of the outer sea overhung the anchorage; and the long, hollow crescent of palm ruffled and sparkled in the wind. Opposite our berth the beach was seen to be surmounted for some distance by a terrace of white coral seven or eight feet high and crowned in turn by the

scattered and incongruous buildings of the palace. The village adjoins on the south, a cluster of high-roofed maniap's. And village and palace seemed deserted.

We were scarce yet moored, however, before distant and busy figures appeared upon the beach, a boat was launched, and a crew pulled out to us bringing the king's ladder. Tembinok' had once an accident; has feared ever since to entrust his person to the rotten chandlery of South Sea traders; and devised in consequence a frame of wood, which is brought on board a ship as soon as she appears, and remains lashed to her side until she leave. The boat's crew, having applied this engine, returned at once to shore. They might not come on board; neither might we land, or not without danger of offence; the king giving pratique in person. An interval followed, during which dinner was delayed for the great man--the prelude of the ladder, giving us some notion of his weighty body and sensible, ingenious character, had highly whetted our curiosity; and it was with something like excitement that we saw the beach and terrace suddenly blacken with attendant vassals, the king and party embark, the boat (a man-of-war gig) come flying towards us dead before the wind, and the royal coxswain lay us cleverly aboard, mount the ladder with a jealous diffidence, and descend heavily on deck.

Not long ago he was overgrown with fat, obscured to view, and a burthen to himself. Captains visiting the island advised him to walk; and though it broke the habits of a life and the traditions of his rank, he practised the remedy with benefit. His corpulence

is now portable; you would call him lusty rather than fat; but his gait is still dull, stumbling, and elephantine. He neither stops nor hastens, but goes about his business with an implacable deliberation. We could never see him and not be struck with his extraordinary natural means for the theatre: a beaked profile like Dante's in the mask, a mane of long black hair, the eye brilliant, imperious, and inquiring: for certain parts, and to one who could have used it, the face was a fortune. His voice matched it well, being shrill, powerful, and uncanny, with a note like a sea-bird's. Where there are no fashions, none to set them, few to follow them if they were set, and none to criticise, he dresses--as Sir Charles Grandison lived--'to his own heart.' Now he wears a woman's frock, now a naval uniform; now (and more usually) figures in a masquerade costume of his own design: trousers and a singular jacket with shirt tails, the cut and fit wonderful for island workmanship, the material always handsome, sometimes green velvet, sometimes cardinal red silk. This masquerade becomes him admirably. In the woman's frock he looks ominous and weird beyond belief. I see him now come pacing towards me in the cruel sun, solitary, a figure out of Hoffmann.

A visit on board ship, such as that at which we now assisted, makes a chief part and by far the chief diversion of the life of Tembinok'. He is not only the sole ruler, he is the sole merchant of his triple kingdom, Apemama, Aranuka, and Kuria, well-planted islands. The taro goes to the chiefs, who divide as they please among their immediate adherents; but certain fish, turtles--which

abound in Kuria,--and the whole produce of the coco-palm, belong exclusively to Tembinok'. 'A cobra berong me,' observed his majesty with a wave of his hand; and he counts and sells it by the houseful. 'You got copra, king?' I have heard a trader ask. 'I got two, three outches,' his majesty replied: 'I think three.'

Hence the commercial importance of Apemama, the trade of three islands being centred there in a single hand; hence it is that so many whites have tried in vain to gain or to preserve a footing; hence ships are adorned, cooks have special orders, and captains array themselves in smiles, to greet the king. If he be pleased with his welcome and the fare he may pass days on board, and, every day, and sometimes every hour, will be of profit to the ship. He oscillates between the cabin, where he is entertained with strange meats, and the trade-room, where he enjoys the pleasures of shopping on a scale to match his person. A few obsequious attendants squat by the house door, awaiting his least signal. In the boat, which has been suffered to drop astern, one or two of his wives lie covered from the sun under mats, tossed by the short sea of the lagoon, and enduring agonies of heat and tedium. This severity is now and then relaxed and the wives allowed on board. Three or four were thus favoured on the day of our arrival: substantial ladies airily attired in ridis. Each had a share of copra, her peculium, to dispose of for herself. The display in the trade-room--hats, ribbons, dresses, scents, tins of salmon--the pride of the eye and the lust of the flesh--tempted them in vain. They had but the one idea--tobacco, the island currency, tantamount to minted gold; returned to shore with it, burthened but rejoicing;

and late into the night, on the royal terrace, were to be seen counting the sticks by lamplight in the open air.

The king is no such economist. He is greedy of things new and foreign. House after house, chest after chest, in the palace precinct, is already crammed with clocks, musical boxes, blue spectacles, umbrellas, knitted waistcoats, bolts of stuff, tools, rifles, fowling-pieces, medicines, European foods, sewing-machines, and, what is more extraordinary, stoves: all that ever caught his eye, tickled his appetite, pleased him for its use, or puzzled him with its apparent inutility. And still his lust is unabated. He is possessed by the seven devils of the collector. He hears a thing spoken of, and a shadow comes on his face. 'I think I no got him,' he will say; and the treasures he has seen worthless in comparison. If a ship be bound for Apemama, the merchant racks his brain to hit upon some novelty. This he leaves carelessly in the main cabin or partly conceals in his own berth, so that the king shall spy it for himself. 'How much you want?' inquires Tembinok', passing and pointing. 'No, king; that too dear,' returns the trader. 'I think I like him,' says the king. This was a bowl of gold-fish. On another occasion it was scented soap. 'No, king; that cost too much,' said the trader; 'too good for a Kanaka.' 'How much you got? I take him all,' replied his majesty, and became the lord of seventeen boxes at two dollars a cake. Or again, the merchant feigns the article is not for sale, is private property, an heirloom or a gift; and the trick infallibly succeeds. Thwart the king and you hold him. His autocratic nature rears at

the affront of opposition. He accepts it for a challenge; sets his teeth like a hunter going at a fence; and with no mark of emotion, scarce even of interest, stolidly piles up the price. Thus, for our sins, he took a fancy to my wife's dressing-bag, a thing entirely useless to the man, and sadly battered by years of service. Early one forenoon he came to our house, sat down, and abruptly offered to purchase it. I told him I sold nothing, and the bag at any rate was a present from a friend; but he was acquainted with these pretexts from of old, and knew what they were worth and how to meet them. Adopting what I believe is called 'the object method,' he drew out a bag of English gold, sovereigns and half-sovereigns, and began to lay them one by one in silence on the table; at each fresh piece reading our faces with a look. In vain I continued to protest I was no trader; he deigned not to reply. There must have been twenty pounds on the table, he was still going on, and irritation had begun to mingle with our embarrassment, when a happy idea came to our delivery. Since his majesty thought so much of the bag, we said, we must beg him to accept it as a present. It was the most surprising turn in Tembinok's experience. He perceived too late that his persistence was unmannerly; hung his head a while in silence; then, lifting up a sheepish countenance, 'I 'shamed,' said the tyrant. It was the first and the last time we heard him own to a flaw in his behaviour. Half an hour after he sent us a camphor-wood chest worth only a few dollars--but then heaven knows what Tembinok' had paid for it.

Cunning by nature, and versed for forty years in the government of

men, it must not be supposed that he is cheated blindly, or has resigned himself without resistance to be the milch-cow of the passing trader. His efforts have been even heroic. Like Nakaeia of Makin, he has owned schooners. More fortunate than Nakaeia, he has found captains. Ships of his have sailed as far as to the colonies. He has trafficked direct, in his own bottoms, with New Zealand. And even so, even there, the world-enveloping dishonesty of the white man prevented him; his profit melted, his ship returned in debt, the money for the insurance was embezzled, and when the Coronet came to be lost, he was astonished to find he had lost all. At this he dropped his weapons; owned he might as hopefully wrestle with the winds of heaven; and like an experienced sheep, submitted his fleece thenceforward to the shearers. He is the last man in the world to waste anger on the incurable; accepts it with cynical composure; asks no more in those he deals with than a certain decency of moderation; drives as good a bargain as he can; and when he considers he is more than usually swindled, writes it in his memory against the merchant's name. He once ran over to me a list of captains and supercargoes with whom he had done business, classing them under three heads: 'He cheat a litty'--'He cheat plenty'--and 'I think he cheat too much.' For the first two classes he expressed perfect toleration; sometimes, but not always, for the third. I was present when a certain merchant was turned about his business, and was the means (having a considerable influence ever since the bag) of patching up the dispute. Even on the day of our arrival there was like to have been a hitch with Captain Reid: the ground of which is perhaps worth recital. Among

goods exported specially for Tembinok' there is a beverage known (and labelled) as Hennessy's brandy. It is neither Hennessy, nor even brandy; is about the colour of sherry, but is not sherry; tastes of kirsch, and yet neither is it kirsch. The king, at least, has grown used to this amazing brand, and rather prides himself upon the taste; and any substitution is a double offence, being at once to cheat him and to cast a doubt upon his palate. A similar weakness is to be observed in all connoisseurs. Now the last case sold by the Equator was found to contain a different and I would fondly fancy a superior distillation; and the conversation opened very black for Captain Reid. But Tembinok' is a moderate man. He was reminded and admitted that all men were liable to error, even himself; accepted the principle that a fault handsomely acknowledged should be condoned; and wound the matter up with this proposal: 'Tuppoti I mi'take, you 'peakee me. Tuppoti you mi'take, I 'peakee you. Mo' betta.'

After dinner and supper in the cabin, a glass or two of 'Hennetti'-the genuine article this time, with the kirsch bouquet,--and five hours' lounging on the trade-room counter, royalty embarked for home. Three tacks grounded the boat before the palace; the wives were carried ashore on the backs of vassals; Tembinok' stepped on a railed platform like a steamer's gangway, and was borne shoulder high through the shallows, up the beach, and by an inclined plane, paved with pebbles, to the glaring terrace where he dwells.

CHAPTER II--THE KING OF APEMAMA: FOUNDATION OF EQUATOR TOWN

Our first sight of Tembinok' was a matter of concern, almost alarm, to my whole party. We had a favour to seek; we must approach in the proper courtly attitude of a suitor; and must either please him or fail in the main purpose of our voyage. It was our wish to land and live in Apemama, and see more near at hand the odd character of the man and the odd (or rather ancient) condition of his island.

In all other isles of the South Seas a white man may land with his chest, and set up house for a lifetime, if he choose, and if he have the money or the trade; no hindrance is conceivable. But Apemama is a close island, lying there in the sea with closed doors; the king himself, like a vigilant officer, ready at the wicket to scrutinise and reject intrenching visitors. Hence the attraction of our enterprise; not merely because it was a little difficult, but because this social quarantine, a curiosity in itself, has been the preservative of others.

Tembinok', like most tyrants, is a conservative; like many conservatives, he eagerly welcomes new ideas, and, except in the field of politics, leans to practical reform. When the missionaries came, professing a knowledge of the truth, he readily received them; attended their worship, acquired the accomplishment of public prayer, and made himself a student at their feet. It is

thus--it is by the cultivation of similar passing chances--that he has learned to read, to write, to cipher, and to speak his queer, personal English, so different from ordinary 'Beach de Mar,' so much more obscure, expressive, and condensed. His education attended to, he found time to become critical of the new inmates. Like Nakaeia of Makin, he is an admirer of silence in the island; broods over it like a great ear; has spies who report daily; and had rather his subjects sang than talked. The service, and in particular the sermon, were thus sure to become offences: 'Here, in my island, I 'peak,' he once observed to me. 'My chiefs no 'peak--do what I talk.' He looked at the missionary, and what did he see? 'See Kanaka 'peak in a big outh!' he cried, with a strong ring of sarcasm. Yet he endured the subversive spectacle, and might even have continued to endure it, had not a fresh point arisen. He looked again, to employ his own figure; and the Kanaka was no longer speaking, he was doing worse--he was building a copra-house. The king was touched in his chief interests; revenue and prerogative were threatened. He considered besides (and some think with him) that trade is incompatible with the missionary claims. 'Tuppoti mitonary think "good man": very good. Tuppoti he think "cobra": no good. I send him away ship.' Such was his abrupt history of the evangelist in Apemama.

Similar deportations are common: 'I send him away ship' is the epitaph of not a few, his majesty paying the exile's fare to the next place of call. For instance, being passionately fond of European food, he has several times added to his household a white

cook, and one after another these have been deported. They, on their side, swear they were not paid their wages; he, on his, that they robbed and swindled him beyond endurance: both perhaps justly. A more important case was that of an agent, despatched (as I heard the story) by a firm of merchants to worm his way into the king's good graces, become, if possible, premier, and handle the copra in the interest of his employers. He obtained authority to land, practised his fascinations, was patiently listened to by Tembinok', supposed himself on the highway to success; and behold! when the next ship touched at Apemama, the would-be premier was flung into a boat--had on board--his fare paid, and so good-bye. But it is needless to multiply examples; the proof of the pudding is in the eating. When we came to Apemama, of so many white men who have scrambled for a place in that rich market, one remained--a silent, sober, solitary, niggardly recluse, of whom the king remarks, 'I think he good; he no 'peak.'

I was warned at the outset we might very well fail in our design: yet never dreamed of what proved to be the fact, that we should be left four-and-twenty hours in suspense and come within an ace of ultimate rejection. Captain Reid had primed himself; no sooner was the king on board, and the Hennetti question amicably settled, than he proceeded to express my request and give an abstract of my claims and virtues. The gammon about Queen Victoria's son might do for Butaritari; it was out of the question here; and I now figured as 'one of the Old Men of England,' a person of deep knowledge, come expressly to visit Tembinok's dominion, and eager to report

upon it to the no less eager Queen Victoria. The king made no shadow of an answer, and presently began upon a different subject. We might have thought that he had not heard, or not understood; only that we found ourselves the subject of a constant study. As we sat at meals, he took us in series and fixed upon each, for near a minute at a time, the same hard and thoughtful stare. As he thus looked he seemed to forget himself, the subject and the company, and to become absorbed in the process of his thought; the look was wholly impersonal; I have seen the same in the eyes of portrait-painters. The counts upon which whites have been deported are mainly four: cheating Tembinok', meddling overmuch with copra, which is the source of his wealth, and one of the sinews of his power, 'PEAKING, and political intrigue. I felt guiltless upon all; but how to show it? I would not have taken copra in a gift: how to express that quality by my dinner-table bearing? The rest of the party shared my innocence and my embarrassment. They shared also in my mortification when after two whole meal-times and the odd moments of an afternoon devoted to this reconnoitring, Tembinok' took his leave in silence. Next morning, the same undisguised study, the same silence, was resumed; and the second day had come to its maturity before I was informed abruptly that I had stood the ordeal. 'I look your eye. You good man. You no lie,' said the king: a doubtful compliment to a writer of romance. Later he explained he did not quite judge by the eye only, but the mouth as well. 'Tuppoti I see man,' he explained. 'I no tavy good man, bad man. I look eye, look mouth. Then I tavy. Look EYE, look mouth,' he repeated. And indeed in our case the mouth

had the most to do with it, and it was by our talk that we gained admission to the island; the king promising himself (and I believe really amassing) a vast amount of useful knowledge ere we left.

The terms of our admission were as follows: We were to choose a site, and the king should there build us a town. His people should work for us, but the king only was to give them orders. One of his cooks should come daily to help mine, and to learn of him. In case our stores ran out, he would supply us, and be repaid on the return of the Equator. On the other hand, he was to come to meals with us when so inclined; when he stayed at home, a dish was to be sent him from our table; and I solemnly engaged to give his subjects no liquor or money (both of which they are forbidden to possess) and no tobacco, which they were to receive only from the royal hand. I think I remember to have protested against the stringency of this last article; at least, it was relaxed, and when a man worked for me I was allowed to give him a pipe of tobacco on the premises, but none to take away.

The site of Equator City--we named our city for the schooner--was soon chosen. The immediate shores of the lagoon are windy and blinding; Tembinok' himself is glad to grope blue-spectacled on his terrace; and we fled the neighbourhood of the red conjunctiva, the suppurating eyeball, and the beggar who pursues and beseeches the passing foreigner for eye wash. Behind the town the country is diversified; here open, sandy, uneven, and dotted with dwarfish palms; here cut up with taro trenches, deep and shallow, and,

according to the growth of the plants, presenting now the appearance of a sandy tannery, now of an alleys and green garden. A path leads towards the sea, mounting abruptly to the main level of the island--twenty or even thirty feet, although Findlay gives five; and just hard by the top of the rise, where the coco-palms begin to be well grown, we found a grove of pandanus, and a piece of soil pleasantly covered with green underbush. A well was not far off under a rustic well-house; nearer still, in a sandy cup of the land, a pond where we might wash our clothes. The place was out of the wind, out of the sun, and out of sight of the village. It was shown to the king, and the town promised for the morrow.

The morrow came, Mr. Osbourne landed, found nothing done, and carried his complaint to Tembinok'. He heard it, rose, called for a Winchester, stepped without the royal palisade, and fired two shots in the air. A shot in the air is the first Apemama warning; it has the force of a proclamation in more loquacious countries; and his majesty remarked agreeably that it would make his labourers 'mo' bright.' In less than thirty minutes, accordingly, the men had mustered, the work was begun, and we were told that we might bring our baggage when we pleased.

It was two in the afternoon ere the first boat was beached, and the long procession of chests and crates and sacks began to straggle through the sandy desert towards Equator Town. The grove of pandanus was practically a thing of the past. Fire surrounded and smoke rose in the green underbush. In a wide circuit the axes were

still crashing. Those very advantages for which the place was chosen, it had been the king's first idea to abolish; and in the midst of this devastation there stood already a good-sized maniap' and a small closed house. A mat was spread near by for Tembinok'; here he sat superintending, in cardinal red, a pith helmet on his head, a meerschaum pipe in his mouth, a wife stretched at his back with custody of the matches and tobacco. Twenty or thirty feet in front of him the bulk of the workers squatted on the ground; some of the bush here survived and in this the commons sat nearly to their shoulders, and presented only an arc of brown faces, black heads, and attentive eyes fixed on his majesty. Long pauses reigned, during which the subjects stared and the king smoked. Then Tembinok' would raise his voice and speak shrilly and briefly. There was never a response in words; but if the speech were jesting, there came by way of answer discreet, obsequious laughter--such laughter as we hear in schoolrooms; and if it were practical, the sudden uprising and departure of the squad. Twice they so disappeared, and returned with further elements of the city: a second house and a second maniap'. It was singular to spy, far off through the coco stems, the silent oncoming of the maniap', at first (it seemed) swimming spontaneously in the air--but on a nearer view betraying under the eaves many score of moving naked legs. In all the affair servile obedience was no less remarkable than servile deliberation. The gang had here mustered by the note of a deadly weapon; the man who looked on was the unquestioned master of their lives; and except for civility, they bestirred themselves like so many American hotel clerks. The spectator was

aware of an unobtrusive yet invincible inertia, at which the skipper of a trading dandy might have torn his hair.

Yet the work was accomplished. By dusk, when his majesty withdrew, the town was founded and complete, a new and ruder Amphion having called it from nothing with three cracks of a rifle. And the next morning the same conjurer obliged us with a further miracle: a mystic rampart fencing us, so that the path which ran by our doors became suddenly impassable, the inhabitants who had business across the isle must fetch a wide circuit, and we sat in the midst in a transparent privacy, seeing, seen, but unapproachable, like bees in a glass hive. The outward and visible sign of this glamour was no more than a few ragged coco-leaf garlands round the stems of the outlying palms; but its significance reposed on the tremendous sanction of the tapu and the guns of Tembinok'.

We made our first meal that night in the improvised city, where we were to stay two months, and which--so soon as we had done with it--was to vanish in a day as it appeared, its elements returning whence they came, the tapu raised, the traffic on the path resumed, the sun and the moon peering in vain between the palm-trees for the bygone work, the wind blowing over an empty site. Yet the place, which is now only an episode in some memories, seemed to have been built, and to be destined to endure, for years. It was a busy hamlet. One of the maniap's we made our dining-room, one the kitchen. The houses we reserved for sleeping. They were on the admirable Apemama plan: out and away the best house in the South

Seas; standing some three feet above the ground on posts; the sides of woven flaps, which can be raised to admit light and air, or lowered to shut out the wind and the rain: airy, healthy, clean, and watertight. We had a hen of a remarkable kind: almost unique in my experience, being a hen that occasionally laid eggs. Not far off, Mrs. Stevenson tended a garden of salad and shalots. The salad was devoured by the hen--which was her bane. The shalots were served out a leaf at a time, and welcomed and relished like peaches. Toddy and green cocoa-nuts were brought us daily. We once had a present of fish from the king, and once of a turtle. Sometimes we shot so-called plover along on the shore, sometimes wild chicken in the bush. The rest of our diet was from tins.

Our occupations were very various. While some of the party would be away sketching, Mr. Osbourne and I hammered away at a novel. We read Gibbon and Carlyle aloud; we blew on flageolets, we strummed on guitars; we took photographs by the light of the sun, the moon, and flash-powder; sometimes we played cards. Pot-hunting engaged a part of our leisure. I have myself passed afternoons in the exciting but innocuous pursuit of winged animals with a revolver; and it was fortunate there were better shots of the party, and fortunate the king could lend us a more suitable weapon, in the form of an excellent fowling-piece, or our spare diet had been sparer still.

Night was the time to see our city, after the moon was up, after the lamps were lighted, and so long as the fire sparkled in the

cook-house. We suffered from a plague of flies and mosquitoes, comparable to that of Egypt; our dinner-table (lent, like all our furniture, by the king) must be enclosed in a tent of netting, our citadel and refuge; and this became all luminous, and bulged and beacons under the eaves, like the globe of some monstrous lamp under the margin of its shade. Our cabins, the sides being propped at a variety of inclinations, spelled out strange, angular patterns of brightness. In his roofed and open kitchen, Ah Fu was to be seen by lamp and firelight, dabbling among pots. Over all, there fell in the season an extraordinary splendour of mellow moonshine. The sand sparkled as with the dust of diamonds; the stars had vanished. At intervals, a dusky night-bird, slow and low flying, passed in the colonnade of the tree stems and uttered a hoarse croaking cry.

CHAPTER III--THE KING OF APEMAMA: THE PALACE OF MANY WOMEN

The palace, or rather the ground which it includes, is several acres in extent. A terrace encloses it toward the lagoon; on the side of the land, a palisade with several gates. These are scarce intended for defence; a man, if he were strong, might easily pluck down the palisade; he need not be specially active to leap from the beach upon the terrace. There is no parade of guards, soldiers, or weapons; the armoury is under lock and key; and the only sentinels are certain inconspicuous old women lurking day and night before the gates. By day, these crones were often engaged in boiling syrup or the like household occupation; by night, they lay ambushed in the shadow or crouched along the palisade, filling the office of eunuchs to this harem, sole guards upon a tyrant life.

Female wardens made a fit outpost for this palace of many women. Of the number of the king's wives I have no guess; and but a loose idea of their function. He himself displayed embarrassment when they were referred to as his wives, called them himself 'my family,' and explained they were his 'cutcheons'--cousins. We distinguished four of the crowd: the king's mother; his sister, a grave, trenchant woman, with much of her brother's intelligence; the queen proper, to whom (and to whom alone) my wife was formally presented; and the favourite of the hour, a pretty, graceful girl, who sat with the king daily, and once (when he shed tears) consoled

him with caresses. I am assured that even with her his relations are platonic. In the background figured a multitude of ladies, the lean, the plump, and the elephantine, some in sacque frocks, some in the hairbreadth rudi; high-born and low, slave and mistress; from the queen to the scullion, from the favourite to the scraggy sentries at the palisade. Not all of these of course are of 'my family,'--many are mere attendants; yet a surprising number shared the responsibility of the king's trust. These were key-bearers, treasurers, wardens of the armoury, the napery, and the stores. Each knew and did her part to admiration. Should anything be required--a particular gun, perhaps, or a particular bolt of stuff,--the right queen was summoned; she came bringing the right chest, opened it in the king's presence, and displayed her charge in perfect preservation--the gun cleaned and oiled, the goods duly folded. Without delay or haste, and with the minimum of speech, the whole great establishment turned on wheels like a machine. Nowhere have I seen order more complete and pervasive. And yet I was always reminded of Norse tales of trolls and ogres who kept their hearts buried in the ground for the mere safety, and must confide the secret to their wives. For these weapons are the life of Tembinok'. He does not aim at popularity; but drives and braves his subjects, with a simplicity of domination which it is impossible not to admire, hard not to sympathise with. Should one out of so many prove faithless, should the armoury be secretly unlocked, should the cronies have dozed by the palisade and the weapons find their way unseen into the village, revolution would be nearly certain, death the most probable result, and the spirit of

the tyrant of Apemama flit to rejoin his predecessors of Mariki and Tapituea. Yet those whom he so trusts are all women, and all rivals.

There is indeed a ministry and staff of males: cook, steward, carpenter, and supercargoes: the hierarchy of a schooner. The spies, 'his majesty's daily papers,' as we called them, come every morning to report, and go again. The cook and steward are concerned with the table only. The supercargoes, whose business it is to keep tally of the copra at three pounds a month and a percentage, are rarely in the palace; and two at least are in the other islands. The carpenter, indeed, shrewd and jolly old Rubam--query, Reuben?--promoted on my last visit to the greater dignity of governor, is daily present, altering, extending, embellishing, pursuing the endless series of the king's inventions; and his majesty will sometimes pass an afternoon watching and talking with Rubam at his work. But the males are still outsiders; none seems to be armed, none is entrusted with a key; by dusk they are all usually departed from the palace; and the weight of the monarchy and of the monarch's life reposes unshared on the women.

Here is a household unlike, indeed, to one of ours; more unlike still to the Oriental harem: that of an elderly childless man, his days menaced, dwelling alone amid a bevy of women of all ages, ranks, and relationships,--the mother, the sister, the cousin, the legitimate wife, the concubine, the favourite, the eldest born, and she of yesterday; he, in their midst, the only master, the only

male, the sole dispenser of honours, clothes, and luxuries, the sole mark of multitudinous ambitions and desires. I doubt if you could find a man in Europe so bold as to attempt this piece of tact and government. And seemingly Tembinok' himself had trouble in the beginning. I hear of him shooting at a wife for some levity on board a schooner. Another, on some more serious offence, he slew outright; he exposed her body in an open box, and (to make the warning more memorable) suffered it to putrefy before the palace gate. Doubtless his growing years have come to his assistance; for upon so large a scale it is more easy to play the father than the husband. And to-day, at least to the eye of a stranger, all seems to go smoothly, and the wives to be proud of their trust, proud of their rank, and proud of their cunning lord.

I conceived they made rather a hero of the man. A popular master in a girls' school might, perhaps, offer a figure of his preponderating station. But then the master does not eat, sleep, live, and wash his dirty linen in the midst of his admirers; he escapes, he has a room of his own, he leads a private life; if he had nothing else, he has the holidays, and the more unhappy Tembinok' is always on the stage and on the stretch.

In all my coming and going, I never heard him speak harshly or express the least displeasure. An extreme, rather heavy, benignity--the benignity of one sure to be obeyed--marked his demeanour; so that I was at times reminded of Samuel Richardson in his circle of admiring women. The wives spoke up and seemed to

volunteer opinions, like our wives at home--or, say, like doting but respectable aunts. Altogether, I conclude that he rules his seraglio much more by art than terror; and those who give a different account (and who have none of them enjoyed my opportunities of observation) perhaps failed to distinguish between degrees of rank, between 'my family' and the hangers-on, laundresses, and prostitutes.

A notable feature is the evening game of cards when lamps are set forth upon the terrace, and 'I and my family' play for tobacco by the hour. It is highly characteristic of Tembinok' that he must invent a game for himself; highly characteristic of his worshipping household that they should swear by the absurd invention. It is founded on poker, played with the honours out of many packs, and inconceivably dreary. But I have a passion for all games, studied it, and am supposed to be the only white who ever fairly grasped its principle: a fact for which the wives (with whom I was not otherwise popular) admired me with acclamation. It was impossible to be deceived; this was a genuine feeling: they were proud of their private game, had been cut to the quick by the want of interest shown in it by others, and expanded under the flattery of my attention. Tembinok' puts up a double stake, and receives in return two hands to choose from: a shallow artifice which the wives (in all these years) have not yet fathomed. He himself, when talking with me privately, made not the least secret that he was secure of winning; and it was thus he explained his recent liberality on board the Equator. He let the wives buy their own

tobacco, which pleased them at the moment. He won it back at cards, which made him once more, and without fresh expense, that which he ought to be,--the sole fount of all indulgences. And he summed the matter up in that phrase with which he almost always concludes any account of his policy: 'Mo' betta.'

The palace compound is laid with broken coral, excruciating to the eyes and the bare feet, but exquisitely raked and weeded. A score or more of buildings lie in a sort of street along the palisade and scattered on the margin of the terrace; dwelling-houses for the wives and the attendants, storehouses for the king's curios and treasures, spacious maniap's for feast or council, some on pillars of wood, some on piers of masonry. One was still in hand, a new invention, the king's latest born: a European frame-house built for coolness inside a lofty maniap': its roof planked like a ship's deck to be a raised, shady, and yet private promenade. It was here the king spent hours with Rubam; here I would sometimes join them; the place had a most singular appearance; and I must say I was greatly taken with the fancy, and joined with relish in the counsels of the architects.

Suppose we had business with his majesty by day: we strolled over the sand and by the dwarfish palms, exchanged a 'Konamaori' with the crone on duty, and entered the compound. The wide sheet of coral glared before us deserted; all having stowed themselves in dark canvas from the excess of room. I have gone to and fro in that labyrinth of a place, seeking the king; and the only breathing

creature I could find was when I peered under the eaves of a maniap', and saw the brawny body of one of the wives stretched on the floor, a naked Amazon plunged in noiseless slumber. If it were still the hour of the 'morning papers' the quest would be more easy, the half-dozen obsequious, sly dogs squatting on the ground outside a house, crammed as far as possible in its narrow shadow, and turning to the king a row of leering faces. Tembinok' would be within, the flaps of the cabin raised, the trade blowing through, hearing their report. Like journalists nearer home, when the day's news were scanty, these would make the more of it in words; and I have known one to fill up a barren morning with an imaginary conversation of two dogs. Sometimes the king deigns to laugh, sometimes to question or jest with them, his voice sounding shrilly from the cabin. By his side he may have the heir-apparent, Paul, his nephew and adopted son, six years old, stark naked, and a model of young human beauty. And there will always be the favourite and perhaps two other wives awake; four more lying supine under mats and whelmed in slumber. Or perhaps we came later, fell on a more private hour, and found Tembinok' retired in the house with the favourite, an earthenware spittoon, a leaden inkpot, and a commercial ledger. In the last, lying on his belly, he writes from day to day the uneventful history of his reign; and when thus employed he betrayed a touch of fretfulness on interruption with which I was well able to sympathise. The royal annalist once read me a page or so, translating as he went; but the passage being genealogical, and the author boggling extremely in his version, I own I have been sometimes better entertained. Nor does he confine

himself to prose, but touches the lyre, too, in his leisure moments, and passes for the chief bard of his kingdom, as he is its sole public character, leading architect, and only merchant.

His competence, however, does not reach to music; and his verses, when they are ready, are taught to a professional musician, who sets them and instructs the chorus. Asked what his songs were about, Tembinok' replied, 'Sweethearts and trees and the sea. Not all the same true, all the same lie.' For a condensed view of lyrical poetry (except that he seems to have forgot the stars and flowers) this would be hard to mend. These multifarious occupations bespeak (in a native and an absolute prince) unusual activity of mind.

The palace court at noon is a spot to be remembered with awe, the visitor scrambling there, on the loose stones, through a splendid nightmare of light and heat; but the sweep of the wind delivers it from flies and mosquitoes; and with the set of sun it became heavenly. I remember it best on moonless nights. The air was like a bath of milk. Countless shining stars were overhead, the lagoon paved with them. Herds of wives squatted by companies on the gravel, softly chatting. Tembinok' would doff his jacket, and sit bare and silent, perhaps meditating songs; the favourite usually by him, silent also. Meanwhile in the midst of the court, the palace lanterns were being lit and marshalled in rank upon the ground--six or eight square yards of them; a sight that gave one strange ideas of the number of 'my family': such a sight as may be seen about

dusk in a corner of some great terminus at home. Presently these fared off into all corners of the precinct, lighting the last labours of the day, lighting one after another to their rest that prodigious company of women. A few lingered in the middle of the court for the card-party, and saw the honours shuffled and dealt, and Tembinok' deliberating between his two; hands, and the queens losing their tobacco. Then these also were scattered and extinguished; and their place was taken by a great bonfire, the night-light of the palace. When this was no more, smaller fires burned likewise at the gates. These were tended by the crones, unseen, unsleeping--not always unheard. Should any approach in the dark hours, a guarded alert made the circuit of the palisade; each sentry signalled her neighbour with a stone; the rattle of falling pebbles passed and died away; and the wardens of Tembinok' crouched in their places silent as before.

CHAPTER IV--THE KING OF APEMAMA: EQUATOR TOWN AND THE PALACE

Five persons were detailed to wait upon us. Uncle Parker, who brought us toddy and green nuts, was an elderly, almost an old man, with the spirits, the industry, and the morals of a boy of ten. His face was ancient, droll, and diabolical, the skin stretched over taut sinews, like a sail on the guide-rope; and he smiled with every muscle of his head. His nuts must be counted every day, or he would deceive us in the tale; they must be daily examined, or some would prove to be unhusked; nothing but the king's name, and scarcely that, would hold him to his duty. After his toils were over he was given a pipe, matches, and tobacco, and sat on the floor in the maniap' to smoke. He would not seem to move from his position, and yet every day, when the things fell to be returned the plug had disappeared; he had found the means to conceal it in the roof, whence he could radiantly produce it on the morrow. Although this piece of legerdemain was performed regularly before three or four pairs of eyes, we could never catch him in the fact; although we searched after he was gone, we could never find the tobacco. Such were the diversions of Uncle Parker, a man nearing sixty. But he was punished according unto his deeds: Mrs. Stevenson took a fancy to paint him, and the sufferings of the sitter were beyond description.

Three lasses came from the palace to do our washing and racket with Ah Fu. They were of the lowest class, hangers-on kept for the convenience of merchant skippers, probably low-born, perhaps out-landers, with little refinement whether of manner or appearance, but likely and jolly enough wenches in their way. We called one Guttersnipe, for you may find her image in the slums of any city; the same lean, dark-eyed, eager, vulgar face, the same sudden, hoarse guffaws, the same forward and yet anxious manner, as with a tail of an eye on the policeman: only the policeman here was a live king, and his truncheon a rifle. I doubt if you could find anywhere out of the islands, or often there, the parallel of Fatty, a mountain of a girl, who must have weighed near as many stones as she counted summers, could have given a good account of a life-guard, had the face of a baby, and applied her vast mechanical forces almost exclusively to play. But they were all three of the same merry spirit. Our washing was conducted in a game of romps; and they fled and pursued, and splashed, and pelted, and rolled each other in the sand, and kept up a continuous noise of cries and laughter like holiday children. Indeed, and however strange their own function in that austere establishment, were they not escaped for the day from the largest and strictest Ladies' School in the South Seas?

Our fifth attendant was no less a person than the royal cook. He was strikingly handsome both in face and body, lazy as a slave, and insolent as a butcher's boy. He slept and smoked on our premises in various graceful attitudes; but so far from helping Ah Fu, he

was not at the pains to watch him. It may be said of him that he came to learn, and remained to teach; and his lessons were at times difficult to stomach. For example, he was sent to fill a bucket from the well. About half-way he found my wife watering her onions, changed buckets with her, and leaving her the empty, returned to the kitchen with the full. On another occasion he was given a dish of dumplings for the king, was told they must be eaten hot, and that he should carry them as fast as possible. The wretch set off at the rate of about a mile in the hour, head in air, toes turned out. My patience, after a month of trial, failed me at the sight. I pursued, caught him by his two big shoulders, and thrusting him before me, ran with him down the hill, over the sands, and through the applauding village, to the Speak House, where the king was then holding a pow-wow. He had the impudence to pretend he was internally injured by my violence, and to profess serious apprehensions for his life.

All this we endured; for the ways of Tembinok' are summary, and I was not yet ripe to take a hand in the man's death. But in the meanwhile, here was my unfortunate China boy slaving for the pair, and presently he fell sick. I was now in the position of Cimondain Lantenac, and indeed all the characters in *Quatre-Vingt-Treize*: to continue to spare the guilty, I must sacrifice the innocent. I took the usual course and tried to save both, with the usual consequence of failure. Well rehearsed, I went down to the palace, found the king alone, and obliged him with a vast amount of rigmarole. The cook was too old to learn: I feared he was not

making progress; how if we had a boy instead?--boys were more teachable. It was all in vain; the king pierced through my disguises to the root of the fact; saw that the cook had desperately misbehaved; and sat a while glooming. 'I think he tavy too much,' he said at last, with grim concision; and immediately turned the talk to other subjects. The same day another high officer, the steward, appeared in the cook's place, and, I am bound to say, proved civil and industrious.

As soon as I left, it seems the king called for a Winchester and strolled outside the palisade, awaiting the defaulter. That day Tembinok' wore the woman's frock; as like as not, his make-up was completed by a pith helmet and blue spectacles. Conceive the glaring stretch of sandhills, the dwarf palms with their noon-day shadows, the line of the palisade, the crone sentries (each by a small clear fire) cooking syrup on their posts--and this chimaera waiting with his deadly engine. To him, enter at last the cook, strolling down the sandhill from Equator Town, listless, vain and graceful; with no thought of alarm. As soon as he was well within range, the travestied monarch fired the six shots over his head, at his feet, and on either hand of him: the second Apemama warning, startling in itself, fatal in significance, for the next time his majesty will aim to hit. I am told the king is a crack shot; that when he aims to kill, the grave may be got ready; and when he aims to miss, misses by so near a margin that the culprit tastes six times the bitterness of death. The effect upon the cook I had an opportunity of seeing for myself. My wife and I were returning

from the sea-side of the island, when we spied one coming to meet us at a very quick, disordered pace, between a walk and a run. As we drew nearer we saw it was the cook, beside himself with some emotion, his usual warm, mulatto colour declined into a bluish pallor. He passed us without word or gesture, staring on us with the face of a Satan, and plunged on across the wood for the unpeopled quarter of the island and the long, desert beach, where he might rage to and fro unseen, and froth out the vials of his wrath, fear, and humiliation. Doubtless in the curses that he there uttered to the bursting surf and the tropic birds, the name of the Kaupoi--the rich man--was frequently repeated. I had made him the laughing-stock of the village in the affair of the king's dumplings; I had brought him by my machinations into disgrace and the immediate jeopardy of his days; last, and perhaps bitterest, he had found me there by the way to spy upon him in the hour of his disorder.

Time passed, and we saw no more of him. The season of the full moon came round, when a man thinks shame to lie sleeping; and I continued until late--perhaps till twelve or one in the morning--to walk on the bright sand and in the tossing shadow of the palms. I played, as I wandered, on a flageolet, which occupied much of my attention; the fans overhead rattled in the wind with a metallic chatter; and a bare foot falls at any rate almost noiseless on that shifting soil. Yet when I got back to Equator Town, where all the lights were out, and my wife (who was still awake, and had been looking forth) asked me who it was that followed me, I thought she

spoke in jest. 'Not at all,' she said. 'I saw him twice as you passed, walking close at your heels. He only left you at the corner of the maniap'; he must be still behind the cook-house.' Thither I ran--like a fool, without any weapon--and came face to face with the cook. He was within my tapu-line, which was death in itself; he could have no business there at such an hour but either to steal or to kill; guilt made him timorous; and he turned and fled before me in the night in silence. As he went I kicked him in that place where honour lies, and he gave tongue faintly like an injured mouse. At the moment I daresay he supposed it was a deadly instrument that touched him.

What had the man been after? I have found my music better qualified to scatter than to collect an audience. Amateur as I was, I could not suppose him interested in my reading of the Carnival of Venice, or that he would deny himself his natural rest to follow my variations on The Ploughboy. And whatever his design, it was impossible I should suffer him to prowl by night among the houses. A word to the king, and the man were not, his case being far beyond pardon. But it is one thing to kill a man yourself; quite another to bear tales behind his back and have him shot by a third party; and I determined to deal with the fellow in some method of my own. I told Ah Fu the story, and bade him fetch me the cook whenever he should find him. I had supposed this would be a matter of difficulty; and far from that, he came of his own accord: an act really of desperation, since his life hung by my silence, and the best he could hope was to be forgotten. Yet he

came with an assured countenance, volunteered no apology or explanation, complained of injuries received, and pretended he was unable to sit down. I suppose I am the weakest man God made; I had kicked him in the least vulnerable part of his big carcase; my foot was bare, and I had not even hurt my foot. Ah Fu could not control his merriment. On my side, knowing what must be the nature of his apprehensions, I found in so much impudence a kind of gallantry, and secretly admired the man. I told him I should say nothing of his night's adventure to the king; that I should still allow him, when he had an errand, to come within my tapu-line by day; but if ever I found him there after the set of the sun I would shoot him on the spot; and to the proof showed him a revolver. He must have been incredibly relieved; but he showed no sign of it, took himself off with his usual dandy nonchalance, and was scarce seen by us again.

These five, then, with the substitution of the steward for the cook, came and went, and were our only visitors. The circle of the tapu held at arm's-length the inhabitants of the village. As for 'my family,' they dwelt like nuns in their enclosure; only once have I met one of them abroad, and she was the king's sister, and the place in which I found her (the island infirmary) was very likely privileged. There remains only the king to be accounted for. He would come strolling over, always alone, a little before a meal-time, take a chair, and talk and eat with us like an old family friend. Gilbertine etiquette appears defective on the point of leave-taking. It may be remembered we had trouble in the matter

with Karaiti; and there was something childish and disconcerting in Tembinok's abrupt 'I want go home now,' accompanied by a kind of ducking rise, and followed by an unadorned retreat. It was the only blot upon his manners, which were otherwise plain, decent, sensible, and dignified. He never stayed long nor drank much, and copied our behaviour where he perceived it to differ from his own. Very early in the day, for instance, he ceased eating with his knife. It was plain he was determined in all things to wring profit from our visit, and chiefly upon etiquette. The quality of his white visitors puzzled and concerned him; he would bring up name after name, and ask if its bearer were a 'big chiep,' or even a 'chiep' at all--which, as some were my excellent good friends, and none were actually born in the purple, became at times embarrassing. He was struck to learn that our classes were distinguishable by their speech, and that certain words (for instance) were tapu on the quarter-deck of a man-of-war; and he begged in consequence that we should watch and correct him on the point. We were able to assure him that he was beyond correction. His vocabulary is apt and ample to an extraordinary degree. God knows where he collected it, but by some instinct or some accident he has avoided all profane or gross expressions. 'Obliged,' 'stabbed,' 'gnaw,' 'lodge,' 'power,' 'company,' 'slender,' 'smooth,' and 'wonderful,' are a few of the unexpected words that enrich his dialect. Perhaps what pleased him most was to hear about saluting the quarter-deck of a man-of-war. In his gratitude for this hint he became fulsome. 'Schooner cap'n no tell me,' he cried; 'I think no tavyv! You tavyv too much; tavyv 'teama', tavyv

man-a-wa'. I think you tavy everything.' Yet he gravelled me often enough with his perpetual questions; and the false Mr. Barlow stood frequently exposed before the royal Sandford. I remember once in particular. We were showing the magic-lantern; a slide of Windsor Castle was put in, and I told him there was the 'outch' of Victoreea. 'How many pathom he high?' he asked, and I was dumb before him. It was the builder, the indefatigable architect of palaces, that spoke; collector though he was, he did not collect useless information; and all his questions had a purpose. After etiquette, government, law, the police, money, and medicine were his chief interests--things vitally important to himself as a king and the father of his people. It was my part not only to supply new information, but to correct the old. 'My patha he tell me,' or 'White man he tell me,' would be his constant beginning; 'You think he lie?' Sometimes I thought he did. Tembinok' once brought me a difficulty of this kind, which I was long of comprehending. A schooner captain had told him of Captain Cook; the king was much interested in the story; and turned for more information--not to Mr. Stephen's Dictionary, not to the Britannica, but to the Bible in the Gilbert Island version (which consists chiefly of the New Testament and the Psalms). Here he sought long and earnestly; Paul he found, and Festus and Alexander the coppersmith: no word of Cook. The inference was obvious: the explorer was a myth. So hard it is, even for a man of great natural parts like Tembinok', to grasp the ideas of a new society and culture.

CHAPTER V--KING AND COMMONS

We saw but little of the commons of the isle. At first we met them at the well, where they washed their linen and we drew water for the table. The combination was distasteful; and, having a tyrant at command, we applied to the king and had the place enclosed in our tapu. It was one of the few favours which Tembinok' visibly boggled about granting, and it may be conceived how little popular it made the strangers. Many villagers passed us daily going afield; but they fetched a wide circuit round our tapu, and seemed to avert their looks. At times we went ourselves into the village--a strange place. Dutch by its canals, Oriental by the height and steepness of the roofs, which looked at dusk like temples; but we were rarely called into a house: no welcome, no friendship, was offered us; and of home life we had but the one view: the waking of a corpse, a frigid, painful scene: the widow holding on her lap the cold, bluish body of her husband, and now partaking of the refreshments which made the round of the company, now weeping and kissing the pale mouth. ('I fear you feel this affliction deeply,' said the Scottish minister. 'Eh, sir, and that I do!' replied the widow. 'I've been greetin' a' nicht; an' noo I'm just gaun to sup this bit parritch, and then I'll begin an' greet again.') In our walks abroad I have always supposed the islanders avoided us, perhaps from distaste, perhaps by order; and those whom we met we

took generally by surprise. The surface of the isle is diversified with palm groves, thickets, and romantic dingles four feet deep, relics of old taro plantation; and it is thus possible to stumble unawares on folk resting or hiding from their work. About pistol-shot from our township there lay a pond in the bottom of a jungle; here the maids of the isle came to bathe, and were several times alarmed by our intrusion. Not for them are the bright cold rivers of Tahiti or Upolu, not for them to splash and laugh in the hour of the dusk with a villageful of gay companions; but to steal here solitary, to crouch in a place like a cow-wallow, and wash (if that can be called washing) in lukewarm mud, brown as their own skins. Other, but still rare, encounters occur to my memory. I was several times arrested by a tender sound in the bush of voices talking, soft as flutes and with quiet intonations. Hope told a flattering tale; I put aside the leaves; and behold! in place of the expected dryads, a pair of all too solid ladies squatting over a clay pipe in the ungraceful ridi. The beauty of the voice and the eye was all that remained to those vast dames; but that of the voice was indeed exquisite. It is strange I should have never heard a more winning sound of speech, yet the dialect should be one remarkable for violent, ugly, and outlandish vocables; so that Tembinok' himself declared it made him weary, and professed to find repose in talking English.

The state of this folk, of whom I saw so little, I can merely guess at. The king himself explains the situation with some art. 'No; I no pay them,' he once said. 'I give them tobacco. They work for

me ALL THE SAME BROTHERS.' It is true there was a brother once in Arden! But we prefer the shorter word. They bear every servile mark,--levity like a child's, incurable idleness, incurious content. The insolence of the cook was a trait of his own; not so his levity, which he shared with the innocent Uncle Parker. With equal unconcern both gambolled under the shadow of the gallows, and took liberties with death that might have surprised a careless student of man's nature. I wrote of Parker that he behaved like a boy of ten: what was he else, being a slave of sixty? He had passed all his years in school, fed, clad, thought for, commanded; and had grown familiar and coquetted with the fear of punishment. By terror you may drive men long, but not far. Here, in Apemama, they work at the constant and the instant peril of their lives; and are plunged in a kind of lethargy of laziness. It is common to see one go afield in his stiff mat ungirt, so that he walks elbows-in like a trussed fowl; and whatsoever his right hand findeth to do, the other must be off duty holding on his clothes. It is common to see two men carrying between them on a pole a single bucket of water. To make two bites of a cherry is good enough: to make two burthens of a soldier's kit, for a distance of perhaps half a furlong, passes measure. Woman, being the less childish animal, is less relaxed by servile conditions. Even in the king's absence, even when they were alone, I have seen Apemama women work with constancy. But the outside to be hoped for in a man is that he may attack his task in little languid fits, and lounge between-whiles. So I have seen a painter, with his pipe going, and a friend by the studio fireside. You might suppose the race to lack civility, even

vitality, until you saw them in the dance. Night after night, and sometimes day after day, they rolled out their choruses in the great Speak House--solemn andantes and adagios, led by the clapped hand, and delivered with an energy that shook the roof. The time was not so slow, though it was slow for the islands; but I have chosen rather to indicate the effect upon the hearer. Their music had a church-like character from near at hand, and seemed to European ears more regular than the run of island music. Twice I have heard a discord regularly solved. From farther off, heard at Equator Town for instance, the measures rose and fell and crepitated like the barking of hounds in a distant kennel.

The slaves are certainly not overworked--children of ten do more without fatigue--and the Apemama labourers have holidays, when the singing begins early in the afternoon. The diet is hard; copra and a sweetmeat of pounded pandanus are the only dishes I observed outside the palace; but there seems no defect in quantity, and the king shares with them his turtles. Three came in a boat from Kuria during our stay; one was kept for the palace, one sent to us, one presented to the village. It is the habit of the islanders to cook the turtle in its carapace; we had been promised the shells, and we asked a tapu on this foolish practice. The face of Tembinok' darkened and he answered nothing. Hesitation in the question of the well I could understand, for water is scarce on a low island; that he should refuse to interfere upon a point of cookery was more than I had dreamed of; and I gathered (rightly or wrongly) that he was scrupulous of touching in the least degree the private life and

habits of his slaves. So that even here, in full despotism, public opinion has weight; even here, in the midst of slavery, freedom has a corner.

Orderly, sober, and innocent, life flows in the isle from day to day as in a model plantation under a model planter. It is impossible to doubt the beneficence of that stern rule. A curious politeness, a soft and gracious manner, something effeminate and courtly, distinguishes the islanders of Apemama; it is talked of by all the traders, it was felt even by residents so little beloved as ourselves, and noticeable even in the cook, and even in that scoundrel's hours of insolence. The king, with his manly and plain bearing, stood out alone; you might say he was the only Gilbert Islander in Apemama. Violence, so common in Butaritari, seems unknown. So are theft and drunkenness. I am assured the experiment has been made of leaving sovereigns on the beach before the village; they lay there untouched. In all our time on the island I was but once asked for drink. This was by a mighty plausible fellow, wearing European clothes and speaking excellent English--Tamaiti his name, or, as the whites have now corrupted it, 'Tom White': one of the king's supercargoes at three pounds a month and a percentage, a medical man besides, and in his private hours a wizard. He found me one day in the outskirts of the village, in a secluded place, hot and private, where the taro-pits are deep and the plants high. Here he buttonholed me, and, looking about him like a conspirator, inquired if I had gin.

I told him I had. He remarked that gin was forbidden, lauded the prohibition a while, and then went on to explain that he was a doctor, or 'dogstar' as he pronounced the word, that gin was necessary to him for his medical infusions, that he was quite out of it, and that he would be obliged to me for some in a bottle. I told him I had passed the king my word on landing; but since his case was so exceptional, I would go down to the palace at once, and had no doubt that Tembinok' would set me free. Tom White was immediately overwhelmed with embarrassment and terror, besought me in the most moving terms not to betray him, and fled my neighbourhood. He had none of the cook's valour; it was weeks before he dared to meet my eye; and then only by the order of the king and on particular business.

The more I viewed and admired this triumph of firm rule, the more I was haunted and troubled by a problem, the problem (perhaps) of tomorrow for ourselves. Here was a people protected from all serious misfortune, relieved of all serious anxieties, and deprived of what we call our liberty. Did they like it? and what was their sentiment toward the ruler? The first question I could not of course ask, nor perhaps the natives answer. Even the second was delicate; yet at last, and under charming and strange circumstances, I found my opportunity to put it and a man to reply. It was near the full of the moon, with a delicious breeze; the isle was bright as day--to sleep would have been sacrilege; and I walked in the bush, playing my pipe. It must have been the sound of what I am pleased to call my music that attracted in my direction

another wanderer of the night. This was a young man attired in a fine mat, and with a garland on his hair, for he was new come from dancing and singing in the public hall; and his body, his face, and his eyes were all of an enchanting beauty. Every here and there in the Gilberts youths are to be found of this absurd perfection; I have seen five of us pass half an hour in admiration of a boy at Mariki; and Te Kop (my friend in the fine mat and garland) I had already several times remarked, and long ago set down as the loveliest animal in Apemama. The philtre of admiration must be very strong, or these natives specially susceptible to its effects, for I have scarce ever admired a person in the islands but what he has sought my particular acquaintance. So it was with Te Kop. He led me to the ocean side; and for an hour or two we sat smoking and talking on the resplendent sand and under the ineffable brightness of the moon. My friend showed himself very sensible of the beauty and amenity of the hour. 'Good night! Good wind!' he kept exclaiming, and as he said the words he seemed to hug myself. I had long before invented such reiterated expressions of delight for a character (Felipe, in the story of Olalla) intended to be partly bestial. But there was nothing bestial in Te Kop; only a childish pleasure in the moment. He was no less pleased with his companion, or was good enough to say so; honoured me, before he left, by calling me Te Kop; apostrophised me as 'My name!' with an intonation exquisitely tender, laying his hand at the same time swiftly on my knee; and after we had risen, and our paths began to separate in the bush, twice cried to me with a sort of gentle ecstasy, 'I like you too much!' From the beginning he had made no

secret of his terror of the king; would not sit down nor speak above a whisper till he had put the whole breadth of the isle between himself and his monarch, then harmlessly asleep; and even there, even within a stone-cast of the outer sea, our talk covered by the sound of the surf and the rattle of the wind among the palms, continued to speak guardedly, softening his silver voice (which rang loud enough in the chorus) and looking about him like a man in fear of spies. The strange thing is that I should have beheld him no more. In any other island in the whole South Seas, if I had advanced half as far with any native, he would have been at my door next morning, bringing and expecting gifts. But Te Kop vanished in the bush for ever. My house, of course, was unapproachable; but he knew where to find me on the ocean beach, where I went daily. I was the Kaupoi, the rich man; my tobacco and trade were known to be endless: he was sure of a present. I am at a loss how to explain his behaviour, unless it be supposed that he recalled with terror and regret a passage in our interview. Here it is:

'The king, he good man?' I asked.

'Suppose he like you, he good man,' replied Te Kop: 'no like, no good.'

That is one way of putting it, of course. Te Kop himself was probably no favourite, for he scarce appealed to my judgment as a type of industry. And there must be many others whom the king (to

adhere to the formula) does not like. Do these unfortunates like the king? Or is not rather the repulsion mutual? and the conscientious Tembinok', like the conscientious Braxfield before him, and many other conscientious rulers and judges before either, surrounded by a considerable body of 'grumbletonians'? Take the cook, for instance, when he passed us by, blue with rage and terror. He was very wroth with me; I think by all the old principles of human nature he was not very well pleased with his sovereign. It was the rich man he sought to waylay: I think it must have been by the turn of a hair that it was not the king he waylaid instead. And the king gives, or seems to give, plenty of opportunities; day and night he goes abroad alone, whether armed or not I can but guess; and the taro-patches, where his business must so often carry him, seem designed for assassination. The case of the cook was heavy indeed to my conscience. I did not like to kill my enemy at second-hand; but had I a right to conceal from the king, who had trusted me, the dangerous secret character of his attendant? And suppose the king should fall, what would be the fate of the king's friends? It was our opinion at the time that we should pay dear for the closing of the well; that our breath was in the king's nostrils; that if the king should by any chance be bludgeoned in a taro-patch, the philosophical and musical inhabitants of Equator Town might lay aside their pleasant instruments, and betake themselves to what defence they had, with a very dim prospect of success. These speculations were forced upon us by an incident which I am ashamed to betray. The schooner H. L. Haseltine (since capsized at sea, with the loss of eleven lives)

put into Apemama in a good hour for us, who had near exhausted our supplies. The king, after his habit, spent day after day on board; the gin proved unhappily to his taste; he brought a store of it ashore with him; and for some time the sole tyrant of the isle was half-seas-over. He was not drunk--the man is not a drunkard, he has always stores of liquor at hand, which he uses with moderation,--but he was muzzy, dull, and confused. He came one day to lunch with us, and while the cloth was being laid fell asleep in his chair. His confusion, when he awoke and found he had been detected, was equalled by our uneasiness. When he was gone we sat and spoke of his peril, which we thought to be in some degree our own; of how easily the man might be surprised in such a state by grumbletonians; of the strange scenes that would follow--the royal treasures and stores at the mercy of the rabble, the palace overrun, the garrison of women turned adrift. And as we talked we were startled by a gun-shot and a sudden, barbaric outcry. I believe we all changed colour; but it was only the king firing at a dog and the chorus striking up in the Speak House. A day or two later I learned the king was very sick; went down, diagnosed the case; and took at once the highest medical degree by the exhibition of bicarbonate of soda. Within the hour Richard was himself again; and I found him at the unfinished house, enjoying the double pleasure of directing Rubam and making a dinner of cocoa-nut dumplings, and all eagerness to have the formula of this new sort of pain-killer--for pain-killer in the islands is the generic name of medicine. So ended the king's modest spree and our anxiety.

On the face of things, I ought to say, loyalty appeared unshaken. When the schooner at last returned for us, after much experience of baffling winds, she brought a rumour that Tebureimoa had declared war on Apemama. Tembinok' became a new man; his face radiant; his attitude, as I saw him preside over a council of chiefs in one of the palace maniap's, eager as a boy's; his voice sounding abroad, shrill and jubilant, over half the compound. War is what he wants, and here was his chance. The English captain, when he flung his arms in the lagoon, had forbidden him (except in one case) all military adventures in the future: here was the case arrived. All morning the council sat; men were drilled, arms were bought, the sound of firing disturbed the afternoon; the king devised and communicated to me his plan of campaign, which was highly elaborate and ingenious, but perhaps a trifle fine-spun for the rough and random vicissitudes of war. And in all this bustle the temper of the people appeared excellent, an unwonted animation in every face, and even Uncle Parker burning with military zeal.

Of course it was a false alarm. Tebureimoa had other fish to fry. The ambassador who accompanied us on our return to Butaritari found him retired to a small island on the reef, in a huff with the Old Men, a tiff with the traders, and more fear of insurrection at home than appetite for wars abroad. The plenipotentiary had been placed under my protection; and we solemnly saluted when we met. He proved an excellent fisherman, and caught bonito over the ship's side. He pulled a good oar, and made himself useful for a whole fiery afternoon, towing the becalmed Equator off Mariki. He went

to his post and did no good. He returned home again, having done
no harm. O si sic omnes!

CHAPTER VI--THE KING OF APEMAMA: DEVIL-WORK

The ocean beach of Apemama was our daily resort. The coast is broken by shallow bays. The reef is detached, elevated, and includes a lagoon about knee-deep, the unrestful spending-basin of the surf. The beach is now of fine sand, now of broken coral. The trend of the coast being convex, scarce a quarter of a mile of it is to be seen at once; the land being so low, the horizon appears within a stone-cast; and the narrow prospect enhances the sense of privacy. Man avoids the place--even his footprints are uncommon; but a great number of birds hover and pipe there fishing, and leave crooked tracks upon the sand. Apart from these, the only sound (and I was going to say the only society), is that of the breakers on the reef.

On each projection of the coast, the bank of coral clinkers immediately above the beach has been levelled, and a pillar built, perhaps breast-high. These are not sepulchral; all the dead being buried on the inhabited side of the island, close to men's houses, and (what is worse) to their wells. I was told they were to protect the isle against inroads from the sea--divine or diabolical martellos, probably sacred to Taburik, God of Thunder.

The bay immediately opposite Equator Town, which we called Fu Bay, in honour of our cook, was thus fortified on either horn. It was

well sheltered by the reef, the enclosed water clear and tranquil, the enclosing beach curved like a horseshoe, and both steep and broad. The path debouched about the midst of the re-entrant angle, the woods stopping some distance inland. In front, between the fringe of the wood and the crown of the beach, there had been designed a regular figure, like the court for some new variety of tennis, with borders of round stones imbedded, and pointed at the angles with low posts, likewise of stone. This was the king's Pray Place. When he prayed, what he prayed for, and to whom he addressed his supplications I could never learn. The ground was tapu.

In the angle, by the mouth of the path, stood a deserted maniap'. Near by there had been a house before our coming, which was now transported and figured for the moment in Equator Town. It had been, and it would be again when we departed, the residence of the guardian and wizard of the spot--Tamaiti. Here, in this lone place, within sound of the sea, he had his dwelling and uncanny duties. I cannot call to mind another case of a man living on the ocean side of any open atoll; and Tamaiti must have had strong nerves, the greater confidence in his own spells, or, what I believe to be the truth, an enviable scepticism. Whether Tamaiti had any guardianship of the Pray Place I never heard. But his own particular chapel stood farther back in the fringe of the wood. It was a tree of respectable growth. Around it there was drawn a circle of stones like those that enclosed the Pray Place; in front, facing towards the sea, a stone of a much greater size, and

somewhat hollowed, like a piscina, stood close against the trunk; in front of that again a conical pile of gravel. In the hollow of what I have called the piscina (though it proved to be a magic seat) lay an offering of green cocoa-nuts; and when you looked up you found the boughs of the tree to be laden with strange fruit: palm-branches elaborately plaited, and beautiful models of canoes, finished and rigged to the least detail. The whole had the appearance of a mid-summer and sylvan Christmas-tree al fresco. Yet we were already well enough acquainted in the Gilberts to recognise it, at the first sight, for a piece of wizardry, or, as they say in the group, of Devil-work.

The plaited palms were what we recognised. We had seen them before on Apaiang, the most christianised of all these islands; where excellent Mr. Bingham lived and laboured and has left golden memories; whence all the education in the northern Gilberts traces its descent; and where we were boarded by little native Sunday-school misses in clean frocks, with demure faces, and singing hymns as to the manner born.

Our experience of Devil-work at Apaiang had been as follows:- It chanced we were benighted at the house of Captain Tierney. My wife and I lodged with a Chinaman some half a mile away; and thither Captain Reid and a native boy escorted us by torch-light. On the way the torch went out, and we took shelter in a small and lonely Christian chapel to rekindle it. Stuck in the rafters of the chapel was a branch of knotted palm. 'What is that?' I asked. 'O,

that's Devil-work,' said the Captain. 'And what is Devil-work?' I inquired. 'If you like, I'll show you some when we get to Johnnie's,' he replied. 'Johnnie's' was a quaint little house upon the crest of the beach, raised some three feet on posts, approached by stairs; part walled, part trellised. Trophies of advertisement-photographs were hung up within for decoration. There was a table and a recess-bed, in which Mrs. Stevenson slept; while I camped on the matted floor with Johnnie, Mrs. Johnnie, her sister, and the devil's own regiment of cockroaches. Hither was summoned an old witch, who looked the part to horror. The lamp was set on the floor; the crone squatted on the threshold, a green palm-branch in her hand, the light striking full on her aged features and picking out behind her, from the black night, timorous faces of spectators. Our sorceress began with a chanted incantation; it was in the old tongue, for which I had no interpreter; but ever and again there ran among the crowd outside that laugh which every traveller in the islands learns so soon to recognise,--the laugh of terror. Doubtless these half-Christian folk were shocked, these half-heathen folk alarmed. Chench or Taburik thus invoked, we put our questions; the witch knotted the leaves, here a leaf and there a leaf, plainly on some arithmetical system; studied the result with great apparent contention of mind; and gave the answers. Sidney Colvin was in robust health and gone a journey; and we should have a fair wind upon the morrow: that was the result of our consultation, for which we paid a dollar. The next day dawned cloudless and breathless; but I think Captain Reid placed a secret reliance on the sibyl, for the schooner was got ready for sea. By

eight the lagoon was flawed with long cat's-paws, and the palms tossed and rustled; before ten we were clear of the passage and skimming under all plain sail, with bubbling scuppers. So we had the breeze, which was well worth a dollar in itself; but the bulletin about my friend in England proved, some six months later, when I got my mail, to have been groundless. Perhaps London lies beyond the horizon of the island gods.

Tembinok', in his first dealings, showed himself sternly averse from superstition: and had not the Equator delayed, we might have left the island and still supposed him an agnostic. It chanced one day, however, that he came to our maniap', and found Mrs. Stevenson in the midst of a game of patience. She explained the game as well as she was able, and wound up jocularly by telling him this was her devil-work, and if she won, the Equator would arrive next day.

Tembinok' must have drawn a long breath; we were not so high-and-dry after all; he need no longer dissemble, and he plunged at once into confessions. He made devil-work every day, he told us, to know if ships were coming in; and thereafter brought us regular reports of the results. It was surprising how regularly he was wrong; but he always had an explanation ready. There had been some schooner in the offing out of view; but either she was not bound for Apemama, or had changed her course, or lay becalmed. I used to regard the king with veneration as he thus publicly deceived himself. I saw behind him all the fathers of the Church, all the philosophers and men of science of the past; before him, all those that are to come; himself in the midst; the whole visionary series

bowed over the same task of welding incongruities. To the end Tembinok' spoke reluctantly of the island gods and their worship, and I learned but little. Taburik is the god of thunder, and deals in wind and weather. A while since there were wizards who could call him down in the form of lightning. 'My patha he tell me he see: you think he lie?' Tienti--pronounced something like 'Chench,' and identified by his majesty with the devil--sends and removes bodily sickness. He is whistled for in the Paumotuan manner, and is said to appear; but the king has never seen him. The doctors treat disease by the aid of Chench: eclectic Tembinok' at the same time administering 'pain-killer' from his medicine-chest, so as to give the sufferer both chances. 'I think mo' betta,' observed his majesty, with more than his usual self-approval. Apparently the gods are not jealous, and placidly enjoy both shrine and priest in common. On Tamaiti's medicine-tree, for instance, the model canoes are hung up ex voto for a prosperous voyage, and must therefore be dedicated to Taburik, god of the weather; but the stone in front is the place of sick folk come to pacify Chench.

It chanced, by great good luck, that even as we spoke of these affairs, I found myself threatened with a cold. I do not suppose I was ever glad of a cold before, or shall ever be again; but the opportunity to see the sorcerers at work was priceless, and I called in the faculty of Apemama. They came in a body, all in their Sunday's best and hung with wreaths and shells, the insignia of the devil-worker. Tamaiti I knew already: Terutak' I saw for

the first time--a tall, lank, raw-boned, serious North-Sea fisherman turned brown; and there was a third in their company whose name I never heard, and who played to Tamaiti the part of famulus. Tamaiti took me in hand first, and led me, conversing agreeably, to the shores of Fu Bay. The famulus climbed a tree for some green cocoa-nuts. Tamaiti himself disappeared a while in the bush and returned with coco tinder, dry leaves, and a spray of waxberry. I was placed on the stone, with my back to the tree and my face to windward; between me and the gravel-heap one of the green nuts was set; and then Tamaiti (having previously bared his feet, for he had come in canvas shoes, which tortured him) joined me within the magic circle, hollowed out the top of the gravel-heap, built his fire in the bottom, and applied a match: it was one of Bryant and May's. The flame was slow to catch, and the irreverent sorcerer filled in the time with talk of foreign places--of London, and 'companies,' and how much money they had; of San Francisco, and the nefarious fogs, 'all the same smoke,' which had been so nearly the occasion of his death. I tried vainly to lead him to the matter in hand. 'Everybody make medicine,' he said lightly. And when I asked him if he were himself a good practitioner--'No savvy,' he replied, more lightly still. At length the leaves burst in a flame, which he continued to feed; a thick, light smoke blew in my face, and the flames streamed against and scorched my clothes. He in the meanwhile addressed, or affected to address, the evil spirit, his lips moving fast, but without sound; at the same time he waved in the air and twice struck me on the breast with his green spray. So soon as the

leaves were consumed the ashes were buried, the green spray was imbedded in the gravel, and the ceremony was at an end.

A reader of the Arabian Nights felt quite at home. Here was the suffumigation; here was the muttering wizard; here was the desert place to which Aladdin was decoyed by the false uncle. But they manage these things better in fiction. The effect was marred by the levity of the magician, entertaining his patient with small talk like an affable dentist, and by the incongruous presence of Mr. Osbourne with a camera. As for my cold, it was neither better nor worse.

I was now handed over to Terutak', the leading practitioner or medical baronet of Apemama. His place is on the lagoon side of the island, hard by the palace. A rail of light wood, some two feet high, encloses an oblong piece of gravel like the king's Pray Place; in the midst is a green tree; below, a stone table bears a pair of boxes covered with a fine mat; and in front of these an offering of food, a cocoa-nut, a piece of taro or a fish, is placed daily. On two sides the enclosure is lined with maniap's; and one of our party, who had been there to sketch, had remarked a daily concourse of people and an extraordinary number of sick children; for this is in fact the infirmary of Apemama. The doctor and myself entered the sacred place alone; the boxes and the mat were displaced; and I was enthroned in their stead upon the stone, facing once more to the east. For a while the sorcerer remained unseen behind me, making passes in the air with a branch of palm.

Then he struck lightly on the brim of my straw hat; and this blow he continued to repeat at intervals, sometimes brushing instead my arm and shoulder. I have had people try to mesmerise me a dozen times, and never with the least result. But at the first tap--on a quarter no more vital than my hat-brim, and from nothing more virtuous than a switch of palm wielded by a man I could not even see--sleep rushed upon me like an armed man. My sinews fainted, my eyes closed, my brain hummed, with drowsiness. I resisted, at first instinctively, then with a certain flurry of despair, in the end successfully; if that were indeed success which enabled me to scramble to my feet, to stumble home somnambulous, to cast myself at once upon my bed, and sink at once into a dreamless stupor. When I awoke my cold was gone. So I leave a matter that I do not understand.

Meanwhile my appetite for curiosities (not usually very keen) had been strangely whetted by the sacred boxes. They were of pandanus wood, oblong in shape, with an effect of pillaring along the sides like straw work, lightly fringed with hair or fibre and standing on four legs. The outside was neat as a toy; the inside a mystery I was resolved to penetrate. But there was a lion in the path. I might not approach Terutak', since I had promised to buy nothing in the island; I dared not have recourse to the king, for I had already received from him more gifts than I knew how to repay. In this dilemma (the schooner being at last returned) we hit on a device. Captain Reid came forward in my stead, professed an unbridled passion for the boxes, and asked and obtained leave to

bargain for them with the wizard. That same afternoon the captain and I made haste to the infirmary, entered the enclosure, raised the mat, and had begun to examine the boxes at our leisure, when Terutak's wife bounced out of one of the nigh houses, fell upon us, swept up the treasures, and was gone. There was never a more absolute surprise. She came, she took, she vanished, we had not a guess whither; and we remained, with foolish looks and laughter on the empty field. Such was the fit prologue of our memorable bargaining.

Presently Terutak' came, bringing Tamaiti along with him, both smiling; and we four squatted without the rail. In the three maniap's of the infirmary a certain audience was gathered: the family of a sick child under treatment, the king's sister playing cards, a pretty girl, who swore I was the image of her father; in all perhaps a score. Terutak's wife had returned (even as she had vanished) unseen, and now sat, breathless and watchful, by her husband's side. Perhaps some rumour of our quest had gone abroad, or perhaps we had given the alert by our unseemly freedom: certain, at least, that in the faces of all present, expectation and alarm were mingled.

Captain Reid announced, without preface or disguise, that I was come to purchase; Terutak', with sudden gravity, refused to sell. He was pressed; he persisted. It was explained we only wanted one: no matter, two were necessary for the healing of the sick. He was rallied, he was reasoned with: in vain. He sat there, serious and

still, and refused. All this was only a preliminary skirmish; hitherto no sum of money had been mentioned; but now the captain brought his great guns to bear. He named a pound, then two, then three. Out of the maniap's one person after another came to join the group, some with mere excitement, others with consternation in their faces. The pretty girl crept to my side; it was then that--surely with the most artless flattery--she informed me of my likeness to her father. Tamaiti the infidel sat with hanging head and every mark of dejection. Terutak' streamed with sweat, his eye was glazed, his face wore a painful rictus, his chest heaved like that of one spent with running. The man must have been by nature covetous; and I doubt if ever I saw moral agony more tragically displayed. His wife by his side passionately encouraged his resistance.

And now came the charge of the old guard. The captain, making a skip, named the surprising figure of five pounds. At the word the maniap's were emptied. The king's sister flung down her cards and came to the front to listen, a cloud on her brow. The pretty girl beat her breast and cried with wearisome iteration that if the box were hers I should have it. Terutak's wife was beside herself with pious fear, her face discomposed, her voice (which scarce ceased from warning and encouragement) shrill as a whistle. Even Terutak' lost that image-like immobility which he had hitherto maintained. He rocked on his mat, threw up his closed knees alternately, and struck himself on the breast after the manner of dancers. But he came gold out of the furnace; and with what voice was left him

continued to reject the bribe.

And now came a timely interjection. 'Money will not heal the sick,' observed the king's sister sententiously; and as soon as I heard the remark translated my eyes were unsealed, and I began to blush for my employment. Here was a sick child, and I sought, in the view of its parents, to remove the medicine-box. Here was the priest of a religion, and I (a heathen millionaire) was corrupting him to sacrilege. Here was a greedy man, torn in twain betwixt greed and conscience; and I sat by and relished, and lustfully renewed his torments. Ave, Caesar! Smothered in a corner, dormant but not dead, we have all the one touch of nature: an infant passion for the sand and blood of the arena. So I brought to an end my first and last experience of the joys of the millionaire, and departed amid silent awe. Nowhere else can I expect to stir the depths of human nature by an offer of five pounds; nowhere else, even at the expense of millions, could I hope to see the evil of riches stand so legibly exposed. Of all the bystanders, none but the king's sister retained any memory of the gravity and danger of the thing in hand. Their eyes glowed, the girl beat her breast, in senseless animal excitement. Nothing was offered them; they stood neither to gain nor to lose; at the mere name and wind of these great sums Satan possessed them.

From this singular interview I went straight to the palace; found the king; confessed what I had been doing; begged him, in my name, to compliment Terutak' on his virtue, and to have a similar box

made for me against the return of the schooner. 'Tembinok', Rubam, and one of the Daily Papers--him we used to call 'the Facetiae Column'--laboured for a while of some idea, which was at last intelligibly delivered. They feared I thought the box would cure me; whereas, without the wizard, it was useless; and when I was threatened with another cold I should do better to rely on pain-killer. I explained I merely wished to keep it in my 'outch' as a thing made in Apemama and these honest men were much relieved.

Late the same evening, my wife, crossing the isle to windward, was aware of singing in the bush. Nothing is more common in that hour and place than the jubilant carol of the toddy-cutter, swinging high overhead, beholding below him the narrow ribbon of the isle, the surrounding field of ocean, and the fires of the sunset. But this was of a graver character, and seemed to proceed from the ground-level. Advancing a little in the thicket, Mrs. Stevenson saw a clear space, a fine mat spread in the midst, and on the mat a wreath of white flowers and one of the devil-work boxes. A woman--whom we guess to have been Mrs. Terutak'--sat in front, now drooping over the box like a mother over a cradle, now lifting her face and directing her song to heaven. A passing toddy-cutter told my wife that she was praying. Probably she did not so much pray as deprecate; and perhaps even the ceremony was one of disenchantment. For the box was already doomed; it was to pass from its green medicine-tree, reverend precinct, and devout attendants; to be handled by the profane; to cross three seas; to come to land under the foolscap of St. Paul's; to be domesticated within the hail of

Lillie Bridge; there to be dusted by the British housemaid, and to take perhaps the roar of London for the voice of the outer sea along the reef. Before even we had finished dinner Chench had begun his journey, and one of the newspapers had already placed the box upon my table as the gift of Tembinok'.

I made haste to the palace, thanked the king, but offered to restore the box, for I could not bear that the sick of the island should be made to suffer. I was amazed by his reply. 'Terutak', it appeared, had still three or four in reserve against an accident; and his reluctance, and the dread painted at first on every face, was not in the least occasioned by the prospect of medical destitution, but by the immediate divinity of Chench. How much more did I respect the king's command, which had been able to extort in a moment and for nothing a sacrilegious favour that I had in vain solicited with millions! But now I had a difficult task in front of me; it was not in my view that Terutak' should suffer by his virtue; and I must persuade the king to share my opinion, to let me enrich one of his subjects, and (what was yet more delicate) to pay for my present. Nothing shows the king in a more becoming light than the fact that I succeeded. He demurred at the principle; he exclaimed, when he heard it, at the sum. 'Plenty money!' cried he, with contemptuous displeasure. But his resistance was never serious; and when he had blown off his ill-humour--'A' right,' said he. 'You give him. Mo' betta.'

Armed with this permission, I made straight for the infirmary. The

night was now come, cool, dark, and starry. On a mat hard by a clear fire of wood and coco shell, Terutak' lay beside his wife. Both were smiling; the agony was over, the king's command had reconciled (I must suppose) their agitating scruples; and I was bidden to sit by them and share the circulating pipe. I was a little moved myself when I placed five gold sovereigns in the wizard's hand; but there was no sign of emotion in Terutak' as he returned them, pointed to the palace, and named Tembinok'. It was a changed scene when I had managed to explain. Terutak', long, dour Scots fisherman as he was, expressed his satisfaction within bounds; but the wife beamed; and there was an old gentleman present--her father, I suppose--who seemed nigh translated. His eyes stood out of his head; 'Kaupoi, Kaupoi--rich, rich!' ran on his lips like a refrain; and he could not meet my eye but what he gurgled into foolish laughter.

I might now go home, leaving that fire-lit family party gloating over their new millions, and consider my strange day. I had tried and rewarded the virtue of Terutak'. I had played the millionaire, had behaved abominably, and then in some degree repaired my thoughtlessness. And now I had my box, and could open it and look within. It contained a miniature sleeping-mat and a white shell. Tamaiti, interrogated next day as to the shell, explained it was not exactly Chench, but a cell, or body, which he would at times inhabit. Asked why there was a sleeping-mat, he retorted indignantly, 'Why have you mats?' And this was the sceptical Tamaiti! But island scepticism is never deeper than the lips.

CHAPTER VII--THE KING OF APEMAMA

Thus all things on the island, even the priests of the gods, obey the word of Tembinok'. He can give and take, and slay, and allay the scruples of the conscientious, and do all things (apparently) but interfere in the cookery of a turtle. 'I got power' is his favourite word; it interlards his conversation; the thought haunts him and is ever fresh; and when he has asked and meditates of foreign countries, he looks up with a smile and reminds you, 'I got POWER.' Nor is his delight only in the possession, but in the exercise. He rejoices in the crooked and violent paths of kingship like a strong man to run a race, or like an artist in his art. To feel, to use his power, to embellish his island and the picture of the island life after a private ideal, to milk the island vigorously, to extend his singular museum--these employ delightfully the sum of his abilities. I never saw a man more patently in the right trade.

It would be natural to suppose this monarchy inherited intact through generations. And so far from that, it is a thing of yesterday. I was already a boy at school while Apemama was yet republican, ruled by a noisy council of Old Men, and torn with

incurable feuds. And Tembinok' is no Bourbon; rather the son of a Napoleon. Of course he is well-born. No man need aspire high in the isles of the Pacific unless his pedigree be long and in the upper regions mythical. And our king counts cousinship with most of the high families in the archipelago, and traces his descent to a shark and a heroic woman. Directed by an oracle, she swam beyond sight of land to meet her revolting paramour, and received at sea the seed of a predestined family. 'I think lie,' is the king's emphatic commentary; yet he is proud of the legend. From this illustrious beginning the fortunes of the race must have declined; and Tenkoruti, the grandfather of Tembinok', was the chief of a village at the north end of the island. Kuria and Aranuka were yet independent; Apemama itself the arena of devastating feuds. Through this perturbed period of history the figure of Tenkoruti stalks memorable. In war he was swift and bloody; several towns fell to his spear, and the inhabitants were butchered to a man. In civil life this arrogance was unheard of. When the council of Old Men was summoned, he went to the Speak House, delivered his mind, and left without waiting to be answered. Wisdom had spoken: let others opine according to their folly. He was feared and hated, and this was his pleasure. He was no poet; he cared not for arts or knowledge. 'My gran'patha one thing savvy, savvy pight,' observed the king. In some lull of their own disputes the Old Men of Apemama adventured on the conquest of Apemama; and this unlicked Caius Marcius was elected general of the united troops. Success attended him; the islands were reduced, and Tenkoruti returned to his own government, glorious and detested. He died about 1860, in

the seventieth year of his age and the full odour of unpopularity. He was tall and lean, says his grandson, looked extremely old, and 'walked all the same young man.' The same observer gave me a significant detail. The survivors of that rough epoch were all defaced with spearmarks; there was none on the body of this skilful fighter. 'I see old man, no got a spear,' said the king.

Tenkoruti left two sons, Tembaitake and Tembinatake. Tembaitake, our king's father, was short, middling stout, a poet, a good genealogist, and something of a fighter; it seems he took himself seriously, and was perhaps scarce conscious that he was in all things the creature and nursling of his brother. There was no shadow of dispute between the pair: the greater man filled with alacrity and content the second place; held the breach in war, and all the portfolios in the time of peace; and, when his brother rated him, listened in silence, looking on the ground. Like Tenkoruti, he was tall and lean and a swift talker--a rare trait in the islands. He possessed every accomplishment. He knew sorcery, he was the best genealogist of his day, he was a poet, he could dance and make canoes and armour; and the famous mast of Apemama, which ran one joint higher than the mainmast of a full-rigged ship, was of his conception and design. But these were avocations, and the man's trade was war. 'When my uncle go make wa', he laugh,' said Tembinok'. He forbade the use of field fortification, that protractor of native hostilities; his men must fight in the open, and win or be beaten out of hand; his own activity inspired his followers; and the swiftness of his blows beat down, in one

lifetime, the resistance of three islands. He made his brother sovereign, he left his nephew absolute. 'My uncle make all smooth,' said Tembinok'. 'I mo' king than my patha: I got power,' he said, with formidable relish.

Such is the portrait of the uncle drawn by the nephew. I can set beside it another by a different artist, who has often--I may say always--delighted me with his romantic taste in narrative, but not always--and I may say not often--persuaded me of his exactitude. I have already denied myself the use of so much excellent matter from the same source, that I begin to think it time to reward good resolution; and his account of Tembinatake agrees so well with the king's, that it may very well be (what I hope it is) the record of a fact, and not (what I suspect) the pleasing exercise of an imagination more than sailorly. A., for so I had perhaps better call him, was walking up the island after dusk, when he came on a lighted village of some size, was directed to the chief's house, and asked leave to rest and smoke a pipe. 'You will sit down, and smoke a pipe, and wash, and eat, and sleep,' replied the chief, 'and to-morrow you will go again.' Food was brought, prayers were held (for this was in the brief day of Christianity), and the chief himself prayed with eloquence and seeming sincerity. All evening A. sat and admired the man by the firelight. He was six feet high, lean, with the appearance of many years, and an extraordinary air of breeding and command. 'He looked like a man who would kill you laughing,' said A., in singular echo of one of the king's expressions. And again: 'I had been reading the Musketeer books,

and he reminded me of Aramis.' Such is the portrait of Tembinatake, drawn by an expert romancer.

We had heard many tales of 'my patha'; never a word of my uncle till two days before we left. As the time approached for our departure Tembinok' became greatly changed; a softer, a more melancholy, and, in particular, a more confidential man appeared in his stead. To my wife he contrived laboriously to explain that though he knew he must lose his father in the course of nature, he had not minded nor realised it till the moment came; and that now he was to lose us he repeated the experience. We showed fireworks one evening on the terrace. It was a heavy business; the sense of separation was in all our minds, and the talk languished. The king was specially affected, sat disconsolate on his mat, and often sighed. Of a sudden one of the wives stepped forth from a cluster, came and kissed him in silence, and silently went again. It was just such a caress as we might give to a disconsolate child, and the king received it with a child's simplicity. Presently after we said good-night and withdrew; but Tembinok' detained Mr. Osbourne, patting the mat by his side and saying: 'Sit down. I feel bad, I like talk.' Osbourne sat down by him. 'You like some beer?' said he; and one of the wives produced a bottle. The king did not partake, but sat sighing and smoking a meerschaum pipe. 'I very sorry you go,' he said at last. 'Miss Stlevens he good man, woman he good man, boy he good man; all good man. Woman he smart all the same man. My woman' (glancing towards his wives) 'he good woman, no very smart. I think Miss Stlevens he is chieip all the same

cap'n man-o-wa'. I think Miss Stlevens he rich man all the same me. All go schoona. I very sorry. My patha he go, my uncle he go, my cutcheons he go, Miss Stlevens he go: all go. You no see king cry before. King all the same man: feel bad, he cry. I very sorry.'

In the morning it was the common topic in the village that the king had wept. To me he said: 'Last night I no can 'peak: too much here,' laying his hand upon his bosom. 'Now you go away all the same my family. My brothers, my uncle go away. All the same.' This was said with a dejection almost passionate. And it was the first time I had heard him name his uncle, or indeed employ the word. The same day he sent me a present of two corselets, made in the island fashion of plaited fibre, heavy and strong. One had been worn by Tenkoruti, one by Tembaitake; and the gift being gratefully received, he sent me, on the return of his messengers, a third--that of Tembinatake. My curiosity was roused; I begged for information as to the three wearers; and the king entered with gusto into the details already given. Here was a strange thing, that he should have talked so much of his family, and not once mentioned that relative of whom he was plainly the most proud. Nay, more: he had hitherto boasted of his father; thenceforth he had little to say of him; and the qualities for which he had praised him in the past were now attributed where they were due,--to the uncle. A confusion might be natural enough among islanders, who call all the sons of their grandfather by the common name of father. But this was not the case with Tembinok'. Now the ice was

broken the word uncle was perpetually in his mouth; he who had been so ready to confound was now careful to distinguish; and the father sank gradually into a self-complacent ordinary man, while the uncle rose to his true stature as the hero and founder of the race.

The more I heard and the more I considered, the more this mystery of Tembinok's behaviour puzzled and attracted me. And the explanation, when it came, was one to strike the imagination of a dramatist. Tembinok' had two brothers. One, detected in private trading, was banished, then forgiven, lives to this day in the island, and is the father of the heir-apparent, Paul. The other fell beyond forgiveness. I have heard it was a love-affair with one of the king's wives, and the thing is highly possible in that romantic archipelago. War was attempted to be levied; but Tembinok' was too swift for the rebels, and the guilty brother escaped in a canoe. He did not go alone. Tembinatake had a hand in the rebellion, and the man who had gained a kingdom for a weakling brother was banished by that brother's son. The fugitives came to shore in other islands, but Tembinok' remains to this day ignorant of their fate.

So far history. And now a moment for conjecture. Tembinok' confused habitually, not only the attributes and merits of his father and his uncle, but their diverse personal appearance. Before he had even spoken, or thought to speak, of Tembinatake, he had told me often of a tall, lean father, skilled in war, and his own schoolmaster in genealogy and island arts. How if both were

fathers, one natural, one adoptive? How if the heir of Tembaitake, like the heir of Tembinok' himself, were not a son, but an adopted nephew? How if the founder of the monarchy, while he worked for his brother, worked at the same time for the child of his loins? How if on the death of Tembaitake, the two stronger natures, father and son, king and kingmaker, clashed, and Tembinok', when he drove out his uncle, drove out the author of his days? Here is at least a tragedy four-square.

The king took us on board in his own gig, dressed for the occasion in the naval uniform. He had little to say, he refused refreshments, shook us briefly by the hand, and went ashore again. That night the palm-tops of Apemama had dipped behind the sea, and the schooner sailed solitary under the stars.