

SAILOR AND
BEACHCOMBER
By A. SAFRONI-MIDDLETON



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MUSICAL COMPOSITIONS

By A. SAFRONI-MIDDLETON

March—

“Our Fleet” War March of the Allied Sailors and Soldiers. Dedicated by special permission of Lady Jellicoe to Admiral Sir John Jellicoe and the British Fleet, 1915. Pianoforte and Military Band.

Entr'acte—

“The Monk’s Dream” (*Full Military*)

Romanza—

“Song of the Night” (*Full Military*)

Waltz—

“Firenze” (*Military*)

Regimental Marches—

“By Order of the King”	. . . . .	<i>Also Pianoforte Solo</i>
“Imperial Echoes”	. . . . .	” ” ”
“The Colours”	. . . . .	” ” ”
“Salute the Standard”	. . . . .	” ” ”
“Under the Old Flag”	. . . . .	” ” ”
“Our Fleet”	. . . . .	” ” ”
“Sierra Leone”	. . . . .	” ” ”
“The Relief”	. . . . .	” ” ”
“The Night Riders”	. . . . .	” ” ”
“Rough Diamonds”	. . . . .	” ” ”
“The Stronghold”	. . . . .	” ” ”
“Half Seas Over”	. . . . .	” ” ”
“House of Hanover”	. . . . .	” ” ”
“Light of the Regiment”	. . . . .	” ” ”
“The Dashing British”	. . . . .	” ” ”
“The Scottish Chief”	. . . . .	” ” ”
“The Dandy Fifth”	. . . . .	” ” ”
“Cashmere”	“The Long Bright Line”	” ” ”
“Parramatta”	“Carrara”	” ” ”
“Old Castille”	“Bohemia”	” ” ”
“Il Cavaliere”		
“The Military Call”	. . . . .	<i>Also Pianoforte Solo</i>
“The Boundary Riders”	. . . . .	” ” ”
	Etc.	

Songs—

“Samoan Love Song and Waltz”	“South Sea Melodies”
“A Soldier’s Dream”	“Alabama Way”
“By the Delawar”	Etc., etc.

Published by BOOSEY & Co., London, Aldershot and New York

Played by Military Regimental Bands throughout the World

Lieutenant J. ORD HUME, L.F., the distinguished Composer, Bandmaster and Contest Adjudicator of the British Empire, says: “I consider Safroni-Middleton’s rousing Military Marches the finest of recent years, and unique productions, coming as they do from the pen of a sailor.”

SAILOR AND BEACHCOMBER



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TREE CLIMBING

SAILOR AND BEACHCOMBER

CONFESSIONS OF A LIFE AT SEA, IN AUSTRALIA
AND AMID THE ISLANDS OF THE PACIFIC

BY

A. SAFRONI-MIDDLETON



WITH TWENTY-FOUR ILLUSTRATIONS

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I DEDICATE THIS BOOK
TO THE MEMORY OF
MY BROTHER
MORTIMER HUGH MIDDLETON
AGED SIXTEEN YEARS

Lost overboard in mid-ocean while serving
before the mast of a sailing
ship out-bound for
Australia

ALSO TO THE MEMORY OF
CAPTAIN POPPY
Of the sailing ship *Aristides*, lost
with all hands

AND TO THE MEMORY OF
MY COMRADES
Of the Australian Bush and
the South Sea Islands

Old comrades, by my fire in dreams
Your hands I clasp to-night ;
Heaven starlit o'er the forest gleams
As 'neath the blood-wood's height
You lie with folded hands asleep
By shores of tumbling waves,
As I creep up each silent steep
To kiss forgotten graves,

The soul of all the songs I sing,
 Whatever sounds most true,
I dedicate each wild true ring,
 Inspired, old chums, by you.
The world grieves not that you are dead—
 Brave, reckless men who died,
Crept from their camp-fires back to bed
 Along the wild hill-side.

But, comrades, 'neath the hills or waves,
 Could one sad song of mine
Reveal dead souls of far-off graves,
 'Twould be a song divine.
As pure and sweet as flowers that grow
 Where once with wild delight
You sang, where bush-flowers, bursting, blow
 Thro' dead fire-ash to-night.

And so in dreams I take your hands,
 In long-dead eyes I gaze,
And half in tears from other lands
 Bring back the dear old days.
In other lands 'neath greyer skies
 Wild rides again recall,
Your songs, your laughing, manly eyes—
 The boy who loved you all.

Lies in my sea-chest 'neath my bed
 The fiddle, stringless, still ;
Old chums, since all of you are dead,
 'Neath forest steep and hill,
I cannot play the songs you loved ;
 But with tired eyes and pen
I strive to tell the truth, who roved,
 And found you—God's best men.

PREFACE

IN the following chapters, wherein I have endeavoured to write down my experiences at sea, in Australia and on the South Sea Islands, I have not gone beyond the first four or five years of my life abroad, but later on I hope to do so, if I get the chance. I have made no attempt to moralise in my book, and if I appear to have been guilty of doing so, be assured it was a spasm of the intellect and quite forgotten all about a few minutes after I had written it down.

All I have attempted in this book is to endeavour to tell exactly my experiences as they occurred in my travels in many lands; also I have wished to reveal a little of the usual experiences, the ups and downs, that youths pass through when they go to sea and are left completely on their own in other lands, seeking to see the world, often ambitious to find a fortune, but generally succeeding in only gathering heaps of grim experiences. Unfortunately no one can buy his experience first, and so the general rule of green fortune-seekers overseas is to end in failure, and to be honest, I was no exception to the rule. Nevertheless my loss of all that might have been was amply compensated by the rough brave men whom I met, seafarers and otherwise, who revealed to me the best side of humanity and

the value of good comradeship : devil-may-care fellows with hearts that were blazing hearth-fires of welcome in the coldest days of adversity of long ago, ere I, crammed up with experience and nothing much else, down in the stokehold of a tramp steamer, returned across the ocean to my native land, eventually to get the roving fever and again go seaward.

Pom-pe-te, pom-pe-te, pom, pom,
 All thro' the burning night
 Shovelling coal for the engine's heart
 Down in the blinding light.
 Working my passage, penniless,
 Over the western main,—
 And I know they'll all be sorry
 To see me home again.

Pom-pe-te, pom-pe-te, pom, pom,
 Shiver and shake and bang ;
 Thundering seas lifting us up,
 Making the screw-shaft clang.
 Unshaven faces thrust to the flame,
 Washed by the furnace bright,
 And England thousands of miles away
 In the middle watch to-night.

Oh! what would they say could they see me
 Mask'd thick with oil and dirt,
 Shovelling deep down under the sea ?
 This sweater for a shirt,
 With the funnel's red flame blowing
 Out in the windy sky,
 And the family pride perspiring
 To keep the steam-gauge high !

I can hear the wild green chargers
 Pounding the boat's iron side—
 Old Death, impatient, knocking away
 All night to get inside !
 Where haggard men like shadows move,
 Toil in the flame-lit gloom.
 Oh, it's just the whole world over
 Sailing the wave of Doom.

For the aristocrats are sleeping
 Snug in their bunks, I know,
 All on the upper deck, while we,
 Are sweating away below !
 Hard-feeding the white heat's fury,
 Piling the wake with foam,
 Unravelling all the knots that wind
 The way that takes them home.

I've clung on an old wind-jammer,
 I've done things—best untold ;
 Hump'd the swag on many a rush,
 Found everything—but gold !
 But oh ! for the flashlight homeward !
 The anchor's running chain,
 And the sight of their dear old faces—
 To see me home again !

Be assured that I have given no artificial colouring in my book, neither have I seriously set out to describe what I have seen, though I am confident that I must have succeeded in giving some local atmosphere, since all that I have written is drawn from true experience, but I cannot be certain that all the events followed exactly in the order that I have written them, for with the flight of time the dates of days, months and years fade away. I have

left to silence almost one year of my South Sea Island life, especially of that period when I, with a kindred spirit of my own age, lived for several months in a hut of our own fashioning on the shore side near Pangopango harbour off the Isle of Tutuila; also I have passed over several months of my Australian bush experiences, and I have done this for reasons of my own. Later on I hope to record the experiences of my sea life that followed my twentieth birthday.

All I say of the South Sea missionaries is said in good-fellowship. Some of the best men are missionaries and sacrifice years of their life in a hopeless quest. So bear with the honesty of one who has fought side by side with the best and worst, and face to face with the grim realities of existence. For the present I hope someone will like what I have written in this, my book—one more ambitious plunge of a failure.

A. S.-M.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
I. I RUN AWAY TO SEA	17
II. STRANDED IN BRISBANE	25
III. SLEEPING OUT AND BUSHED	36
IV. I LEAVE FOR THE SOUTH SEA ISLANDS	42
V. I PLAY VIOLIN AT NATIVE WEDDINGS	51
VI. SOUTH SEA BAR-ROOM	57
VII. I GO CRUISING	68
VIII. WITH R.L.S. AND OTHERS	78
IX. CANNIBALISM	90
X. A FIJIAN BRIDE	105
XI. BACK IN SAMOA	116
XII. TRAMPING THE SOUTH SEA BUSH	120
XIII. STILL TRAMPING	133
XIV. SOUTH SEA DOMESTIC LIFE, ETC.	139
XV. TAHITIAN MORALS	148
XVI. MARQUESAN QUEENS. THAKAMBAU	157
XVII. R.L.S. AT SAMOA. NATIVE MUSIC	174
XVIII. R.L.S. IN THE STORM	193
XIX. FATHER DAMIEN	203
XX. I RECEIVE A KNIGHTHOOD	211
XXI. LITTLE DAMIEN'S GRAVE	218

	PAGE
XXII. BOUND FOR AUSTRALIA	228
XXIII. I STOW AWAY	244
XXIV. IN THE BUSH	255
XXV. BEFORE THE MAST. MAN OVERBOARD	260
XXVI. IN SAN FRANCISCO	273
XXVII. LOST IN THE AUSTRALIAN BUSH	280
XXVIII. ON THE GOLD FIELDS	290
XXIX. THE CONCERT IN COOLGARDIE. FAREWELL	298

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

PLATE		
1.	Tree-Climbing	<i>Frontispiece</i>
2.	River Scene, Queensland	<i>To face page 24</i>
3.	Forest Track, "Out Back"	" " 40
4.	Coco-nut Palm in Full Fruit	" " 52
5.	Native Girl, Samoa	" " 64
6.	View of Apia from Mulinu	" " 74
7.	Planting Coco-nuts	" " 84
8.	Preparing Copra	" " 104
9.	Native Coast Village near Apia	" " 116
10.	Low-Caste Native Girl	" " 126
11.	Native Bamboo Bridge	" " 138
12.	Rarotongan Scenery	" " 150
13.	South Sea Lagoon	" " 166
14.	Native Girls making Kava	" " 170
15.	Para Rubber-Tree	" " 182
16.	Native Pottery	" " 192
17.	Loading Bananas	" " 200
18.	Coco-nut Palms and Pasture-land	" " 210
19.	Native Homestead	" " 220
20.	Native Canoes, Fiji	" " 226
21.	Homestead Scene, Queensland	" " 236
22.	Cabbage-Palm and Bush Land	" " 250
23.	Pastoral Scenery, N.S.W.	" " 258
24.	Modern Sheep-Shearers	" " 280

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I

I run away to Sea—Outbound for Australia—Appointed Solo Violinist
in the Saloon—I watch Sailors asleep

I WILL write you that which no man has written before. I will tell you the truth as I found it. I will tell you of the aspirations of rough but brave men in distant lands and on the ships of distant tropic seas. I will tell you the truth of many thrills that buoyed me up with hope in my wanderings, and also of the chills that crushed in the last forlorn stand on the field of adversity. Aye, you shall hear of those things that men dream of in silence. I will pour them out of my soul for the calm eyes of stern reality.

My pages of romance have long since been shrivelled up in tropic seas, under blinding suns, on the plains and in the primeval bush lands, but still I am the living book of all that has been in the dear old dead romance of passionate boyhood. The glorious poems, the dreams of what should be, the flinchless fight for right, have all faded away and left in the secret pages of life the withered flowers of old friendship, tied up with magic threads of women's kisses, the memories of dead, brave comrades, some under the seas and others under the bush flowers of Australian steeps or beneath the tropic jungle of the South Sea Islands. There they

sleep with the memories of savage native men singing by their tiny huts which have long ago vanished before the tramp of the white men. All these things are in this book, with the poetry of life which is mine, mingled with the memories of haunting dreams of that world of Romance which so many of us sail away to but never, never find.

I cannot promise that in the chapters to follow I can tell all that befell me in the exact order in which the events happened, for it must be that after the flight of years I should stumble a bit in the days and months of a life that was lived in the midst of wild adventure and incessant travel from land to land ; but it will be enough to assure you that the characters that I tell you of really lived and for all I know many are still living. When I tell you that an old cockatoo dropped down from the tropic sky on to a blue gum twig overhead and surveyed me with a sideways melancholy eye as I sat alone by my camp fire, be quite sure that that cockatoo lived and breathed, took stock of me and flew away into the sunset, and has doubtlessly dropped into the scrub, a small bunch of dead feather and bone, years ago.

At school I read more from the pages of romance than from school-books. At fourteen years of age the opportunity arrived, and secretly, with the help of an older friend, I succeeded in securing a berth on a full-rigged sailing ship, and, within four hours of my trembling carcass creeping up the gangway and down on to the great decks, I was before the masts going down Channel bound for Australia.

My recollections of the first few days are dim. The skies bobbed about, I swayed on deck, the brave old heroes of ages past flew out of my brain into the stormy moonlight and shrieked in the sails overhead, as my head swelled to the size of the dome of St Paul's and I vomited. I longed to be home again. Alas! deep-sea sailing ships do not turn round and speed with haste for their native port in response to the feeble schoolboy's tearful voice. I was done for! Hopes, glories, vast ambitions, all vanished! My thin legs trembled along on the decks till I staggered through a little cabin door and fell into my bunk. By some great oversight in the sea discipline I was allowed to sleep for five hours; I cannot remember to a certainty now, but I think I was drowned and died about a thousand times in that first off-watch sleep.

I soon recovered, and discovered that sea captains do not stand on the poop cracking jokes and shying oranges and coco-nuts up at the crew, as they laughingly toil among the sails. I also found that the Bo'sun wore very stout boots, and I have never met a man in my life who could kick so true and aim with such precision. Five years after, whilst I was in 'Frisco, I called on a phrenologist and speculated one dollar, and discovered that the contusion and everlasting bump formed at the back of my head by a Bo'sun's belaying-pin was an inherited taint derived from the over-burdened brains of my passionate ancestors!

Well, I recovered my equilibrium, secured good

sea-legs, went aloft, crawled along the yards, and helped to reef the sails. Often in the wild nights the sailors cursed and swore as I clung with might and main, my hands and teeth clinging to the rolling rigging up in the foremast top-gallants. My comrades shouted orders to me, their voices blown away on the thundering night gales, but I only heard the instinctive cry of self-preservation within me as the moon and the great beast-like clouds swayed like mighty pendulums across the night skies, swept from skyline to skyline, while the masts shivered to the roll and thunder of the broadside swell as the ship flew along at eighteen knots before the gale. Often I would gaze down deckwards, watching the praying figurehead's lifted hands heaving skywards when the tropic moonlight made wonderfully brilliant the hills of bubbling foam over the bows as she dived and plunged along. I loved that figurehead, for often as I gazed from aloft on moon-bright nights it seemed to wear a strong resemblance to my dear mother, and with my legs curled round the yards aloft in the lonely sea-nights I would often look down and fancy in my dreams that her shadow ever moved along over the waters below the swaying jib-boom with extended hands, praying for me, as no one ever prayed for me before or since !

I slept amidships with the cook and three other apprentices. I was a favourite with them all, being of a cheerful temperament and a good fiddle player. Often in the off watches I would play old familiar

strains while they joined in the rollicking chorus, awaking the silence of the lonely calm tropic nights in moving waters that belted the whole world, when the sails swayed silently along beneath strange stars, filled out at intervals like drums, then flopped, as the lazy tropic breeze once more sighed and fell asleep.

The old Scotch Captain heard me playing one night ; he was a religious man and taught me some beautiful sea-hymns, and in due course I played in the cabin aft during Sunday service, when all the crew mustered, and John the cook, who swore and cursed most fearfully all day long in his galley, opened his big-bearded mouth and sung most expressively those old pious hymns, knocking even the Skipper out in melodious reverential pathos !

The dear old Skipper had brought his daughter with him. She was a pretty Scotch girl—a crew of thirty-six men, and one pretty girl and me ! Well, I combed my hair, cleaned my teeth, gazed in my little bit of cracked mirror-glass fifty times an hour, for alas ! the family failing asserted itself ; I had fallen in love ! I have never been what you would call really lucky in love, like some happy men ; trouble always arose after the first embarrassment had worn off and I felt truly happy, and blessed the universe. And it was so in this my first love affair. One dark night as she stood in shelter by the bulwarks near the saloon door I was admiring her eyes and swearing eternal love, calling all the bright stars to be witnesses to my unchangeable fidelity, and just as I

kissed her sweet white ear and, in my madness of love, breathed secretly through her beautiful dishevelled, scented hair, as it waved in the moonlight over her lovely curved shoulders, I received a tremendous clump from the old Skipper! That night I also received stern orders from the Chief Mate never to be seen near the saloon again after dark!

I crept into my bunk heartsick and wretched. The affair got about the ship. I was chaffed a good deal by the whole crew. Real old sea-salts they were. I can see them now as I dream, walking across the decks by moonlight, muffled up to the teeth in oilskins, some with big crooked noses, all with weary sea-beaten faces. Up aloft they go. Again I see their big figures move up the ratlings as they reach the moonlit sails, and climbing, vanish in the sky. All around is sky and water and stars, fenced in by eternal skylines, as the ship travels silently onward, a tiny grey-winged world under blue days, starry and stormy skies, towards a skyline that for ever fades, following sunset after sunset across boundless seas. They were a motley crew those sailors. Some read books, some believed in spirits, and some in beer, and one would tell us over and over again of his experiences in distant lands and his brave deeds and his wonderful self-sacrifices and many other virtues, not one of which he really possessed.

There was one old sailor who on arriving home on his last voyage found that his wife was dead. He

would sit on a little empty salt-beef tub and tell me about his courting days and his "old girl who was one of the best," the tears rolling down his coarse-looking face all the time. He was an extraordinary mixture; in one breath he would almost curse his wife's memory, and in the next ask me if I thought there was really another world. He could not read or write, and seeing me play the violin and read music as well as books made me almost omnipotent to his sad old eyes. I remember well enough how my heart was touched by his manner and questions as I put on a wise air and convinced him of the soul's immortality. I even went so far as to tell him that my dead relations had returned to my family as shadows from the other world, and the poor old fellow perched on his tub listened eagerly, believing all I said, and then went off and found his comrades, who sat playing cards by the fo'c'sle door, and laughed the loudest, till they all snored in the fo'c'sle bunks, half stupefied by the smoke and smell of ship's plug tobacco. I have often seen them by the dingy fo'c'sle oil-lamp fast asleep, seared unshaved faces, all their worldly passions asleep, looking like big children, so innocent, as they snored away, and some of them who had fallen asleep whilst they were chewing tobacco dribbled black juice from the corners of their mouths, their big chests upheaving at each slumbering breath. Outside, just overhead, the night winds wailed and whistled weirdly in the rigging as the jib-boom swayed along, and at regular intervals came the thunder of the

diving bows as the ship dipped and heaved and plunged along over the primeval waters.

Five months passed away on that ship. Storms blew from all directions and sometimes dead ahead and then we never slept. Hauling the mainsail up and tacking is more nuisance than flying before a thousand gales. To stand by the top-gallant halyards as comes the wind ; to clew the main sky-sails up, singing chanteys, as you cling to the yards with a thundering gale smashing the highways of the water world into a myriad travelling hills as the wild poetry of the sea singing to the ears of the sailor, and I was never so happy as when the green chargers ramped across the world.

I shall never forget my delight as we were towed down Brisbane River, with the everlasting hills all around. I will not weary you with any more details beyond telling you that when we lay alongside the next night I hired a wharf loafer and got my sea-chest secretly ashore and bolted !



RIVER SCENE, QUEENSLAND

II

Stranded in Brisbane—I look for a Shop—Meet typical House Agent
—The Vanity of Youth—I stock my Shop—Alone in the Bush—
House Agent calls for Agreement Money and the Rent—I do
a Moonlight Flit

As I have previously told you, all I am writing is the truth, so I must tell you that I never saw the Captain's daughter again, but in my chest of old letters and unaccepted manuscripts I still keep her little notes, dropped near me on the deck of the ship that took me to Australia.

The atmosphere of a new world sparkled in my head as I stood in the old colonial town of Brisbane. It was a sweltering hot night, and as I stood by the river and gazed up the gas-lamp-lit streets, watching the passing Australian girls in many-coloured attires and the colonial "corn-stalks" in big hats slouching about, I felt a tremendous loneliness come over me, a strange homesick longing crept and crept, and from my heart to my eyes a mist arose. I have had many homesick breakdowns in my time, but never one as deep and sincere as I experienced standing there alone in that strange country. I was not yet fifteen years of age, and the thought of my being absolutely dependent on my own exertions was naturally a big oppression to a boy of my inexperience. I was tall for my age and looked two or three years older than I was. A good comrade by my side

at that moment would have been untold wealth to me. Under a lamp-post I counted my money. I had just three pounds ten shillings! That night I slept in a little low lodging-house by North Quay. With daylight and a good breakfast my courage returned and I sat up in bed and played several old operatic airs on my violin. A week after I pawned it for three pounds.

I had made no friends. My money was going. I knew that I must get a job or meet disaster. The idea of starting work was most distasteful to me, and yet what was I to do? Walking along Queen Street one night I stood by a tea shop. I gazed at the window. My old school-chum's father was a tea merchant and I had helped them to blend the teas in England, and as I stood there thinking, the thought suddenly occurred to me that I would start a shop and be a tea merchant.

The next day I tramped my legs off looking for a likely shop. I found the rents too high and moreover I had no references and the agents gazed suspiciously at my cheese-cutter hat. I at once bought a large big-rimmed straw hat in a second-hand shop, and on the advice of a more sympathetic agent than the rest I made for the outskirts of Brisbane. Here and there on the scrub-covered slopes were scattered wooden houses raised on posts. Upon a post board just off the main track I saw written "Jonathan Bayly, House Agent." Taking my handkerchief out I carefully dusted my boots, wiped the sweat from my sunburnt face, walked into the little office

room, and there came face to face with the gentleman whose name appeared on the board outside. I did not like the look of him at all. He had a long goat-like face and grew pointed whiskers on the chin only.

“Are you the House and Shop Agent?” I asked.

“Yes,” he said as he eyed me attentively.

“Oh,” I said, “I am looking out for a small shop which would be suitable for a tea shop.”

I had observed business men in London put on important voices and cough in an affluent way, and as he once more eyed me I made a bold effort, placed my hand in an affected way to my mouth and coughed in two little important jerks, swayed slightly on one leg and gazed round his office.

In a moment his manner changed. I had impressed him with the sense of my own assumed importance, and to clinch the coming deal, I dropped my remaining three sovereigns on the floor, picking them up carelessly as though they were buttons.

I have travelled the world over since, made deals with moneyed men, bought gold claims worth thousands of pounds, which I sold for a dollar—and glad to get it!—and done many more strange and unfortunate things in my time, but never since did I so completely gull a human being as I did that old colonial house agent—but nevertheless he did me also.

Taking down his big white helmet hat from a solitary peg, he placed it carefully over the three remaining hairs of his cranium, and bowed me out of the door to view the proposed shop. Walking

off the main track he led me across the bush, and after walking for about one hour, he apologised for the distance and the solitary bush surroundings, telling me that the shop I was about to view was in an excellent position, inasmuch as it was in the centre of a proposed Township, and indeed when at last I stood by its little shanty-like front door I inwardly realised that it needed a good deal of apology on its behalf. A small broken-down shanty was the only other habitation in view for miles! The description of this shop's position would sound like a silly attempt to be humorous. I only wish it were, for I took that shop! I listened to that old Agent's palaver; I was only a boy and I had some dim idea in my head that gold-miners and bushrangers passed by it at regular intervals, and when he waved his arms about and pointed out the proposed spot for the Church, the Bank and the main streets, I choked down my misgivings and clinched the bargain. I took the place on a "seven years' agreement with the option of a renewal of fourteen more years at the expiration of the aforesaid term." Of course, all this long lease was proposed by the old Agent. I knew no more about agreements and expirations of leases than a baby, but as I signed the long important-looking document in his office that same afternoon, I carefully read it through and through as though I were taking my ninety-fifth shop, and did not intend to be taken in as I had been taken in before! Well, I signed it.

Next day I obtained the key and went into

Brisbane, bought a pair of scales, some paper bags, a bottle of ink, a pen and one chest of cheap tea—I think it was fourpence a pound by the thirty-six-pound chest. I also got the manager of the wholesale department to send me ninety-five empty chests for show purposes. I was full of business. I kept thinking of my old father's advice to my elder brothers when he said, "My sons, do not go in for professions, nothing succeeds like business; sell and trade in something that the world must have. Who wants poets, musicians and authors?—with their men and women made of moonrise!" And well was he able to speak on the subject, since he had reared a large family up by his pen, which is in no wise mightier than the sword in many cases, excepting when you sit concocting letters to your immediate creditors for kind consideration and more time before you pay up!

Well, I will proceed and tell you all about that shop, and you must remember that it is only a very minor detail in the story of my experiences to follow, as I slowly but deliberately unfold my travels and troubles, my love affairs and losses in Australia and the South Sea Islands.

Oh, the vanity and pride of youth! As I turned the key of my shop door and entered beyond the portals, placing carefully on the floor my parcel, which contained a cup and saucer, a small oil lamp and the few absolutely necessary things to sustain a decent domestic life, a thrill of extreme pride went through me. I gazed around the spacious room, my

hands were itching to get hold of the ninety-five empty tea-chests and place them in commercial rows in the two large shop windows that gazed at the sunset like two mammoth glass eyes of melancholy and fate-like loneliness across the silent Australian Bush. Behind lay my back garden which also extended to the skyline !

I took a stroll around, and you can imagine my delight as I stumbled across some foundations already half dug out, which no doubt were for the future homesteads of the coming Township ! They looked pretty old and I noticed that a young gum-tree had grown to a considerable height in one of them, but I did not stop to criticise ; time, growth of gums and Townships were outside my experiences of life. I simply lent my imagination to the future scenery and saw myself a prosperous tea merchant ; around me rose in the dreamy rays of the dying sunset the grey terraces of splendid villas ; I heard the hum of human voices, the laughter of the bush children romping on the streets-to-be of that Unbuilt Township. Like a grey old pioneer of the desert, uncharted on the map of civilisation, stood my shop, and I the proud landlord, stroking the first sprout of down on my upper lip, gazed innocently around, and wondered what my kind old father would think of my first business move up the steps into the portals of the grim commercial world. I felt considerably bucked up at the splendid outlook, I even felt a tenderness springing up in my heart for that old Agent. He had patted me on the shoulder

too, and told me that I was a plucky young chap with real business ability in my head !

Next morning, standing under my piazza, I spied a large carrier van rapidly moving across the thin track that divided the immense grey slopes of the outstretching country. It was my ninety-five empty tea-chests and one full one approaching me ! The old colonial carrier grinned from ear to ear as he dumped the lot in my shop, smelt my sixpence twice, and placing it in his pocket, drove away leaving me once more alone in the vast solitudes.

Profiting by my memories of a tea shop in the Old Kent Road, I at once set to work and wrote on white cards, "Genuine Pekoe Ceylon Tea, 2/ per pound," and underneath, in very bold letters, "The cup that cheers but does not inebriate." Of course, in those days I knew nothing whatever of the Australian Bushman's temperament ; had I done so I should, of course, have written, "The cup that inebriates and cheers !"

Ah, how I remember my pride as I stood on the slope and gazed at my solitary shop window. Sunset was once more sinking into its saffron sea out westward, and sent over the hills a dying beam that touched as though with tenderness those words, written in big chalk letters over the doorway of my shop, "Middleton & Co., Tea Merchants." As I gazed up at it I climbed once more on the old tub and added this after-thought, "late of London," and the sun-beam died away as my eyes instinctively turned westward. I knew that that same sun was stealing

round the world and those beams would steal likewise over the lattice windows of my sleeping parents, my brothers and my sisters, all dreaming and snoring in velvet comfort, and I wondered if they dreamed of me, and whether their wildest dreams could picture my shop and my heroic ignorance as the shadows of the Australian night crept over me and the parrots stirred in the leafy gums, and the innumerable frogs and locusts in the swamps hard by chanted a fit accompaniment to my retrospective dreams.

I tell you, I felt pretty lonely in that old place. I would stand at the shop door and watch the fleets of parrots and magpies sail away into the sunset, day after day. And oh, the lonely nights ! I often would climb up to the extreme tip of a hill near by and stare across the scrub to catch the last gleam of the old Agent's house ; its slim brows far off would twinkle with good comradeship and cheered me up wonderfully.

Well, I think it was just about three weeks after my first opening of the shop that I was standing one evening at the door feeling pretty downcast ; the sun was setting over the blue hills and the thickening shadows made the landscape look for all the world like a dried-up primeval ocean bed, and the weird scattered gums like the masts of old sunken wrecks, that through some strange freak of nature had burst into leaf. Suddenly on the distant range I saw a moving speck ; my astonished eyes gazed steadily and then brightened with enthusiasm ; it

was a lonely horseman ! Surely he would not pass by my shop without buying a pound of tea, thought I. What on earth could I do to attract him ? A happy thought struck me. I rushed to my old sea-chest, out came my old bugle-horn, and placing it to my lips, I stood at that lonely shop door and gave three tremendous blasts, then watched. To my huge delight, as the echoes reverberating faded away over the silent steppes, the horseman altered his course ; he was coming towards me !

He was a burly, brick-coloured, dusty-looking fellow, and as he sat astride by my shop door gazing first at me, then at my shop, and then again on the surrounding country, he coughed twice and spat over his shoulder. I felt extremely riled by his manner. Then he said, "How's biz ?" With good business forethought I replied, "Pretty good the last two days !" Then suddenly making a bold effort I asked, "Would you like to try a pound of my Pekoe ?"

With a kindly look in his grey eyes he said, "Good tea I 'spose ?" "Nothing to beat it," I answered quickly.

Looking quietly across the country he remarked, "No complaints about its quality round these parts I bet." Without another word he gave me two shillings, took the tea and galloped away.

I think it was about four days after selling that pound of tea that I spotted the Agent coming down the hill-side track right opposite my shop. The month was up, and the rent due !

“ Well,” he said as I stood at the door and boldly faced him, “ I’ve called for the rent.”

For a moment I fumbled in my pocket. I knew, to be an honourable citizen, I should pay my way and let all earthly considerations of sustaining existence and thoughts of the future go to the winds, but I had only fifteen shillings in the world, and the month’s rent was four pounds, and the cost of the agreement two pounds ten shillings. Pulling myself together I said, “ Can you give me another month ? ”

“ Not a day,” he answered hotly, and then looking up quickly asked, “ Where’s the agreement money ? ”

Then I saw that my first boyish instincts were to be relied upon—the man was a hard-hearted scoundrel. I answered quickly, “ Where’s the Township you spoke of ? ” At this he almost spat with rage, and thrusting his pointed whiskered chin in my face said, “ Do you expect me to supply you with a Town as well as with a shop ? ”

I pretended to see some fine logic in that remark, quieted myself down, and then said, “ Parrots, magpies, ’possums and mosquitoes do not buy tea, so how can I pay the rent ? ”

His temper now got the upper hand of him. “ You’ve taken the shop,” he snarled; “ where the hell’s your capital ? ”

On hearing him say this, the sudden inspiration that has stood me in such good stead in the sorrows and joys which I am going to tell you of, flashed in my brain, and I quickly answered, “ You cannot

supply a Town, and yet you expect me to supply capital. Put your Township here and I'll soon show you the capital." And then I trembled and forced a smile to my lips. He looked so dangerous that I did not know what might occur to me in those lonely parts. But he was only a bully after all. For a moment he looked me up and down with interest, and then said, "Can you pay me to-morrow?"

Pointing my trembling hand to my rows of empty tea-chests, I said, "Look here, I'll go to Brisbane to-morrow, sell that tea at cost price, and you shall have your rent and the agreement money." At this he turned and went away. That night I hastened off to Brisbane, hired a van, got my sea-chest out of that wretched shop and was never seen in any shop in those parts or anywhere else on earth again.

III

No Money—Sleeping Out—Bushed !—The Stockman's Shanty

STRANDED in Brisbane without a cent I slept down on the wharfs and sometimes curled my half-starved body up by the warm funnel of the deep-sea tramp boats. I will not weary you with the details of those days and nights, excepting to tell you that hundreds of English boys, and the pluckiest boys of your country too, go through all that I went through in the land of the Golden Fleece. I was soon in rags, sunburnt and miserable. I mixed with English and Colonial tramps, some good men and some no good ; most of them wore shaggy beards and others tried to keep shaved and had forgotten their names in the attempt to lose their identity—sad “ ne'er-do-wells ” of the civilised world, who had hurried across the world to save their necks or preserve their liberty !

It is wonderfully easy to sink into the depths of Failure's Hell. The human relics that make up the sad side of existence are fascinating folk, full of sarcastic wit and most of them of a sentimental turn of mind, and strange as it may seem, deep in their hearts better men than those who climb the heights of ambition on one leg—instead of crawling up on all-fours and dying of old age half-way up.

I remember one night while we were all sitting huddled in our rags round the funnel of the English Mail Boat, one old chap (at least he seemed old to me as I was only fifteen years of age) would sit by moonlight reading and writing poetry. He had fine eyes, and he and I got interested in each other, and I found out gradually that he was a University man, who in a moment of mental aberration had signed a cheque and passed it. He had travelled the South Seas, lived in Fiji, Samoa and Tonga, could quote all the poets and as far as I was able to judge wrote beautiful poems. When he read one of them to me, inspired by memories of his boyhood, I was quite touched and he noticed it by my eyes, and I with my impulsive temperament could have kissed that sad old mouth as the beautiful words trembled out of it and his face lit up to find that at last in the cold old world he had found an appreciative listener. Out of the big tail pocket of his ragged coat he pulled a dirty old bundle which was all of his poetic work. He read all the poems to me; the longer ones I could not understand, as they were on Greek subjects, but nevertheless I listened attentively, and now that I am older I thank God that I did. We slept for nights and nights in a wharf dust-bin together, and one night I waited and waited and he never came. I know he would have come if he were able to. I never saw him again; he and his poetry left me for ever—God bless him wherever he is.

After that I spent days and days trying to get a

berth on one of the home-bound ships, but there were so many looking for the same post that I gave it up as hopeless and eventually got a job in a tanning yard where they cured sheep and cow skins. Even after all these years I can still smell that yard under the tropic sun and the terrible odours of advanced putrefaction. My wages were thirty-five shillings a week. I stayed just three weeks, got my violin out of pawn and started fiddling on the public streets. After the second day I chummed in with an Italian harp-player. He taught me a lot of fine Italian melodies, and in a week we were the talk of Queensland capital. I used to stand by his side at night when all the streets were lighted up and put my whole soul into my playing as I thought of my proud old father and my sisters, and then with my big-rimmed Australian hat in my hand bowed to the street audience as they shied in the silver pieces. In two weeks I had eight pounds in my pocket, and as it always does happen, and will happen till the world ends, when I went to the post office there was a letter from home with four five-pound notes in it! How I would have jumped to get that a week before; but my heart was touched nevertheless by those kindly hands and tender thoughts across the world, heedful of my welfare.

Bidding my wizened dark-eyed old Italian harpist "Good-bye," I made for the bush, and travelled north. I had a comrade with me. He was not a bad fellow—hailed from the East End of London,

was utterly devoid of romance, and swore fearfully. As we slept out in the bush at night I cheered him up by playing the fiddle, till we both lay down side by side, our feet towards the camp fire, and slept.

I shall never forget that bush tramp. For three weeks we toiled along, our swags on our backs, from steep to steep, and from plain to plain, nothing but vast solitude and sweltering silence broken at intervals by the fleets of large parrots migrating across the tropic skies ; as they passed overhead we would hear their dismal mutterings, till their curling wings faded away over the gum clumps on the everlasting skylines of the oceans of hills and plains around us.

Brisbane was about one hundred miles away. Day after day we continued our voyage across those everlasting seas of grey scrub and rock. The tropic sun belching down with full vigour raised blisters as big as soap bubbles on our bare necks ; they would often burst and bring us great relief. Our supplies were running short, and we had got off the track and were completely bushed ! The stiff bush grass tore the ends of our trouser legs completely away, and we looked terrible scarecrows, and got thin too. Often we would climb the highest steeps and gaze around in the hope of seeing some sign of human habitation. We were indeed two sad cast-aways on seas of desolation, moving slowly onward on sore feet under the tropic sun. As we sat by our camp fire at night my comrade would curse me for bringing him to such a God-forsaken country, indeed all my own valour vanished as we lay curled

together in the darkness of that endless bush and heard the dingo's wail as its creeping feet explored the waste far away.

One night, over the hills far off on the skyline, regiments of ragged gum-trees suddenly burst into view, as up crept the white Australian moonrise. We sat up and stared into each other's eyes for company. I shall never forget the terror that made our teeth chatter. I gripped my revolver (I had bought it and a tin of one hundred cartridges before starting off from Brisbane). There far away on the steeps, like a monstrous human shadow, moved something, leaping from steep to steep like some ghastly spring-heeled Jack. The perspiration rolled down our faces. We were both speechless as we stood up and gazed at that terrible sight. Instinctively we clutched each other, as that terrible Aboriginal came towards us ; up went our trembling hands in the moonlight. We shook visibly as we leaned against each other for support, and fired the six chambers of our revolvers in rapid succession. The hills echoed and re-echoed that cannonade ; the enemy fell and we fainted ! I poured some water down my comrade's throat and half raised him up.

At daybreak, crestfallen and miserable that we had killed it, my chum and I buried the fallen enemy, a poor old man kangaroo !

Two days after that incident we were both hard at work pulling pumpkins and stacking straw on the cleared bush ground of a shanty. The stockman was a good fellow, he treated us kindly and rigged us



FOREST TRACK, "OUT-BACK"

both out in decent trousers. I had fine times at that lonely bush homestead. The stockman's wife took a great fancy to me, and they would sit together by their shanty door, after the day's work, and listen to my playing on the violin as though an angel had fallen from the clouds specially to entertain them. They had three little girls, plump little sunburnt girls too. They all loved me. How they romped with me, and how they cried when I went away! The stockman's wife shed tears, and the old fellow's voice sounded husky as he wished me "Good luck," and those three little girls, with their bright eyes, wet with tears, are still looking up into my boyish sunburnt face, and their dear little hands still wave on the ridge of the steep as I ride away for ever, fading from their sight.

My companion got work on another station and found another comrade more suitable to his temperament than I. He swore that I was mad.

IV

My first Whiskies and Sodas—And after!—Secure Position as a Violinist in Orchestra—We stow away—Sight the South Sea Islands—Samoa

ONCE again I arrived in Brisbane, and walking up the main street, feeling rather down in the mouth, I was suddenly thrilled by meeting an old school chum out from England. We almost fell into each other's arms. As soon as we had both recovered from our mutual astonishment, I inquired and learnt that he was working as a clerk in one of the Brisbane wholesale establishments. I had seven pounds in my pocket when we met that night. I went with him into my first public-house, and started on whisky and soda! I have made up my mind to tell the whole truth, in this the book of my life, and so I must tell you to my utter shame that I got fearfully drunk.

How it really occurred I do not know. My comrade was evidently used to intoxicating refreshments and showed huge delight as I got more and more excited. I did not know what had come over me. After the third whisky I felt an intense tenderness creep over me for everyone in the bar. The whole street got to know I was in that wretched place. I smacked my old school chum on the back over and over again, and as the old sailors and cunning old

Colonial loafers poured into the bar and called me a fine and splendid young fellow, I shouted hurriedly for "deep seas," "schooners," "whiskies," and all the thousand orders which they poured into my ears. I was not too far gone not to notice the "old salts" wink at each other as they lifted their tremendous glasses and clinked them one against the other, drinking my health and long life, as with pride I paid. That night, when I eventually got on to my bed, the room whirled round and round, and slowly sank into vast depths of infinity, and I became insensible. I will not describe my feelings the next morning, as it would make woeful reading, but I will tell you this, I have never drunk whiskies and sodas since, and so the "ill wind" blew into me a deal of good.

In the next room to me lodged a violinist, and he could play too. I introduced myself to him and he gave me several good lessons and recommended me to some good studies. I told him my tale, and to my delight he got me a job as violin player in the Brisbane Theatre. It was an easy matter for him to do this, as he was the leader of the orchestra. I shall never forget the novelty of those first nights, and the sights as the stage beauties whirled round and round, cocked their legs skyward, and bowed with blushing modesty as the audience loudly cheered. I have never seen anything like those sights, not even in the Fiji and Samoan Islands, where I met women attired in half of a coco-nut shell, and stalwart brown men standing under beautiful blue

skies as nude as Grecian statues, and yet not half so nude as white women wearing only about a quarter of their clothes.

Sickening of orchestral life, I bade my few friends farewell, and sailed for Sydney. The harbour struck me as very beautiful, also the city itself, with its long streets—Pit Street, George Street and the parallel streets—along which thundered, in those days, the big engines of the steam trams.

Alas! ill luck befell me, my money was soon all spent. I strove to get into the theatre again; but the whole of Italy was standing at the door offering their services for a macaroni-living wage, and I was done for, as they were mostly good players and old in experience. I hastily wrote home to England, begging them to send me some cash. In those days however it took quite three months to get a reply, and long before the letter-due period was near I was once more stranded and sleeping on North Shore Ferry boats and on the Domain, chummy with the old unfortunates again, as like mammoth rats we crept through cracks and slept the sleep of the down-cast and weary.

One day I made the acquaintance of two more lads who were about my own age. They had been sleeping out in sheds for weeks, and were both half-starved, and that afternoon we went down on the wharf of Circular Quay together, and watched a ship unloading fruit and bananas. Taking our opportunity, we stole a fine bunch of the latter. I shall never forget how we enjoyed that gorgeous

feed, as we sat in the Domain hard by and shared out our stolen meal. My comrades were both English fellows. That same afternoon we decided to stow away on a large tramp steamer—I believe it was a “Blue Anchor Boat.” At dusk that very night, as she lay alongside, getting up steam so as to sail next morning, we three crept up the gangway, and after asking the chief steward and the chief officer if there was a chance of “working our passages home” we waited our opportunity and stole down the stokehold ladder at dark, as quiet as three mice, right down into the big ship’s depth, and lay by the coal bunkers all curled up together on some old sacks. For a long time we whispered together, full of glee at the thought of such easy success in getting away from Sydney, all Homeward Bound!

About midnight, we fell asleep. Suddenly I was awakened by footsteps, and coming down the iron ladder right over our heads I saw the big boots of a man. Quickly pulling the peak of my cheese-cutter cap over my eyes I pretended to sleep. My chums were both snoring beside me, and, as I once again peeped under the rim of my cap, I saw by the figure’s uniform that it was the Chief Engineer. He struck a match and looked at a steam-gauge, and just as I thought that he was going up again on deck, and that we were undiscovered and safe, he turned and spotted us three boys curled there upon the old sacks, all asleep as he thought. For a moment he gazed down upon us, and then without a word crept away. I quickly awakened my two comrades, and

told them. They would not believe me at first, but eventually I convinced them, and we all quietly climbed up the ladder and bolted. He had seen us there, three pale-faced starved boys curled together, and it had touched him, and now that I am older I know that he would never have split, wishing to give us a chance to get away back to our native land. And though we did not profit by his kindness, I often think of the tenderness that made that rough sea-engineer creep up to the decks and keep a still tongue for the sake of the three little stowaways.

Next morning we saw the ship sail away half steam ahead across the Bay ; round the Point her stern passed out of sight as we three stood gazing wistfully close together on the wharf. Away she went, with the white hands of the passengers waving farewells, and in my dreams I saw her pass through Sydney Heads, and heard her thundering screw start as she passed out into the ocean and rolled away full speed ahead on the long, long track Homeward Bound for England—and I cried myself to sleep that night.

I soon sickened of that life, I can tell you, and one day out at “ Miller’s Point ” I saw alongside the wharf a schooner which I had been told was bound for the South Sea Islands. I was lucky and secured a berth before the mast, and next morning as dawn crept over Sydney I was aboard her, flying through the “ Heads ” into the Pacific Ocean before a stiff breeze, with all sails set, bound for the Islands.

That night it blew like hell, and the ship almost

turned upside down. I was not used to the tumbling of small craft, which is very different to the roll and heave of big ships, and so became terribly sea-sick. While I was aloft that night I brought up my dinner and tea, the whole of which was caught by the terrific wind and slashed on to the deck into the face of the skipper and the man at the wheel. By Jove! they did swear! But sailors are rough and forgiving, especially when you play the fiddle to them, as I did in the calms that followed that cursed gale and my illness.

In three weeks we sighted the first Island. At first it looked like a huge coco-nut sticking out of the calm shining sea afar, and as we got nearer we saw that it was quite a decent little world about 300 yards across and 100 wide. A big crag, its population consisted of one hut, an old man and two daughters. They were quite nude, and running out to the extreme end of a small promontory they waved their thin long brown arms, and showed their white teeth, as we flew by with full sails set, 300 yards off.

It was a most novel sight to me to see those lonely people on that old rock out there in the wide Pacific. How they lived, and what they lived there for, heaven only knows—I don't.

As sunset faded into saffron and crimson lines along the skyline that tiny isle faded away into the infinity of travelling darkness for ever following the sunsets around the globe, and I and the crew of eight, all told, lit our pipes and sat on deck as the schooner, urged by the increasing wind which

always sprang up after nightfall, crept over the primeval waters, the sails filling out and flopping at longer intervals. The crew were rough sailor-men, two were Englishmen and four came from "Frisco," the cook was a mixture of Chinese and nigger blood, —a most extraordinary-looking being he was too, with his frizzly dark hair, slit-almond eyes, and thin yellow teeth dividing the lips which incessantly gripped a long pipe. He and I had no love for each other. I caught him spitting in a tin pannikin, and wiping it clean with his claw-like hand as he put my dinner on and handed it to me. I took it, and turning on my heel gave my arm a full-length swing and over the side it went into the Pacific! By Jove! he did glare viciously at me. After that I always carried my own plate to the galley and placed my food carefully upon it myself.

Daybreak was stealing over the seas as the steep mountainous shores of Samoa burst through the skyline ahead.

At midday the anchor dropped into the calm waters of the Bay. Out from the beach, where the thundering surf leaped over the barrier reefs in the sunlight like showers of broken rainbows, came the out-rigged catamarans, swarming with savage faces. I shall never forget that strange sight of wild men dressed in their own skins, and rough-haired women too, bare as eggs. Along they came paddling and singing weird tunes that sounded like the dark ages in dismal song to my trained ears. Behind the strings of those canoes swam the mothers. On

their wave-washed backs clung their tiny brown babies. The bright maternal eyes gleamed, and the wistful tiny bright frightened eyes of the infants shone, as they rode securely on the brown soft backs of those original old mothers of the sea-nursed South!

Behind them stretched the shores of their island home, thickly clad with big tropical trees, big fan-like leaves shimmering in the distance. In a few moments their naked feet were pattering on the deck of our ship. We all made a rush to save our belongings from their thieving hands, as they rushed under our very noses, like big children, to collar all that attracted their bright alert eyes.

That night off I went in one of the catamarans with the rest of the crew. On the beach we met half-castes and white traders loafing and spitting by the sweltering grog shanties and Samoan women were also loafing around. I eyed them with great curiosity. They were nearly naked; some were dressed in cloth loin-strips only; others, leaning against posts smoking and chewing, were dressed in some sailor's old discarded shirt.

Never in my life have I seen such handsome women and men as some of those Samoans were—fine eyes, splendid physiques, the men standing nearly six feet in their skins. Beautiful heads of hair they had too, both the men and the women, and they were full of song; and when I thought of the white men of my own country, with pimply, dough-coloured skins, bald heads and stumbling gait, with pens behind

shrivelled-up ears and eyes gleaming worlds of woe, as they were pulled up to London Town in the train every morning and every night pulled back again, my heart was touched over the sadness of the lot of the working people of the British Isles.

V

I extemporise Stirring Music on my Violin at Native Weddings—
Dethroned Queens and Kings—Meet Papoo

I AM now going to tell you about Samoa and Samoan folk just as my eyes saw them. My ship sailed away, but I was not on board of it. The Samoan climate suited my health, and I found decent fellows living there who made jolly companions. One of them was a reformed German missionary who had mended his ways, left off the drink and toiled honestly on a coco-nut plantation which helped him to eke out a living for his accepted wife and family. They were pretty little children too—I knew them all well, thirteen altogether, some with blue-black eyes and some grey-black eyes. All had a tiny splash of white on their tiny plump bodies; their mothers were as brown as pheasants' eggs and mostly fine-looking women.

For a week I lodged with a dark old Samoan who had a kind of bungalow on the beach. The walls were lined with the most beautiful South Sea shells. He traded with them, and I believe did a good business with sailors and traders. He certainly made more headway than I ever did in my tea shop. Well, I found my violin was a real fortune to me. I got in with all the wealthy Samoan chiefs and attended Samoan weddings; far away in the depths

of the forest it was I who played and composed on the violin at those South Sea forest festivals. Stirring music! The hotly blushing bride, dressed in her bridal robe—her hair only!—which ruffled as the breeze of the cool forest kissed her innocent nakedness, was given away to the modest Samoan happy youth, and you must forgive me, dear reader, whoever you are, and remember I was only a romantic boy, when I tell you that my whole soul envied that youth! I was young and inexperienced in the ways of Western and Southern life, and I at first thought that the Samoan ladies were rather loose in their morals. I am older now, and I tell you this—the morals of the South Sea men and women place the morals of our Western life completely in the shade.

Certain phases of life in London could never occur in the South Seas, and even were the women inclined to traffic with their comeliness, the South Sea Samoan chief's war-club never misses!

At night I would steal up the steep shore hills under the mangroves and coco-palms and creep into the tiny dome-shaped dens, which were the homesteads of the native men and women of those South Sea isles. They all got to know me and trust me, and I often would share their meals as they sat squatting around their big earthen steaming pots wherein they cooked fish and peculiar-smelling vegetables. The heat of those dens was terribly stifling to me with my clothes on, and I would very soon make tracks and get outside, and



COCONUT PALM IN FULL FRUIT

from those steeps I would gaze out seaward at the vast calm Pacific trembling into silver under the South Sea moon, as the phosphorus-sparkling waters at intervals curled and broke to silvery waves up the shore, by the mirroring palm-sheltered lagoons. On the beach through patches of moonlight passed the loafing half-caste traders and huddled groups of Samoan women with their tiny black children running round and round them like big black rats.

Laoleo, a Marquesan, was my special comrade on those nights out. He was the son of one of the South Sea queens who had seen her day—far away on one of the lonely Atolls, her beauty faded and mouth mumbling and toothless, she sat dreaming of her glorious past, and found life still sweet in living over the memories of all that had been. Laoleo's father was in my time a dethroned king. I saw him once as he sat by his den. He was fat and squatty, only had one big yellow tooth, a large head, cute twinkling eyes and fearfully wrinkled brows, and when he wrinkled them up, as he thought of his past, he looked like some grim personification of the dark ages cast into human frame.

I shall never forget the great prayer-chanting night. Laoleo took me into the inland scrub one night, and there, in the forest by their dens, chanting to their ancient gods, sat the old naked chief and his big brown wives and daughters, some with their ridis on, but most of them attired only in their hair and modest smiles.

It was a beautifully calm night. Overhead from seaward crept cooling winds, drifting damp odours from wild flowers and orange-tree scents from the shore lagoons and palm-forest glooms. Round and round whirled the nude maidens of that strange world, swaying their bodies in lyrical beauty and over their heads in rhythmic movement their long curved brown arms. The men squatting around slowly moved their big brown bodies to and fro, chanting weirdly all the time. By his big domed den sat the dethroned king, Laoleo's father. There he sat rehearsing his grand past, his large thin feet on a little mat, his chin pointing towards heaven, his face once more alive with revived majesty as his warrior chiefs around him swayed their clubs, calling down the spirits of the mighty dead to bless that old king and their own brave selves. Young Laoleo and I stood in the shadows watching them all. As for me, I felt a bit nervous—they all looked so different sitting round there with inspired eyes bright with memories of their glorious past, wondrous battles and beautiful cannibalistic feasts, memories of the bygone days when they nibbled their choice old friends, found them of sweet dispositions and wept over tender memories.

Through the spread tree-tops gleamed pale stars, and peeping through the hut doors hard by, among the coco-palms, through big leaves gazed the wistful eyes of their small brown naked babies—like tiny shadows of unborn children peeping from infinity into the dim regions of moonlit reality.

How the memories return to me as I write on. It was on that very night which I have just described that I, the son of a proud English gentleman of ancient family, fell in love with a South Sea Island woman, ten years older than myself. You shall hear something of my downfall. I loved and lost, and cried in my heart as I lay alone in my hut on a lone Pacific isle over the grief, the breakdown that has stricken men since the days of our first grief-stricken parents, old Adam and sad Eve. I have not told you before, but several days preceding the events which I have just spoken of, Laoleo and I were down in one of the shore grog shanties, talking and yarning to the batches of beachcombers, as they loafed in the sultry glooms by the coco-palms, smoking and spitting and playing cards—some of them the black sheep of the civilised world, who were never known to be really sober—when an exceedingly beautiful Samoan girl of twenty-six years of age came in and sat just by my seat as I played the fiddle. She was accompanied by her father, an old chief. She had an attractive, insinuating face, and as she sat there, half-leaning against a post, her brown naked soft velvet figure looked like some beautiful sculptural work of art. Silently she sat as I played on, her shining eyes gazing astonished at my white sunburnt face, and not till I had finished the fiddling, and the drunken old half-caste trader had finished his jig and swaggered up to the bar for another dose of stuff called brandy, did her eyes blink and her lips part in a smile of pleasure that revealed her white

teeth. She gave me such a look as she sat there, dressed only in a narrow tappa loin-strip, that I quickly riveted all my attention on an attempt to tune up my violin, so as to hide the hot blush that flamed to my ear tips.

VI

Contrasts—A South Sea Bar-room—I meet Robert-Louis Stevenson—An Old Time Trader's Morals—Shell-backs

ALAS, a good many of those brown men and women of the old days have passed away for ever, and in their place, over the islands of the South Seas, roam the varied offspring of men from many lands, the half-caste children of white traders, Chinese mongrels, Polynesian niggers, descendants of wandering, adventurous viciousness, mixed up with the outcasts of civilisation, and more often than quite enough the puny offspring of touring American and German missionaries, and English too. I don't know which has won in the race to populate the lonely and beautifully secret-keeping isles of those far-away seas, but I think the good old flag is still to the front, flying to the breeze, represented in the sparkling, dancing eyes of the romping children on the wooded South Sea slopes—pretty violet eyes they have too, some grey and some grey-brown, little laughing angels of innocence, as they gaze up at you and go tumbling head over heels, revealing their tiny plump white-splashed backs, and the good old missionary sprees hidden in the dark of the unrecorded ! For true it is that sometimes the virtuous and the good have their weak moments, those sad lapses which are not on any account recorded in the delightfully

innocent autobiography of the returned, weary but still earnest traveller, beautifully written, and sold for ten shillings and sixpence net, circulated among the numerous British, German, and American Christian Societies, and read by the benevolent old gentlemen and ladies of their native land, which is so overrun with poverty and misery.

I knew one old Samoan chief, who was a cute, intellectual fellow, and could speak "pigeon English" well enough to ply me with numerous questions concerning my native English land. I often remember how his bright eyes lit up with astonishment when I told him of the far-away sorrows of London Town, so different to the warm moonlit forest of his own Island. I told him how men slept on door-steps, shivering, clothed in verminous rags which fluttered in the cold night winds as they half covered starved skin and bone of dead men who still breathed—men who had dropped out of the fighting ranks of life, lost the forlorn hope, and did not believe in God, for they had sorrowed in life and found hell in the death of breathing-despair. I told him of tiny wistful eyes of children starving as they gazed into shop windows watching the mist rise from the steaming foods, and yet nothing in their little pinched bellies. I told him of vast cathedrals pointing their steeples up to the grey English skies, costing millions of money to build, while far below their stone walls, stealing along the wet cold streets, those tiny trembling prayers, God's helpless children, crept without food

and clothing. I told him of women, dishevelled and weary, sleeping out on the Embankment and huddled in dark corners and ditches, some fallen through drink, and some through loving too well the man who had betrayed their trust ; and I told him of their more fortunate sisters who had loved and been unbetrayed by the object of their lucky trust, and how terribly bitter those very women were towards their fallen, lost sisters. I was young then, otherwise how much more could I have told the astonished old chap as he raised his eyes and hands to heaven and wiped the perspiration from his heathen brow !

Yes, to hear how we lived under the banner of the sign of the Cross, wherefrom only the shadow falls over the pale-faced multitudes as they tramp to the clank of the chains of conventionality, chains gold-plated with eighteen-carat hypocrisy.

“ And then Englis come to here,” he said, as he opened his South Sea mouth in astonishment. He was an unmarried man, and having no fine-looking daughters had not suffered as some of the Samoans had, the why and the wherefore I leave the reader to guess. I also leave the reader of my autobiography to remember that the South Sea Islands’ so-called savages are men just like ourselves, with inclinations and dreams and religions based on mythology and the gods of their ancient histories, and were they a powerful and mighty race, owning three parts of the world, with all the advantages of climatic conditions and education that the Western

world has had, they would most assuredly emigrate from their Isles and seek to reform men to their ways of thinking, and doubtless they would find a good harvest in our modern cities for their pious endeavours. I am sure we should all, under their influence, make a grand stride towards that far-off goal of perfect good. I know that there are many men stealing across the earth who do not think as I think, but this is the autobiography of my life, and not of another life.

I was a lad in the days that I am telling you of, and had the opportunities that other men who were older and more respected did not get. I have often rushed in where the angel feared to tread, and the devil also. R.L.S. and others only saw the traders, the Samoans and other tribes, as they stood before him in one light, and the missionaries with the halo of feverish goodness to reform shining around their brows. I was a boy, my opinion unrespected, a young beachcomber who knew more than they thought he did, so they let go, and out came the true man, glorious and joyous in the wild sprees of those long-ago Samoan nights! Mind you, there were good men in the South Seas of those days, but over most of their heads, in the cemetery where the whites were buried, the flowers grew. I have stood gazing on those forgotten graves at sunset and wondered what dead desires lay beneath those crosses and stones, what sad crimes and what memories of their native lands, for the Islands, as well as Australia, were the happy hiding places of men who were flying

from justice, and were I to tell you the yarns, the terrible tales of escaped innocence being hunted and cursed through miscarriages of justice, I should have to fill a book with nothing else but those tales.

I will now return to where I left the South Sea Island girl Papoo, for that I discovered was her name. As the drunken trader swayed to his tub and her frizzly-headed brown father rolled a tobacco leaf into a cigarette with two fingers and stood by the one-roomed Samoan Hotel I spoke to the girl who had so attracted my attention.

“You like music,” I said.

“Nein spoke,” she answered, but her eyes spoke for her, and I shifted my seat and got closer and read that poem of curves and shoulders, bright eyes and hair, yes, all the mystery of a woman’s eyes, lit by the magic light of sincerity.

I will not tell you all the many details of my romantic love affair; but I can often hear in my dreams the cry of the night bird and the hushed intervals, as the sea-surf rose and thundered over the shore barrier by the forest track near Vaea Mountain’s thickly wooded slopes as I sat by Papoo and made love to her, just the very same as English boys do to the girls in the London suburbs to-day. Papoo was just the same in her manner, modest to a fault, betraying her modesty by adding another garment over her ridi, which looked to me very much like the half of a discarded red nightshirt of some cranky old skipper. I played the violin to Papoo by the thatched hut where she lived and she

sang weird Samoan songs, which stealing into my ears from her lips trembled with lyrical beauty, the soul of which was in my own head. Nights followed nights and I would creep behind her thatched hut on all-fours and meet her secretly. I got so deeply in love with her that I asked her to clear from the Island and go with me to Australia ; and then the end came, in the sense that we could not meet so often. Her father found us out ! I thought he would kill me at first, but the anger in his dark eyes sank down and he jabbered in South Sea lingo tremendously for a time. I hung my head and pretended to be heartily ashamed of myself, and so he forgave me, but kept his weather eye on me just the same ; and my dear Papoo crept in the hut door, gazed over her shoulder at me as she disappeared, and pointed to the shore, and I knew that she would meet me and bolt at the first opportunity.

It was the day after that episode that I was sitting by a dead banyan-tree, when a white man, whom I thought was a rather respectable trader, emerged from the forest just by. It was Robert Louis Stevenson. He had intellectual keen eyes and a sad emotional-looking face, and looked a bit of a dreamer. Of course I did not know him then, nor can I remember much what he said at that moment. I know that I had climbed a tree and was looking at a bird's egg when he came up to me and asked me what bird's egg it was ; I could not tell him, but I did as he requested, climbed up the tree and placed it back into the nest. Had I known he was a great

author and poet I should have taken more stock of him. I remember that we strolled across the slope together and I gave him some tobacco and climbed several more trees as he stood below calling up to me to show him the eggs. It was not till nearly a week after, when I was on the beach talking to a trader friend who said to me "That's Stevenson, the writer," that I asked about him, but even then I did not gather that he was as famous as he was. I remember the very next day as I and Papoo lay hidden by some coco-palms we saw him lying full length, leaning half on his elbow gazing seaward, writing now and again on a slip of paper that he held in his hand. He had his boots off, for they stood beside him. I think he must have been bathing in one of the creeks by the Bay and afterwards crept up to the seclusion of the banyan-trees to dream and write down his thoughts. Papoo and I watched him for a moment, and then arose and stole away, as she had the household duties to attend to and I did not want her father to catch her again.

Almost every night I would go down by the beach and mix with sailors and traders—men from all countries they were, a good many Germans among them, especially when the *Lubeck* arrived from Sydney, bringing passengers and a varied cargo. The crew would come ashore and have a regular spree, some of them drinking the vile concoction sold at a shanty bar by the beach. There was one old chap who hailed from "Nuka Hiva." He would sit drinking and smoking and yarning away for

hours, telling us his experiences ; he knew all the Islands, had been married over and over again, and as he was growing old and infirm through drink and temper (for he had a terribly fiery head) he would sit and curse the memory of his numerous family, not one of whom would help him. He had grown-up sons and daughters on most of the Isles of the South Seas round about ; some of his children were as blackish as their mothers, and some half white and half brown. He would sit for hours while I played and strummed on the violin, telling me of the strange habits of the different tribes and their marriage customs. We would sit together and roar with laughter as he (half drunk) crawled on the shanty floor illustrating the way he solemnised the marriage of his eighth wife in Fiji, describing how he kissed her feet, and how he went through ceremonies of a most extraordinary kind in the many weddings that he had attended as bridegroom. I could not very well write here the tales he told, and moreover I do not believe all that he said was true, though he would pull his billy-goat whiskers, lift his hat from his extraordinary high bald head, and seal every detail with a blasphemous oath of " God's truth." He was interesting at first, but I soon wearied of his adventures, for he told the same yarn night after night, and as I slept in the same room with him my life became a burden to me. Just as I was going off to sleep he would suddenly sit up, half drunk, and say : " Did I ever tell you of my marriage with Betsy Brownlegs, the Fiji chief's daughter ? "

And then, notwithstanding that I quickly answered "Yes, you have told me and everyone else in Samoa," he would sit up and start off, pouring out the old tales.

One night I got him in a decent mood, played him some old English songs, and then he revealed the best side of his character, that all men have, and with tears in his eyes looked up at me and said, "Matey, that 'ere old song makes me remember—she sang that, and I killed her!" And then out came the sorrow of his life, why he was a drunken exile in the South Seas. As a young man when in England, for he was an Englishman, he had fallen madly in love with a pretty girl in a Kent village. All went well for a time; then a rival came on the scene who was more polished than poor Horne-castle, and the object of his affections cooled down towards him and gave every encouragement to the suitor who wore a top hat and white cuffs. I can still see the gleaming of Horne-castle's eyes as he told me of that rival of his, how he caught his village sweetheart one night sitting on a stile with the top hat hanging on a post beside her and the cuffs round her neck. "I did for her," he said; "I meant the shot for him." And then, though many years had passed since that tragedy which had made him fly from his native land, the tears of remorse crept up to his eyes, but they quickly brightened as he told me that he had read in an old newspaper that the second shot had succeeded, and his rival had died in the hospital. So ended my strange comrade's

courtship—the girl and the rival in the grave, and Hornecastle an exile in the South Seas, and on the slopes his many wives and children romping with glee, brought into existence by the top hat and white cuffs episode. How strange and inscrutable are the ways of Fate.

I made the acquaintance of another old chap who had a mania for eating hard-boiled eggs. He had been a sailor, travelled the world over, done many misdeeds and many good ones. He spoke with a Yankee twang and I believe was an American. He would sit in the grog shanty telling all the traders and sailors in the bar, when his turn came round, of other lands, and invariably finished up by condemning the country in question or praising it according to the quality of the hard-boiled eggs that he had eaten while residing there. They were real old “Shell-backs,” the men of those days, had sailed the seas, lived on “hard tack,” slept “all standing” in wind and rain, and as the various yarns were told they would listen and quietly sip their beer, spitting over their shoulders out of the grog shanty windows without missing, in a way that struck me as wonderful. They were wild times, those that I am writing of, not so long ago either, as I am still a young man. You see I started young and saw more of life before I reached man’s estate (which is the only estate I ever possessed) than a good many men see in their threescore and ten years. As I write and dream on I can see those Isles glittering under the tropic sun, with the shoreward

surfs rising and breaking into rainbow-flushed colours, thundering over the reefs. They are still breaking and curling to spray out there, as on the beach through the tracks of moonlight pass and repass the semi-savage-looking figures of Samoan men and women, and still I can hear the songs of those who fish in the Bay as they glide along from shore to shore in the strange outriggered canoes, while the half-caste and white traders loaf, lean, smoke and spit by the shore shanties, tugging at their short beards.

Time went on till Papoo and I drifted apart, and since I must tell the truth, this being no romance, one of her own tribe courted her. She still had her eye on me, but the novelty was wearing off, and I went off to 'Tonga in a small trading schooner. When I returned to Samoa after about six months, I found that Papoo and her family had left the Island. I never saw her again, and so ended my second love affair.

VII

I go cruising amongst the Islands—Arrive in Sydney—Wharf-ers looking for Work—I go off hunting for Gold—Meet R. L. Stevenson at Sea

ONCE more the wandering fever came over me, and wishing old Hornecastle good-bye and my few other friends, I shipped in a schooner bound for the Fijis. For two or three months I roamed with her from isle to isle, saw the various tribes of original mankind of all the South Seas, heard their songs and squatted with them in their little huts as the children of past bloodthirsty cannibals said grace over their meals to the great pride of the onlooking missionaries, who have done a deal of good notwithstanding their own sins.

After a week's stay at Vanua-Levu we proceeded for the Australian coast, and I arrived once more in Sydney Harbour and there once again I fell in with sailors. There they were, a ragged chain of shoulders on the wharf, mostly men of forty to fifty years of age, stalwart and sunburnt relics of better, or worse, days. Still they stood, watching with weary eyes for work, tugging grizzly beards and moustaches, smoking plug tobacco or fiercely chewing in the hot sunshine, arguing the point over the latest trade union grievance, spitting over their shoulders with the same wonderful precision and

fate-like persistence. And still they stand there, at least the younger ones; the older ones are now dead, asleep in the "Necropolis" out at "Rookwood," with all their grievances at rest and their dried-up chewing gums silent for ever, the cry for higher wages for ever entombed!—while their pals stand down by Sydney Bay and now and again in the long silent watch of many years wipe their noses with their outstretched thumb and forefinger and break the silence by some brief remark, such as "Poor pal Bill, whenever I sees the old wind-jammers being tugged out across the Bay I thinks of 'im and the good old days before the mast, before we joined the trade union, and now he's dead, I wonder where he is." Then, by way of punctuation, the reminiscent loafer spits out a thin swift stream of black tobacco juice.

I soon tired of the wharf monotony, and finally, hearing of the gold discoveries of those times, the fever got hold of me and I resolved with a friend, whose spirit seemed very much like my own, to go up country and see if we could find gold ourselves. The gold discoveries were far away in Western Australia, but I got an idea in my head that gold was to be found in New South Wales. I bought a blanket, a billy can and other necessaries for bush exploitation, and we started off by taking tickets on the Newcastle night boat. It took one night to get round, and next morning we started off. I remember we passed some old coal-mine shafts and then tramped along a main track with tall gums

each side of us. We were happy together. My comrade was a Scotch fellow, stolid and full of dry humour, and I believe he would have marched on for years without complaining so long as he could smoke. At midday, both tired and hungry, we hailed the driver of a cart that came across some paddocks to the right of us. He was an Australian farmer and a kind fellow we found him. I shall never forget his jolly laughter and the twinkle of his eyes when I told him we were "travelling up country in search of gold," as we sat up there beside him and the Australian buck-jumper galloped along at about four miles an hour. He put us down about four miles outside of Maitland. It was an old-fashioned, sleepy-looking place, and as we tramped through the main street, with our cheese-cutter caps on and swags on our backs, the Australian youths opened their big mouths and grinned from ear to ear, as they stood in groups by the roadside.

That night we left Maitland behind and slept on the scrub by the Hunter River and then tramped across country. The heat was terrific and reminded me of my Queensland experience. We got work at homesteads and pulled pumpkins, examined creeks carefully, dug holes, gazed for sparkling running water that might reveal the precious metal as it ran over the pockets in the hills; but we found no gold, only hard work and toil. We soon sickened of the life, only suitable to the Chinamen who toiled about us on the stations. Grim, rum-looking things these men were. They looked so stolid and emotionless as

they tramped in Indian file across the slopes at sunset back to their sweltering huts that it would require very little imagination to dream that they were stuffed mummies of the Pyramids walking in some long sleep, exiled to the dried-up Australian Bush, and they smelt so strong that when the wind blew from their direction my comrade and I at once lit our pipes !

We soon made tracks for Sydney, where once more I tried to get a berth on an English ship. I had received several letters from home and longed to see them all again ; but it was not to be, all the home boats were full up that week and money was getting scarce. My comrade and I determined to get a job somewhere, and going on board the *Lubeck*, a German ship, I was taken on as mess-room steward, and my mate secured a job in the saloon. We were delighted at such a companionable bit of luck. Next morning she sailed, and as I was walking along the deck next day I saw the Pacific Ocean all around us, and gazing over the bulwark side by the saloon leaned Robert Louis Stevenson. He did not notice me as I stood there by the engine-room door, and I stared on and had a good opportunity of examining the man who had just begun to be interesting to me, as I had a faint idea that he stood apart from ordinary mortals and wrote books of poetry, and so I examined him with interest. He was a good deal like the photographs which I have since seen of him in books and elsewhere, though he looked somewhat older. His face seemed very much sunburnt, and its

outline struck me as though it expressed Jewish origin.

The voyage to Samoa, as far as I can now remember, only took about a week or ten days. We called at Tonga and stayed, I think, only a few hours. I slept among the sailors in the fo'c'sle. They were all Germans and they spoke very little English. I discovered that one of them had a violin and, mine being in pawn in Sydney, I borrowed it from him and started to entertain the crew by playing old English songs, and some sea chanteys, one of which was the good stirring old Capstan song "Blow the Man Down." As I sat on the hatchway at night and two Germans sea-salts shouted songs in German as I played, Robert Louis Stevenson came and spoke to me, and seemed very much interested in my playing. He remembered seeing me in the Islands and asked me if I was an Australian. I told him I came from England. He became interested in me and just as I was losing my first embarrassment, and had played him once again a Scottish melody which seemed to please him very much, I heard the wretched German chief steward shouting for me, and I had to make a bolt. I did not see him again till we arrived near the Islands, then one night as I was sitting on the hatchway pickling the fiddle strings, sweating a good deal, for it was a sweltering hot night, Stevenson came through the alley-way by the engine-room, and sat beside me and another sailor who was humming as I strummed away. I saw his face outlined distinctly ;

it was a calm night, the moon right overhead flooded the sea with a silver sheen as the screw whirled steadily round and the vessel sped along leaving a long silver wake which could easily be seen for miles behind as the sparkling foam drifted with the glassy swell.

Stevenson was one of those men with a keen face that made you feel a bit reticent until he spoke, and then you discovered a human note in the voice that put you thoroughly at your ease, and as he spoke to a German sailor he picked my violin up and started to try and play some old folk melody. I told him how to hold the bow correctly and hold the head of the violin level with his chin, which he at once attempted to do and made several efforts to perform, upon which I smiled approvingly at my illustrious pupil! He had long delicate fingers and looked well as he stood in the Maestro fashion and did all I told him to do in an obedient way as though I were Stevenson and he the humble sailor-lad. He asked me many questions about music and seemed to know more about the history of celebrated violinists and the history of musical notation than I did, but he spoke modestly and did not take the least advantage of my inferior knowledge as he walked to and fro restlessly and then sat down again. He seemed fond of looking over the ship's side, gazing out to sea, and up at the stars. He was very friendly with all the sailors, went into the fo'c'sle, talked to the crew and was greatly interested in ship life. I did not see him

again till I arrived on the Islands. I did not care about travelling with Germans whom I could not speak to, my knowledge of German being no more than "nein," and "jah," and so I left the *Lubeck* and once more came in contact with old Horne-castle. My chum, though I did all I could to persuade him to leave the boat, would not do so, and so we parted, and the last I heard of him was that he had shipped before the mast of a sailing ship bound for San Francisco and during terrible weather got lost overboard. Poor Ned, I often think of him and even regret leaving the *Lubeck*, otherwise he might not have gone off on the ill-fated ship, for she too got lost later on with "All Hands."

Hornecastle¹ had also been away from the Islands somewhere or other, I forget now where, but I remember his pleasure at seeing me again as he smacked me on the back, and shouted "Hello, my hearty."

It was about that time that I spent a good deal of my time in practising the fiddle and studying music, and Hornecastle and another old shell-back would sit on a chest and say, "Shut it, youngster, give us a toon!" I had got hold of Kreutzer's violin studies, and some of the double-stopping strains, I must admit, got very monotonous even to me as I played them over and over again hundreds of times, and when I think of the old chap's temper at my persistence, and the way he got out of his bed one night,

¹ Hornecastle was a successful trader and always gave me employment if I required it, and paid well.



VIEW OF APIA FROM MULINU

as I was practising, and said, "By Christ, if yer don't stop that hell of a row, I'll smash yer fiddle," I can hardly blame him.

One night a schooner arrived from Honolulu and the crew came ashore and had a fine spree. She brought as passengers two missionaries. I do not remember their names, only that we all called them the "reverends"; the elder one of the two, who looked like a German, was a real "knock-out"; he had succumbed to more women, and had made more devoted mothers on that Isle than Hornecastle had in all his populating career! But he was a good fellow withal, and after he had been to the missionary school and done his duties he would come to us and talk about our evil ways, and try to reform old Hornecastle, who was dead against the Church. Hornecastle would listen to him, blinking his grey eyes all the time. He would tug his beard, put his finger to his beak-like nose and say, "Look ye here, Missy" (which was an abbreviation for missionary). "It's no good yer trying to come your old swank over me, you'd best start to reform yerself, old cock." But that missionary was oblivious, and used to the sarcasm and genial observations of his own kind, and took it all in good part. Half comic and half in earnest, he would raise his pious hands above his head, as old Hornecastle would let go and curse missionaries and all creation in general. This missionary meanwhile would sit quietly gazing around, taking notes down, asking questions, the names of trees, flowers, and Isle afar and near,

busily engaged in compiling his memoirs, to be published when he returned to his native land in a grand volume chock-full of extreme virtue and self-sacrifice, and the sad ways of the children of the South Seas, and the little bit of good white men had circulated in the children who would grow up pious. I have read a good many books written by men who have presumably travelled and lived in the parts they have written about, but I can most earnestly assure my readers of this autobiography that black men of India and on the Gold Coast of West Africa and in the South Seas do not speak as I have read that they do speak.

The copper-coloured man of Ceylon and Bombay, as soon as you step ashore, speeds towards you and says, "Me show you where live, me good man, carry parcel and nebber steal," points viciously to his rival—who is clamouring in pigeon English for your patronage—and swears that "He's bad man, steal all, and been pison" (meaning prison), as the aristocratic dark-turbaned gentleman, with long black naked legs, white shoes and no socks, grins, shows his white teeth, pulls his black hand from under his shirt tail, and tries to entice you to scan his splendid selection of photographs—photographs that, not to put too fine a point upon it, even a Turk, on looking at them, would blow his nose and blush! The South Sea Islanders accost you in a more innocent way; naturally a virtuous race, and living in isolation from civilised Europe, they have watched the White askance, and gradually discovered that

the godliness he clothes himself with sometimes covers a deal of vice ! So they strive to sell you corals and fruit, as they patter over the ship's deck with naked feet, and when they see the white man's eyes wandering over their lithe figures, the women, who have been schooled in Western ways, glide up to you with speaking eyes, stroke your hand with their soft brown fingers, stand with their curved nude brown bodies, clothed only in a string of beads, and like a big greedy child say, " You like me ? give me money, eh ? "

This, of course, sounds very different to the books I have read, but whoever you are, go to the South Seas, and keep your weather-eye open and you will not contradict me when I say that the money spent by Christian Societies in England and America to polish up the South Sea Island daughters and men, who were far more innocent than Europe ever remembers being, could be spent in our own countries with far greater advantage. The South Sea Islanders would be happier and the English poor and starving children better looked after.

VIII

An Old Time Marquesan Queen—Forced Teetotalism and the Result — With R.L.S. watching Native Dance — A German Missionary—A Medley of Incidents

THERE was an old Marquesan Queen who lived near Samoa. Years ago in the zenith of her beauty and fame she sang and danced at the cannibalistic feasts, was the belle of the Isles and a kind of Helen of Troy of the South Seas. She was taken prisoner by various tribes, bought by the big tattooed chiefs and, when they sickened of her, sold again and again until at last she emerged from the door of a South Sea Divorce Court, and fell into the arms of one of the Island Kings and, becoming a Queen, became virtuous, in so far as she possibly could be after being reformed to the Christian religion. Horne-castle called at her lonely Isle once, while we were cruising around in a sloop. He, of course, knew her well, and after introducing me to her as his son, I brought the fiddle out at "Castle's" request, and played to her, as she sat old and wrinkled by her hut door. She was a most extraordinary-looking old woman ; when she smiled her face puckered up into a map of wrinkles and her small shrunken black eyes twinkled as though through the dark came back old memories of those lusty stalwart chiefs of long ago. Then she readjusted her pince-nez and I saw

the tears in her eyes as her black fingers nervously turned over leaf after leaf of the big English Bible which she had on her bony knees. She had grown very pious and sedate and no one on earth would have guessed her past history as she sat there, with nothing on except an old bustle skirt, which only reached to her knees, and stuck on her head a large Parisian hat of the fashion about the time of the French Revolution.

I suppose she's dead now and gone to the land of her fathers. I often think of her and the way she gazed at my white face as I dropped on one knee, with all the respect due to a Queen, and kissed that shrivelled hand. I can still see the faint, majestic smile flickering on those aged lips that had received in the bloom of maidenhood how many kisses on their soft amorous curves—and the lithe brown body's outline of breathing beauty, how often had it been folded in the arms of brief paradise? There she sat, a wrinkled-up bit of humanity, jealous and fretful of those who had not seen their day, for all the world like some old ladies of my own country, as she surveyed with approval, the decorum of the future race romping about her, tumbling head over heels on the plantation slopes, partially clothed in palm-leaf hats, and lava-lava, extending from the waist to the knees.

Hornecastle could speak the "Island lingo" like a native and many were the modest blushes she gave as the old chap went over reminiscences of the glorious past, telling her of her past beauty and

swearing that she had but slightly changed, and that for the better, giving me a vigorous side wink as he told that thundering lie with its inner meaning. Poor old Castle, he may be still alive. I never met a more knowing and yet sentimental old shell-back and he grafted into my mind more than any other man the knowledge of South Sea Island life and the inefficacy of white men of religious aspirations. I would not even be surprised to hear that he was now pious and sobered down. I never met a man like Castle for strength. I've seen him pick up a tree trunk that weighed three hundredweight and handle it as though it were a one-seater canoe. He once told me that he had only had two illnesses in his life and they, he said, were "Bronshitus and Pew-Monja." He was born in the early days of old England when they did not teach the boys and girls Latin, French, German and Euclid, long before children looked upon their parents as fools, and held the candle while their old mother fetched up a ton of coal.

There was one other eccentric old man whom I have forgotten to mention ; his name was Bodey, he'd travelled the world over and had spent ten years of peace and rest in Darlinghurst Gaol, Sydney. I never saw him sober, so that I cannot tell you anything of his real character, excepting that he was extremely devoted to his Samoan wife, who likewise struck me as very fond of him. She was a tall, fine-looking woman of about forty years

of age. Her original beauty had long since departed ; her front teeth also had gone ; her plump, full lips were much shrunken, but her eyes still remained cheerful-looking and moved quickly and intelligently as she spoke. Bodey gave her a terrible shock once. He broke his ankle and, being utterly helpless, could not get down to the beach drinking shanty, and so got quite sober. For two days running, his manner was so different that his wife gazed upon him as a stranger, and he too gazed upon her, as she nursed him and bathed his foot, with suspicion, quizzing her with astonishment, but I took mercy on him, went and got a bottle of Samoan whisky and the couple in half-an-hour were once more united and happy. Three weeks after that he died of shock.

Hornecastle and I went to his grave, to place a large cross on it, which we had made ourselves. When we got there Hornecastle cried like a child, and I gave a Samoan who was lying asleep near by a large silk handkerchief and one " mark " to dig a hole after we had gone, and place that cross over our dead friend. I remember well how Hornecastle in his drunken grief stuck the cross in and kept poking down and down, as though he was searching for his old comrade, and when I pulled him away he staggered back, fell on his knees and kissed the earth with his lips, crying out, " Bodey, old mate, can yer hear me ? "

It upset me terribly at the time ; I did not know Castle had such deep feeling in his nature. I pulled

him off and told the Samoan to make the grave neat and he bowed his brown face fourteen times reverently to show me that he understood my wishes. As soon as we had gone he bolted off with the tombstone ; what he wanted it for only heaven knows.

It was about that time that the Islanders had some great festive ball and I and Hornecastle went inland and had a fine spree. Hornecastle got fearfully drunk, and I played the violin as the Samoan men, boys and girls, dressed up in a very picturesque way, flowers in their hair, and grasses and leaves clinging to their brown bodies, went through their ancient dances, in the shade of the banyans and mangroves. It was a great meeting ; the old fighting chiefs were all there, dethroned kings and discarded queens, claimants to fallen dynasties of the Islands around. Robert Louis Stevenson was there. Hornecastle smacked him on the back to let me see that he was in with the best society. Stevenson took it all in good part and laughed heartily as the half-naked Island women danced and whirled around and threw up their legs while Hornecastle kept shouting "Hen-core ! Hen-core !" He was a low old scoundrel, but I couldn't help liking him ; he was most sincere in all his likes and dislikes and never put on any side. Stevenson liked him too, for while he was gazing interestedly on the weird moonlit forest scene of that primeval ball-room I noticed he often gazed sideways with intense amusement at Hornecastle, who kept getting enthusiastic about the various nude figures of the

Samoan women, and made critical remarks about their limbs and beauty, slapping me on the shoulder every now and again, and poking me in the ribs as he noticed some especial point about them that interested him. The presence of Robert Louis Stevenson standing close by made me feel a bit uncomfortable in my association with Hornecastle, especially as the old reprobate would appeal to me at every incident, as though he thought I was as bad as himself. It was almost dawn before the Tribes finished their grand war dances. All the little children, tired out, lay huddled in groups under the scattered palms and coco-nut trees fast asleep, their tiny dark faces revealed by the moonbeams which crept over their pretty eyelids and tiny parted sleeping lips, as the night wind blew aside the long-fingered palm-leaves just above them.

The few whites, Robert Louis Stevenson and his friends, went off home some time before the grand finale, which consisted of the banging of drums and the kicking of legs and movement of bodies in a manner something resembling the modern "cake-walk," except that it was a deal more rhythmical and fascinating to gaze upon. Hornecastle fell madly in love with a fat old dark woman of about sixty years of age; round and round the two of them went together, and the old chap, I'll swear, cocked his legs quite as high as the South Sea maid of sixty summers. In the morning he looked pretty bad and kept sticking his head in a tub of cold seawater to keep it cool, and till he got a few more

drinks down him he looked a bit ashamed of himself, and well he ought to, considering I have only told you half the truth with regard to his behaviour.

I must tell you, before I go on, about the German missionary "Von Sour-Craut." One night he was caught out with one of the high caste chieftain's daughters; what he had been really doing I don't know, but there was a terrible rumpus. One of the old Inland tribes who were staying on for some feast at Satufa and were on the warpath (for at that time there was always some trouble about over-chief jealousy) got hold of him and took him off into the forest. The whites, English and American missionaries, got wind of his predicament and off we all went and succeeded in finding him trussed up like a fowl. Hornecastle swore that they were an emigrant tribe of Solomon Islanders and that their intention was to roast him on a cannibalistic spit; he even told me afterwards that he saw the oil basting pot; anyway, true or not true, we all had a terrible fighting scramble to rescue Sour-Craut. Hornecastle knocked six of them over with a log. I got in a blow on one of them and had my knuckle dislocated as I put my hand up to protect my head as a warrior lifted his club and brought it down with a crash! We won the day though and released the trussed-up victim, and the whole tribe of outraged mothers and fathers, who had attempted to get their own back, scampered off into the moonlit forest like a pack of mammoth rats. We tried to get the truth out of Sour-Craut the missionary as to what he had done



PLANTING COCONUTS

to cause such wrath among the natives, but he insisted that divine prayer was his only object in seeking out the dusky maid, but we all had our suspicions and Sour-Craut got the sack by the authorities and left those parts. Hornecastle had a nasty wound in the back and one of his ears was partly chewed off. He had good blood though and it soon healed. The way he swore over that wound was something terrible, in fact I really think he used worse language than he did when we went to Nuka-Hiva and slept side by side in a hut that had previously been inhabited by a half-caste Chinaman. We were just going off to sleep when out they came from their hungry vigil and running in all directions started to taste the two of us.—for they were bugs as big as hornets! We did smash them up too, and I'll swear that they were more tenacious in their death struggles than the New York species that came down the walls in vast regiments and nearly ate my eyelids away, but I will tell you of all that terrible time later on.

One night soon after the first-mentioned event, a German sailor gave me a copy of A. Lindsay Gordon's poems. I read the "Sick Stockrider" and felt like leaving the Islands for a pilgrimage to the author's grave. I at once came under the influence of the unfortunate Omar Khayyam of the Australian Bush and wrote off yards of quatrains. I think if they had been published they would have made me famous as the author of the world's worst poems; anyway I liked them, and when I read them

to Hornecastle and he smacked me on the back and said I was a genius I almost put them in an envelope to send to the Poet Laureate of England. I dedicated the poems to Hornecastle, and that's the only part of it that I wish to remember.

Mr Castle introduced me to a real poet ; he wore long shaggy hair, unfortunately he was a Dane and wrote in his own language, but I knew that he was a real poet by the way he gazed at the pretty brown Samoan girls as they passed by us on the beach, their arms round each other's naked shoulders, crimson flowers in their rough hair, and their ridis adorned with leaves and blossoms that dangled to their bare knees. The poet came under the influence of Castle's loose ways and one night while half intoxicated fell on his knees and attempted to embrace a beautiful Samoan wife of about twenty-five years of age. I knew the husband intimately and quickly explained matters to him, told him that he was only a poet, otherwise there would, I am sure, have been another rumpus. The Dane and I became very friendly after that episode and, to my delight, I found that he could play the violin, and had a lot of fine duets for two fiddles. We went to the native hut villages and borrowed a disused hut, and sat there together playing for all we were worth. The native children, men and women stood by their small doors and huddled round us delighted and astonished as we scraped away in the twilight by the border of the forest. Old Hornecastle got quite jealous of my friendship with that Danish poet, but

I soon stroked him down the right way, and took him down to a grog shanty and gave him several "splashes." A touring party came across the Bay one day, four of them altogether; they were English and had come across from New South Wales. One of them was a retired judge; he had a head without much front to it, and the back stuck up like a large walnut with a few hairs gummed on it. His son spent the whole day in taking photos; he took snapshots of everything for miles, also of Hornecastle in all positions, and the old chap was delighted.

"Castle" and I persuaded that judge's son to sail across to the Isle where that old Marquesan Queen lived with the sole purpose of taking her photo. I was an innocent party to the whole business, but they took several hundreds of photographs of Castle's friends, etc., and the old judge discovered them among his son's belongings and there was a row! I never saw such wrath, such virtuous indignation as that man was capable of. I don't know what became of the son, but I have a suspicion that he is on the Bench in England to-day, a good and prosperous man, and if he ever reads these memoirs of mine he need not be frightened as I have not the slightest intention of giving him away over that photo business. How sad is life when you think of things, but the best thing to do is not to think too much. I have seen men become prematurely old through worrying over the inevitable things of civilised life. Why try and improve things or make them worse? "Socialism," "Trade Unionism"

and all the other thousand "isms" if they are for the betterment of the race will come, or, if not, fall away. Universal approval will guide the laws of mankind as well as the laws of nature, and so things fall into their places or fall from their assumed places as sure as the stars of heaven roll and fall to the universal laws of gravitation. And so I jog along doing my best for my immediate circle and do not get excited over the awful event that will never happen.

I must tell you of a gentleman I met one night who came across the Pacific from the Island of Pitcairn where the mutinous crew of the *Bounty* landed years ago. They are all dead now, but their children are still living there; in fact, the whole race are now partly descendants of the sailors of that long-ago ship. I have met in my later musical rambles many of the blue-blooded folk of different lands and I think if God makes Peers and Knights of dead men in heaven, very few of them will be able to go on with their title, but if that son of the old mutineer of the *Bounty* does not get a title when he's dead it will be a shame. He was a splendid fellow, brave, sincere in his conversation. He tolerated Horne-castle's numerous repetitions of past loyal deeds, etc., like a hero, and gave me my first lesson in astronomy. With a quick soulful ear he heard the note of pathos as I played some old folk songs to him; he gave me a long and wonderful account of the beauty of life and the sadness of death, and when he told me who he was I could have fallen over with

astonishment. I had thought he was at least the head of some English University on tour. I was of course young then, and the astonishment would be, now I am more in with the world, more on the side of finding a University man who had some really original information to impart. Some men think too much learning kills originality and makes men become automatic penny-in-the-slot machines. Ask the question of them and their memory reverts back to the fourteenth chapter of the *Odyssey* or Plato's *Ethics* to seek for the reply and so their faculties through long disuse slowly fade away and they die from the head downwards. I don't know if it's true or not, but I have heard that some great theoretical men always when just dead cool off at the head first, their feet being warm long after stiffness has set in, but this is a gloomy topic and quite out of my province, so I will ask my reader's forgiveness and change the subject at once.

IX

Descendants of Mutineers—Cannibalism—I play a Violin Overture at what I fear is a Cannibalistic Feast—A Samoan Chief's Philosophy—Musings

BEFORE I proceed I will tell you about the crew of the *Bounty* just as I heard it from the lips of one of the descendants of the old mutineers whom I have awhile back spoken of.

The *Bounty* left England considerably more than a hundred years ago, and made a voyage to the South Seas, calling at the Isle of Tahiti. No one knows exactly what the mutiny was about; anyway there certainly was a mutiny and the crew cast the Captain and one or two officers adrift, then ran the ship ashore in the Pacific and hid themselves in the Isles among the savage Tahitian men and women. The latter being beautiful to look upon, the sailors took them to wife, and with my knowledge of seafaring men of my own day I can assure you that they did not grieve much over their exile and thoroughly enjoyed themselves. The Government sent out a search for them and some of them got collared and were taken home to England and executed. The remainder, who had gone off to another Isle taking their wives with them, eluded their pursuers, lived and ended their lives on the Isle of "Pitcairn" and left behind them hundreds of

half-caste children, who turned out to be anything but what one would have expected, being an intelligent and upright race. It appears that the mutineers went in for debauchery ; fought over each other's wives, and even their comrades' daughters as the years rolled by. Eventually they all died excepting Adams, the mutineer ring-leader, who, seeing all his old comrades dead, grew pious and remorseful over his wild career, and being king of the Island race brought the whole family up to be strictly upright and honest in all their ways, and he succeeded too ; and there they are out there to-day in the South Seas, happy and industrious. By the irony of fate old Adams proved to be the best and most successful missionary that ever reared a brood in the South Seas, and all men who have been that way will agree with all I have said and tell you that even to this generation the Island children of those parts are brave sailors, and their faces resemble the long dead lineaments of those sailors of long ago, and most of the families have English names, such as Johnson, Noble, etc.

I am now going to tell you about cannibalism in the Pacific Islands just as I saw it and heard of it. Of course, a lot has been written on the subject by many travellers, but you may be interested to know my views and experiences on this gruesome but interesting matter.

I knew two Islanders who still hungered after the flesh of man ; they were not the true natives of Samoa, for the Samoans were not at all addicted to

cannibalism. One night they listened to me as I sat playing the violin under the shade of some banyan-trees, and invited me into the forest village to their den. Well, when I arrived inside their snug little homestead I noticed a grizzled old man and woman nibbling away at the remains of a thigh bone of some departed enemy whom they had roasted and eaten. As I looked across at them sitting there enjoying that awful meal they swiftly hid the bone behind them. The man was a simple-looking fellow; his shrunken gleaming eyes gazed kindly upon me, but I could not conjure up in my heart much love for him, especially when he grinned and revealed his yellowish front teeth that had chewed up the remains of who knows who? Some missing white trader, or someone of his own race, or even a missionary with M.A. after his name. They were very fond of missionaries, as I've heard that they eat well, being nicely nourished, and not being addicted to too much drink they have not the rum-flavour that traders have had who have met the awful fate of supplying the cannibalistic festive board with meat.

I felt rather nervous as I caught sight of that awful remainder of departed woe, but I took good care not to let them see that I had noticed, as they knew what would happen to them if they were found out, and consequently, I being at that moment in their power, they might have thought it advisable to put an end to my existence and make me into provisions for their secret larder! I was very young, white and tender in those days and would have eaten well.

I am quite sure these remarks of mine may make you think I treat such things as cannibalism lightly, but it is not so ; good and bad are comparative, and when I sit here and write and see life with sadder and more earnest eyes I simply think what a lucky fellow I was not to have been born in the South Seas. Had my parents been South Sea Islanders, and I born in Fiji instead of Kent, doubtless someone would have already recorded in their autobiography my own cannibalistic revels and terrible sins, for I am adventurous and wayward enough now with all the advantages of birth and education—so what would I have been if I had crept into the world and seen the first light and heard the first sounds in some Fijian moonlit forest ? And you too, reader, what would you have been ? Probably both happier than we are now—who knows ?

Well, I looked over at that grim couple and smiled pleasantly to let them see I had noticed nothing, and as I spoke to them and the woman picked her teeth with her finger and nearly choked as she swallowed the mouthful that she sought to conceal, and said, “No savee,” I heard a noise outside in the forest and they both jumped up. I looked outside and saw a group of the savages passing along through the forest. It was already twilight, yet I could see most of their swarthy faces distinctly and I at once recognised an old Tongan friend of mine whom I had long since thought had gone back to Tonga. The four of us left the den and went across the clearing and met the group as they hurried along, dragging

behind them a heavy load. What I am going to tell you is absolute truth, and I will tell you the details just as I saw them with my own eyes. That load which they dragged behind them was a body, and they were off into the forest depth bound for the grand cannibalistic feast !

As I came up to them they all looked startled and frightened and made as though to go for me, and I believe now that I look back that had not my Tongan friend appealed on my behalf I should have been immediately killed. I had my fiddle with me, and they looked upon my violin as some kind of enchanter, some spirit of the dead, and after a hurried consultation, standing there under the trees with fierce faces and frizzly heads, muttering in guttural tones, they all turned toward me, and one said, "Ova lu-lu," and made signs that I should follow them into the forest and play music to them, their intention being not to kill me but to entice me on with them so that I could not return and give them away, and so I was commandeered.

At that moment I had not the slightest suspicion that the load that bumped behind them, tightly wrapped up, as it parted the tall grasses and flowers as they hurried along, was the dead body of some fallen enemy, otherwise I am quite sure that I should have made a bolt for it, but possibly my slow comprehension saved my life, for however fast I ran I doubt if I could have out-run a South Sea savage.

How well do I remember that terrible journey through the forest, as overhead sang the trade-wind

in the palms and giant trees, and the sunset died away and the mysterious glooms around became deeper mysteries. Hot and dejected I followed those stalwart bare men, twenty behind me and twenty in front, as their naked feet hurried in single file toward the terrible "place" where that "thing" was to be cooked! And I, the hired musician, trembled as the hot breath of the tall savage just behind me blew down my neck as he dragged his burden along on that sweltering hot night. I have played the violin in many ball-rooms and fêtes since that long-ago night, but never once have I played without that terrible picture (which I am now going to tell you of) rising before my eyes. It seemed miles to me before they stopped. Great heaven, they were dressed up for the occasion! Some of them were smeared with whitish stuff, and three of them—women!—were got up like idols. One was a young and attractive-looking type of South Sea womanhood. She walked two ahead of me and I remember her well as she did not look so fierce as the others and the thought came to my mind that I could look to her for sympathy if they wanted to kill me. Women are women the world over, and down in my heart I blessed the soft curves of that female frame as she moved along in front of me, turning her head from time to time to gaze steadfastly into my eyes. Several times I thought of making a sudden dive into the forest. If I had done so I feel quite sure the reader would never have read this autobiography.

In between two great plateaux they stopped and the chief that led them gave two bird-like calls among the hills, and presently the bush parted gently and out poked frizzly heads. More of them to attend that feast! One was a terrible-looking fellow; his head looked like a huge coco-nut with fat lips on it and a tuft of quills on the top. He glared at me and spoke viciously to the others. How my heart thumped! I felt my face turn grey and my lips go dry as I gave a sickly smile to that awful man to let him see that I was perfectly agreeable to all that they were doing and to all that they might do, and in an inspiration I started to play the fiddle and laughed hysterically. I do not mind telling you that I was in a terrible funk and to this day I do not like the look of men who have coco-nut-shaped heads, so horrified and cowed was I by that chief who muttered to the others and swayed his club to and fro and several times half lifted it as though to brain me! And all this I am telling you is so terribly true that I don't know how to proceed with all that happened, whether to describe my feelings or what my eyes saw. But there, whoever you are, you can place yourself in my predicament, and if you have a good imagination feel a faint echo of my despair of that night of long ago.

Overhead hung the bright moon in the vault of night as the busy hands of that fierce tribe gathered and piled up the wood fire as in the hot embers frizzled the "Long Pig." There are some details of cooking odours which I must leave out. I cannot

describe all, it was too hellish to describe. Round and round that terrible fire they whirled like some ghastly nightmare of the dead in hell, lifting their chins skywards and chanting thanksgiving to their ancient gods, and I heard the rattle of the threaded shells that adorned the bodies of the wild women as they too sang in shrill voices. I played away as fast as I could on my violin the repeated intervals of those minor strains, keeping time to that terrible dance, the perspiration pouring down my face as I tore away at the only two strings on my instrument. There they were, a ring of swarthy faces around me, as they suddenly stopped all hushed as the night-bird in the forest said "Wail-wail-tu-tu-wail-wail," and they started on their haunches to devour their "meal." And as the forest wind blew the dying, flickering firelight over their faces I thought I would presently awake from some ghastly nightmare, so terrible was the sight and so unreal-looking were the surroundings conjured up in my own brain by the knowledge of what that big dish joint consisted of, for they themselves as they sat there swallowing away looked quite innocent and peaceful, and they even offered up a prayer to their gods in devoted thanks for that supper, just the very same as tiny white children who put their hands together and thank God for their feast of the poor murdered four-legged creatures of the field. I pretended to join in the prayer and muttered out some noises, but I could not under any pretence eat. I really think that I would have died sooner than eat of that

joint. How I got out of it I don't know, but I did, and I put down my escape to the quantity of diners at the festivity and their greediness.

As I sat there in that den of the forest I thought of my people in England, in a respectable London suburban home, calmly going about their household duties, singing and playing the piano, and the afternoon "At Home," small talk and whispering, while I sat on a little dead tree stump in the South Sea Isle with my heart thumping like a funeral march drum, as about fifty naked savage cannibals gnawed the bones of that inhuman and yet human feast! I thought of my father's offices in London, as he sat editing the adventurous books for that publishing house wherefrom sprang out to the hands of the schoolboys the *Highway Men*, *Red Indians* and *Spring Heeled Jacks*, etc.,¹ that fired the heads of the boys of my schooldays with the mad adventurous spirit to go to sea and seek adventure in far lands, and I cursed these books, for it was through them that I was sitting there, wondering every moment if those terrible men would suddenly take a fancy to me, knock my skull in and prepare me for the next meal!

But no such thing happened. As soon as they had finished they all crept silently away into the forest to their several homes to sleep off the effects of that orgy. They were men of the interior, and

¹ Work which was very distasteful to my father. He, having a refined literary taste, was a critic of poetry, and wrote several critical works, including *Shelley and his Writings*.

even the true Samoans do not agree with cannibalism, but the Island was in a fever then ; they had been prepared for war some time before and those cannibals had come over from some other group.

I took my first opportunity and leapt away into the wooded country and arrived next day at Hornecastle's hut. I kept my mouth closed, for had I told of that terrible night they would have known that I had split and I should have been doomed ; and so I followed the good old proverb that " a still tongue shows a wise head." And I was pleased that I did hold my tongue, for while I was drinking in a saloon in Apia with Hornecastle, the night following my terrible fright and dread of being eaten, a German started cursing and told us how he had hung a prize pig up in his store and, when he went in the morning, to cut it up for joints, he found it missing ; the natives had stolen it, and crept into the forest, and probably roasted it and had a glorious feast, and as I listened to his details I started to wonder if the load that my friends of the night before had dragged through the forest to the midnight feast could have possibly been his stolen pig!—and all the horror of that secret feast the outcome of my own suspicions. I said nothing, and to this day my suspicions each way are equal.

Thank goodness that under the influence of education and the work of the missionaries the terrible appetite which I have just described has

long since died out. The white man in the South Seas has done that much good. You must remember that I am writing under the still clinging atmosphere that my mind inhaled when I was a lad, of an age when we are apt to look upon those who are mediators with the Supreme as men who are, or should be, very different to other men, and consequently their natural failings were greatly magnified to my onlooking eyes. And so my remarks and musings, considered from this aspect, do not treat harshly the men who went out to the South Seas to reform their brethren, but simply show the futility, the uselessness of mortals attempting to reform, to better the spiritual conditions of those who are born of Mother Earth as they themselves are. After all we are all of us only like little children clambering and crying at the skirts of creation, some with white faces and some with black faces, and if the black-faced children, in their innocence, laugh and cry over their little idol-dolls and are pleased with them, why should the white-faced children try to steal their dolls and smash the lot up and make them unhappy by offering them an idol in exchange which they cannot see and which is too big for them to carry if they could see it. And moreover, what more do the white children know than the black ones ?

I knew a Samoan chief who was a kind of philosopher of his race, and I was much struck by his remarks and wisdom as he used to sit squatting by his hut and talk to me of the old days. He was not

a true-blooded Samoan, but came from the Marquesan group and had once been a king before the heavy tramp of civilisation came his way. He would tell me wonderful tales of his time, many of which, when I think of them now, seem almost incredible, but they were true enough and some day I intend to devote my time to writing them down for publication. They alluded a good deal to cannibalistic orgies and terrible battles for the love of the women of those times, wild dances round their monstrous idols, idols that sang and voiced forth terrible prophecies, that made the warriors of those Isles do most outrageous things to their enemies and to their children and daughters. As he sat there squatting and told me many things I would turn "all chicken flesh," as people say, and watch his grim wrinkled face and twinkling eyes reveal the smouldering passions that flamed in the dark age of his time. Under the influence of that old king's memories I wrote the following poem just as he would have written it, and approved of it too if he could only see it ; in fact it is just what he really said, word for word, but I have rhymed it in my own way.

Let him shout on, pass me the full nut-bowl,
I'm old, would I trust to his wretched creed ?
I, with my fifty gods, that soothe my soul,
Must fail them all—trust to one god—indeed !
Look you—I'm wise, a dead white man is dead
Should he offend his Heav'n while 'neath the sun—
And we ?—well, at the worst, when our soul's fled,
If fifty fail, we've still his Mighty One !

He'd steal our souls, curse him, his lying race
Claimed my blue seas and this my ancient isle !
Remember well do I that first white face
That blessed my head, with hand t'wards heaven did smile,
Pah ! I believed that grin !—had I known then
Those eyes gazed from the spirit heart of Hell
I'd slain him !—faith, 'tis true these strange white men
One virtue have when cooked—yes, they eat well !

Pass me the bowl, time 'tis to grieve, at most,
When in sick dying eyes the last stars sleep.
We've won our battles too, enjoyed the roast
Of what sweet foes ! 'tis even so we reap
Sweet vengeance ! They, those prating white men skunks,
Our wives defiled, our land made one vile hell ;
Cursed missionaries, and traders on night-drunks—
Ah ! I've a tale, when dead, their God to tell !

He's dead now and the day is not far off when the whole race will have passed away before the tramp of the Western whites, vanished for ever, for all men know that as soon as the white race creeps into the household of the dark race of the South Seas race extinction commences, and so the Fijians, Marquesans, Samoans, Tongans, indeed all the original inhabitants of the South Sea Isles, are diminishing before the civilisation and Christianising work of the whites, which means annihilation of the brown race and brings before us the inevitable thought that it would have been better for the race and its posterity for the Islanders to have eaten all the whites instead of cohabiting with them. But it is too late, they are now completely in the power of the "great white hand," as I heard an old chief express it, and soon the half-caste of Chinese, niggers, ex-

convicts and the ne'er-do-wells of the Australian cities will tramp over the graves of the dead men and women who sang by forest huts and danced by the glimmering fires in the days when the white surfs ran up the shores singing into foams and silence.

Personally I do not believe that the drastic change to other conditions has anything to do with the diminishing population of the varied races of the South Seas, and all men who have experienced life in those climes know that rum and syphilis, putrefying the milk of the South Sea babies, and the preventives to motherhood are the sole causes of race extinction, and these causes have of course been introduced by the whites and all the other semi-civilised races. I am simply stating facts as I know them, and I have not the slightest idea in my mind that railing against those evils will better things; indeed to attempt to better the conditions might lead to more disastrous complications, like the sailor who went down into the hold of the ship's magazine to find where the leak was, struck a match and blew the ship up. And so things are best left as they are; as useless to attempt to change them as to seek to revise a man's temperament. I myself have made many attempts to change my own temperament, but I think till I die I shall dream and dream and always be under the control of that unfortunate impulse that does the very thing which at that particular time I should not have done. How often do we embrace with affectionate trust our enemy and scorn the advice of our best friend! And so the world jogs along,

always busy righting the wrongs of life and more often than enough writing beautiful epitaphs on the tombstones of men who cannot read them.

Such is my experience of life, and I have been obliged to be pretty observant and have not travelled this world over without noticing the special points that influence existence. It is really wonderful how observant some men are and how unobservant other men are. I knew a man who had done nothing but roam his life away over the seven seas to the mountain peaks of the world. "What is Rio like?" I said, "and the Amazon?" "All right I guess," he answered. "What's it like in Pekin?" I ventured to ask again. "All right I guess," was the growled reply as he squirted out of his grizzly mouth an eggcupful of tobacco juice. I probed him all ways to get a glimpse of his views of the world and experience, but never got him beyond the "all right I guess." Another time I came across a young fellow who had passed through the same places like a race-horse. "What's Rio like?" I asked him. At once his face lit up and we had to hold him down as the flood of description he poured into our ears overwhelmed us. So you see it's a matter of the observant temperament that makes the tale-teller and it's ridiculous for anyone to think that a man has to camp on the top of a mountain or up a palm-tree for twenty years before he can describe the surrounding country or the height and character of the tree. Nature is very easy to scan and appreciate; it's only men and women that it takes years to understand thoroughly, and then you may be wrong.



PREPARING COPRA

X

A Cockney and his Fijian Bride—Nature's Lady—South Sea Dress Fashions—Idol Worship

AFTER the exciting experience which I related to you in the last chapter, when I think I was within an ace of being eaten by that cannibal tribe, I started off cruising with "Castle" and my friend the Danish poet. We made a happy trio and many were the subsequent adventures which we had together. Hornecastle hired a sloop and made a good bit of cash at times by trading around the Islands, and I was delighted to go off with him. It took us several days to reach the Fiji Islands. I shall never forget the times we had together and the strange people we came in contact with. The Fijians struck me as a very different type of people from the Samoans, who are much more intellectual-looking, and when Hornecastle and the poet and I went ashore we soon found plenty to interest us. There were plenty of whites there, half-castes and Indians who worked on the plantations.

I chummed in with an Australian fellow and we went up towards the mountains and saw the Fijians in their homesteads. They were neat little thatched homes; some of them shaped something like a haystack as seen in English fields. I and my friend, who

could speak a bit of their language, went inside one or two of these and watched them squatting on their haunches at dinner eating steaming stuff out of earthen bowls, using their fingers as knives and forks. I made friendly signs to a Fijian mother and her eyes quickly brightened up as I took her baby in my arms and examined its tiny wild face, its jewel-like eyes twinkling with fright. I never saw such pretty babies anywhere in the world as the mites of the South Seas. Their little plump bodies are as soft as velvet and the expression on the face like that of a baby kitten, and the mothers are as proud as Punch when you admire and kiss them, as I have often done, but you have to be careful that you kiss them all—I mean the babies—because mothers are just as jealous in the South Seas as in the Isles of the English seas. And so after I had committed myself and held up that little Fijian kid, I went from one mother to the other and did likewise to their offspring, and those dark naked mothers (for they were only dressed in a loin-cloth) all admired me and even the eyes of the men looked pleased as they offered me food, and the native youths clambered around us as we crept out of the door, and tried to steal the buttons off our clothes. They are all terrible thieves and the thieving instinct is so strong in all of the Islanders of the Pacific that they only place half the value on goods which are given them and jealously guard and overestimate all that they steal.

I shall always remember vividly that ramble in

the mountains of Fiji, because we came across a white man who had married a native woman. I suppose the marriage was something after the wild bird marriage act, anyway there he was sitting by his dusky beauty on the slopes that rolled seaward, quite as proud as any English father of his two tiny half-caste brats. His wife, dressed only in an old red flannel skirt, smoked a cigarette by the hut door, and every now and again gave the little whitish beggars as they romped and quarrelled with each other a terrible spank. I never saw children turn head over heels as those two nippers did ; over and over they went down the slope like two big brown balls, uncurled themselves and came racing up to us again and then off once more as I stood sweltering under the tropic sun fanning myself with a large palm leaf speaking to their proud father. He was a Cockney from Mile End ! You can imagine my astonishment when he asked all sorts of questions about my own birthplace and sighed as he said, "The dear old smoke," meaning London Town. From the little that he let out I could see that he had previously been to sea as a coal trimmer on a tramp steamer. He was a man of about thirty-eight to forty years of age, but looked older through growing a scrubby beard, possibly to disguise himself from the English police ! He seemed happy enough sitting there under his big umbrella hat, with white pants to his waist, and beyond those two articles of dress quite bare and cool.

His wife could speak English very well indeed and

I must say I admired her husband's taste, for though she was the descendant of South Sea savages, cannibals, she would have put nearly all the Mile End women of his native land into the shade, and the West End ones too ! She had a fine head for a woman, a voluptuous soft curved body, earnest dark eyes, darkish high-bunched hair, and a freedom of manner and modest exposure of the upper part of her body and lower limbs which was very fascinating. She would have created an enormous sensation could she have been transported just as she was to Piccadilly or the Strand. I am quite sure that the Mile End Cockney would have been envied and would have had to keep his weather-eye open too, as the Christians of London Town came into contact with the innocence of the heathen South Seas.

“ You come England ? ” she said, as I spoke to her husband. “ Yes,” I said, “ same country,” and she smiled with approval that such as I should have had the honour of hailing from the same country as her children's father, and going into the hut brought my chum and me both a drink. I don't know what it was, but English beer tastes like poison compared to it. I have been to many afternoon teas since that time, but never have I had a sweeter hostess or seen softer eyes, and all those things that make Nature's lady. I have heard a lot about “ Nature's gentleman,” but I tell you this, Nature's lady is nicer to meet and as rare, and I've found her just as she was turned out of the Garden

of Eden and just as beautiful and innocent, as she sat on that little stump, bare as at her birth, excepting for her lava-lava, with her pretty one-month-old baby's tiny mouth toiling away at her breast for all it was worth. As the sunset faded out seaward the Cockney sailor, his "savage" wife, my chum and I sang all together, to the sailor's accordion, "The Old Rustic Bridge by the Mill," also "White Wings they never Grow Weary," and I can never hear those songs now but I see that scene again, the half-dressed sailor, my freckled lanky Australian chum, the Fijian beauty, singing at the top of her voice on the Pacific slope by the Island hut.

We only stayed at that Island two days and then sailed off to Lakemba and other Isles of the same group. We carried Hornecastle on board and dropped him in his bunk when we left Suva. I do not know what he had been drinking, but it made him pretty bad. We set the jibs and big mutton sail and the trade-wind took us along at a splendid pace. I was the second in command, and though she was a rotten old tub I was the proudest officer on the high seas! Hornecastle kept me awake that night. The poet and I got a bit worried; we thought he'd got a touch of the d.t.'s, and from what I could gather by his delirious mutterings he'd actually got married during that short stay and was frightened out of his life of being pursued by his irate bride!

Next day he was on his legs again and looked better than ever. I tried to pump him and find out

what he had done to get so drunk and look so worried, but he would not budge an inch, and to all my innocent queries only told me to mind my own business and look after the wind !

I cannot for the life of me tell you the correct name of the Isle we next called at ; they all had native names and I never could understand half of them. I think it was called Mulooka ; anyway it was a fine place and well wooded. I shall never forget the beautiful sight of the forest-clad country and the intense loneliness of the wooded depths away from the tracks. I stood in the wood alone and gazed up at the branches overhead. They were covered with big breathing blossoms that had beaks on them ; they were big fat parrot-birds chuckling away to themselves as the trade-wind swept across, blew the top branches aside and revealed the deep blue skies. I turned round and looked west ; there through the trees far away stretched the dark blue crinkling Pacific, dotted here and there with native canoes, paddled along swiftly from shore to shore. On the beach far below were groups of dark men and half-castes by our little sloop.

I must tell you of the fashions of those times. Some of the chiefs wore a dirty white collar only, and a waistbelt wherein was stuck an old-fashioned revolver and rusty knife. Another stood on the shore as proud as possible attired in a waistcoat. Men and women seemed to vie with one another at making themselves look ridiculous and outrageous too. Of course, most people were amused

by them. I shall never forget how the Dane laughed; he was a real good fellow that poet. I laughed too, but not like him; I was getting a bit used to sights of that kind. As for Horncastle he simply looked on and yawned. Finding that he was staying the night and did not intend leaving till late the next day, I made up my mind to have a look round and go into the interior, so off I went alone. I am constituted that way and am never so happy as when I am completely alone with no one to ply me with questions or tell me their experiences while I am keenly interested in my own at that precise moment.

About a mile from the shore I came across a village of native homesteads built on a beautiful spot shaped out and shaded by the hand of instinct. There they stood dotting the landscape by the cooling shade of palms, yams, orange and other trees of luxuriant tropic foliage. In the cleared spaces by those huts squatted the tribes of powerful mothers and men, all of them dressed in no clothes excepting their hair, which sprouted upwards on the top of their heads and shone in the sunlight. As I emerged from the forest trees into full view the tiny children stopped from their gambolling, stared at me for a moment and then all raced off towards the village homesteads as though for dear life. They ran so fast that I could only see their legs twinkling in the sun-gleam. Then uprose the wild mothers and stalwart forest men, and between their bare legs,

with little wistful demon-like faces, those frightened children peeped at me as I walked across the scrub and waved my hand, smiling as I approached them.

I found them a very hospitable people ; they gave me food and drink and I well repaid those wild mothers for their kind thoughtfulness as I stroked the small frizzing heads of their babes and raced the little naked beggars, boys and girls, across the track and gave the winners buttons for prizes. "Moora, moora," they shouted as I gave the last button away, and then I held on to myself tightly as they scrambled around me and tried to steal the buttons off my clothes ! "No, no," I shouted to one persevering little imp, and his mother, seeing my annoyance, picked up a large plank and struck him over the head with a terrible crash ! By Jove, I was astonished when she did that, but the poor little devil simply looked a bit crestfallen, looked up to me for sympathy, instead of his mother, and I rubbed the top of his head and made him happy. I found out afterwards that the top of their heads is the safest place to hit, the South Sea Island skull being very thick indeed.

I don't know how those natives lived or what employment they followed. I suppose some of them worked at copra gathering or some other work which was useful to the white traders ; anyway they all looked fat and well and their native villages like little bits of paradise compared with European cities.

Away further in the interior were living (so I heard) tribes that still encouraged the cannibalistic tendency. I suppose they were still under the influence of the older men and women who had memories in their heads of the olden days when they dined off their enemies and discovered the good points of old rivals at the festive board. I never went off into the interior to see if it was so ; my past experience was quite sufficient for me and I did not intend to take any more risks.

Before I leave that native village I must tell you of their idol worship. Before sunset I went back to the beach, and loitering about got in with some sailors, and together that night we went over the hills and down into the village and strolled among the natives, and going behind one of the larger huts there stood before us monstrous effigies with hideous faces and eyes bulging out like unburst soap-bubbles, and before them on little mats knelt the elder native men bowing and chanting prayers at the top of their voices, throwing their long arms up over their heads all the time. They were earnest enough in those fetish rites, and as we stood there, white-faced men of the Western world, watching, they took not the slightest notice of us, so deeply were they engrossed in their pleadings to those dirty wooden deaf idols. Of course I could not understand a word they were saying, but the note of the chant had grief in it and sounded to me like "Winga-wonga, wonga-winga," repeated over and over again to a minor cadence

that fell and rose as their bodies and arms moved up and down.

My comrades and I were somehow impressed by that strange sight of religious old-world grief which sounded the same note and showed the same earnestness as the creed expression of the modern civilised world. The missionaries were, and are, of course, dead against the idol worship, and so as time goes on and the methods of Christianity get hold of the people the idols rot away or are touched up and hidden in the secret depths of the forest, safe from the destroying hands of those who have gone over to the new creed. Often the wanderer among the primeval woods will come across the relics of those gods standing in some secluded gully under the shade of banyan-trees and rotting tropic trunks, covered with wild vines, vividly coloured with gorgeous flowers, still upright, with perhaps one eye missing and the face thus obliterated by decaying rot made more hideous than ever. Yet some indefinable awe still clings to them as they stand there deserted by the poor heathen children who once appealed to them with their whole hearts, sorrowing over "the giant agony of the world," now long dead in their forest graves.

I have told you all this because I once saw it, just as I have attempted to describe it to you, and as I stood gazing, quite alone, I looked up over the rotting, eyeless head and saw a branch with about twenty human skulls hanging in a row. The tropic rains had washed them quite white and

as they swayed and clinked one against the other as the wind swept mournfully through the trees I became nervous and made off from the spot as quickly as I could. I am very fond of music, but the funereal notes of those tinkling skulls did not appeal to me and make me brave.

XI

Back in Samoa—My Friend the Missionary—Musings

NEXT day we sailed away, and being lucky with a fair wind blowing steadily behind us we soon arrived back safely at the Samoan Islands. It was a long trip and I was jolly glad to see my berth ashore again as I did not get much sleep at sea—room being scarce I had slept on deck the whole time, and I had to sleep in the sloop scupper as she lay over with so great a list. Everything was just about the same, and very quiet. The *Lubeck* had been in and left again for Sydney. Hornecastle had a heavy drinking bout. There were several American sailors hanging round who had been left stranded by the wrecks of the man-o'-war ships that were blown ashore. I once more felt a longing to get away to the civilised world. Our comrade the poet got a job on a schooner and went away, and I was sorry to see him go. I still had my violin and started practising again in the evenings and often went into my old friend the shell-seller's big den on the beach and yarned to him in "pigeon-English," and it was there that I met Mrs Stevenson. I was playing the violin and she took a great interest in me. She was a real Bohemian and invited me to her home at once, but I was young and nervous, and at that time I



NATIVE COAST VILLAGE NEAR APIA, SAMOA

was getting pretty shabby too—my blue serge suit had almost turned yellow through fading under the tropic sun—so I pretended to have an important job on that very night and got out of that invitation. I played several melodies at her request and I well remember playing “Alice, where art thou?” to her, to which she sang the refrain quietly as I played. She was attractive-looking and looked as though she had spent her life exploring the tropics. At first I thought she was some passenger just arrived on one of the boats till she introduced herself and told me her name.

There were a good many whites about at that time and also a lot of buildings going up for them, and for a time I had a job looking after the natives who did all the hard graft, but had to be kept watch over by the whites. I do not think a brown man has ever been known to work industriously in the South Seas when no one was looking, unless, of course, he was doing something completely on his own account. I got to know many of the Americans, English and Germans who were there at that time, some staying only a day or two before going off to the Marquesan group, Fijis, etc. Some I think were missionaries, others were travellers sight-seeing. One of the missionaries I got to know well and he struck me as a very decent fellow, had a fine sense of humour, was devoid of hypocrisy, and though earnest enough in his mission he could see quite vividly the light and dark shades of the whole of the Christianising schemes. We often smoked and yarned together, and though

I was much younger than he, he seemed to prefer my companionship to the society of the men of his own profession. I taught him to play tunes on the violin by ear, and a very good ear he had too, as well as a refined taste for melodies with something in them, and if he ever reads my autobiography he is sure to remember me.

A "Man-o'-War" ship called in at Samoa about that time. When the crew got ashore that night it sounded like civilised Europe and home again. I must say that the Samoan ladies are nearly as bad over sailormen as the English middle-class girls are, and the jolly Jack Tars had a fine time of it roaming about the beach, on terra-firma again after so long a sea voyage. They bolted off in all directions, visiting the native huts along the shore, most of them in the hands of a cute-looking native guide who knew all the ropes and also all those Samoan ladies who were mostly addicted to easy virtue. These men guides work on commission, and some of them claim half of the proceeds as the foreign ships arrive, and so they do very well, and you can well imagine that Berlin, London, Paris and New York to-day are well represented in the South Seas as far as the different stock of the world's sailormen is concerned. There they are out there to-day (the half-castes I mean), while the fathers, pensioned-off sailors in the civilised cities of the world, are bringing up legitimate families, respectable young men and women who do not dream of their half sisters and brothers toiling on the plantations lashed by the overseers' whip

in the far-away Pacific, and many a cosy vicarage retreat of Puritan England, standing like the very emblem of sedateness and purity by the village roadside, is the ancestral hall of some savage South Sea man or woman with eyes that gaze longingly seaward from their native Isle, knowing not why. And so the world jogs along and I suppose all for the best.

It was about this time that I am speaking of that Mataafa and Laupepa were enjoying their resumed power over the Island. Laupepa had been exiled by the German Government, and had at last been allowed to return. There had been a good deal of fighting going on among the German and American sailors, and Samoans, but all seemed pretty quiet in my time. A terrible hurricane had struck the Islands, lifted the warships up on tremendous waves and tossed them ashore as though they were canoes. Many lives were lost, and the storm did more damage in a couple of hours than all the warships and threatening natives.

XII

Tramping the South Sea Bush—Native Homes, Scandal and Jealousy—Samoan Children—Samoan Girls attired in European Cast-off Clothes—Another South Sea Chief

I THINK that you might like to hear something of the suburban life in the South Sea Islands, of the native villages inland, and so I will now tell you of my strolls and visits to Marano's hut and his wife "Taloffora." One morning quite alone I set out to go inland to the village of Safata. It was a lovely morning; I walked along under the tamanu-trees that skirted the borders of the forest where thousands of screaming parakeets passed over by the seashore, disturbing the tropical silence as they wheeled away.

Before starting on the main track I made my way down to the beach to have a swim in the cool waters and refresh myself. I was then several miles from Upolu, and as I crept from the forest and gazed shoreward, where by the palms shone a lagoon, I suddenly surprised a covey of native girls who were all having their morning bath. Some were still in the water and others on the shore; all of them, of course, perfectly nude. I shall never forget how some of them ran up the shore to get their "ridis" while others modestly bent themselves in the shallow waters, their heads and chins just poking out,

watching their opportunity to bolt up the shore. This they did one after the other, their brown legs splashing out as they raced to the palm-trees, each plucking a big leaf to hold in front of her for modesty's sake. There they stood in a huddled group just as God's first thought had moulded them, the jungle grass brushing to their knees, in their hair the lovely wild red flowers plucked from the plants around them, their rows of pearly teeth gleaming as they smiled.

I tramped enviously onward. I was very happy that day. Somehow the scent of the sea-winds stirring the forest flowers intoxicated my brain as I trudged along and I felt as though I and those forest trees had been friends for ages. There is nothing under the heavens like a South Sea forest to make the atmosphere of true poetry, to lift you out of and above your fleshy self, and as I tramped along I sang to myself through sheer delirium of happiness.

Before the sun had climbed over the western hills I arrived at "Safata" and old Marmona's wife came from her hut door with her big mouth open so wide with welcome and astonishment that I saw the brown roof and her three back teeth. "Marmona!" she shouted with delight as she called for her husband, "White man's," "Siva," and across the track from behind the scattered shed-like huts of the village that stood beneath the palms and South Sea bamboo-trees came running Marmona, my old friend, whom I had got acquainted with in Apia. He was delighted to see that I had my fiddle

with me and though he was getting old he clapped his hands and started chanting and did a double shuffle round me as the native girls came running across the clearings to see the white man. Round me they stood gazing into my face in regiments, their thick dark hair smothered in grass ; some wore hibiscus flowers stuck behind their pretty brown ears, others a palm leaf twisted hat-shape to fit their curly heads, others were perfectly naked excepting for a tiny strip of tappa-cloth tied round the thighs into a bow at the back and in front a large blushing hibiscus blossom.

It was a sweltering hot afternoon and by their huts sat the Samoan parents watching their " Faine-toa " (little children) play. Some of them were very old, dark, hairless-headed grandfathers and grandmothers, and they all sat cross-legged, each on a little mat. Marmona led me up to a group of them and introduced me with pride, very much the same as an English draper would introduce an earl who suddenly claimed his friendship, to his tradesmen acquaintances, for I was a white man, and moreover my violin-playing made me something of a god in his eyes. I fully appreciated his great impression of me, saluted the village folk in lordly style and smacked Marmona familiarly on the back afterwards, and he nearly fainted with sheer pride and delight as the awestruck village *élite* followed us across the cleared patch towards his hut, where his wife Taloffora was busily laying the cloth on the ground for dinner. Her back stuck high up

as she stooped and stirred the hot baked fish food and plantains, all got ready especially for me, and I sat there cross-legged on the special visiting mat and thoroughly enjoyed that meal. As I was sitting munching away, thinking how peaceful everything was in that native village, I suddenly heard a loud jabbering in a hut close by. It was a jealous neighbour of Mr and Mrs Marmona's; they had long since been at loggerheads with my friend and his family, and now to see me there dining with them had riled them till their jealousy knew no bounds, and to make things worse old Madam Taloffora kept talking loudly to me in her own language as she walked round me filling my platter up with more hot fish. I could not understand all that she was saying, but I guessed she was having "one off" her jealous neighbour. Crash! came a coco-nut from the enemy's hut and caught my hostess a terrible whack on that back part which the South Sea Islanders often reveal when they stoop. With a yell she placed her skinny fingers on the insulted part, and then the outraged husband came rushing under the palms towards her and gazed up into her face. She jabbered hysterically and the old fellow's brown-skinned face shrunk into a map of scheming wrinkles that denoted intense concentration on the way for the best and speediest revenge! For the brown man is much the same as the white man—he believes all his wife tells him, never dreaming that she is possibly the cause of the whole trouble. Often

the tribes of those wild lands meet in bloodthirsty warfare, kings are dethroned, queens murdered and unmentionable cruelties occur through no greater cause than that a woman was spitefully jealous of another woman's tappa waist sash !

I knew old Marmona's wife well, and in truth I could have sworn that she had scandalised the irate owner of the hand that had shied the coco-nut ; anyway the deed was done, and I was at my wit's end to know what to do to avert disaster. As quickly as possible I appealed to the old chap and by many signs and deftly used Samoan words I let him see that the best way to have revenge was not to imitate the injury, but to let me smile on and treat him and his wife with lordly respect. He was a clever old fellow and quickly fathomed the depths of my meaning, and I was so delighted to see how things were going that when he fetched the hut oil pot out in his hand, which the South Sea Islanders always keep ready for bruises, I myself held it as that wretched old scandalous wife stooped and he applied the lotion with his tender hand, and across the track, under the palms through a small hut door, gleamed the envious jealous eyes of the woman who had thrown the coco-nut. Had I not appeased the murderous wrath of my host and hostess they would have attacked that hut and the friends of each would have taken sides and a pitched battle commenced, which would in all probability have ended in the taking of my life. Evidently the jealous neighbour thought she had been sufficiently re-

venge, for with the cessation of Mrs Marmona's groans the feud ceased.

Samoans are not given to vendetta vindictiveness, and mortal enemies by day are often great friends by night ; and so it was in this case, for that night, as I played the fiddle, the enemy crept from her camp, sneaked through the circles of native girls and boys who sat all around delighted as they watched me, and fell into the arms of my hostess, each wailing loudly as I played away. Two grim-looking aged chiefs of many past battles chanted some old idol song as their friends sat round with frizzly heads and merry eyes listening to the awful noise. They sang in any key but the one I was trying to accompany them in, but it did not matter—they were all happy enough and so were the audience as they listened and smoked at their ease, tired after working on the yam plantations or on the buildings that were being erected for German Government officials far away by the beach.

In the huts hard by I heard the poor brown kiddies being spanked as they were put to bed screaming with disappointment that they must sleep while the chiefs sang and the funny white man scraped the spirit wood with the magic long thin finger, for that was the way those natives described my violin and bow.

I shall never forget the strangeness of those times in those primeval forests and native villages. As the moon sailed overhead that night after the concert had ceased I carefully hid my violin in my

hostess's hut and took a stroll around under the shadow of the palms. Among the yellow bamboos I saw the native girls in the arms of the Samoan youths, their eyes shining in the moonlight, while the innocent old mothers and fathers squatting cross-legged by their huts smoked peacefully away, thinking those very lovers were fast asleep in the next hut bedroom.

As I strolled by with Marmona by my side they each saluted us with the exclamation of "Talafa!" and "Good white mans." In the branched moonlit forest by the narrow pathways that lead from house to house, I saw dark figures pass; they were the natives passing and repassing along the silent forest tracks as they hurried each to his home in the woods or other distant villages. Many of them had stayed late in the village where I was staying, and suddenly remembering the domestic establishment, their lonely hut in the forest afar and the waiting wife, they one by one went off running at full speed, and often in those lonely South Sea hills you could hear yells and excited jabberings as the wretched wife screamed and the semi-savage husband endeavoured to explain the why and wherefore of his lateness. Indeed the traveller in the South Seas invariably is astonished by the sameness of the native and the European character. As men say, "civilisation is only skin deep," and very often so is the difference between the white and brown man. I particularly noticed the manners of those who had better clothes on than their neighbours. They



LOW-CASTE NATIVE GIRL

would walk along with a trader's cast-off long-tailed shirt flapping behind them and gaze with a scorn-like glance upon their brown brothers who wore only a native "ridi," and the native girls nearly burst with pride and vanity as they creep from their hut attired in a red sash only, a banana-leaf hat and white flower behind their ear, and others with a yellow pair of high-heeled shoes on and a white woman's cast-off night-shirt. The traders call in at the villages and bring all kinds of cast-off European clothing, which they exchange with the natives for copra, yams and many other things, and so you often are surprised by suddenly meeting a native creeping from the forest wearing some lady's under-garments, or a pretty Samoan girl attired in a sailor's cast-off pants, cut off close to the thighs and buttoning under her pretty curved chin!

The women struck me as being very industrious. They sit for hours and hours singing and making cloth stuff out of leaves and bark which they keep hammering and weaving. By their side lies the stupendous bamboo stick which every now and again they swiftly lift up and strike their children over the heads with—as they keep pestering them with questions and mischief the whole time that they are working, the bamboo rod gives forth a hollow sound on the tiny native skull, and seems to have no effect beyond checking the infantile activity for a few minutes, after which the mothers, without ceasing the song which is always flowing from their lips, lift the bamboo and strike once

again. Out of the forest into the village often come the quick-footed youths and maidens with small baskets full of jumping fish which they have been catching down on the shore side in the lagoons and in the sea, and as they go along the tiny baby urchins run from under their mothers' legs, steal the fish through cracks in the basket and eat them "all alive O."

Round some of the hut dens sit the old stagers of other days, stalwart old men, brown as mahogany, their naked limbs striped with tattoo marks and scarred with spear wounds. Squatting under the shade of the palms they tell the younger men of ancient battles and of the old idols and the wonderful things those idols foretold and how it all came to pass. Those old warriors still believed in the old heathen gods, and when they were dubious about anything crept away into the forest depths and consulted some monstrous armless wooden image, rotting away in secrecy, staring with a big boss eye as it had stared for years through the shadows of the forest, till the superstitious chief crept behind the ancient tree trunks up to it and fell on his knees, lifted his hands and chanted the prayers of his heart to its wooden outstretched ears.

There was one aged chief in that village who looked as though he were a thousand years old; he had arched eye sockets and so deep were his eyes set that you seldom saw them, excepting now and again when a tiny gleam of the sunlight struck across his face through the palms as he spoke and

lifted his head and finger skyward, telling of cannibalistic feasts of long ago. One of his ears was missing; he had once been hideous, but age had softened the wicked features and expressions down, and his wrinkled brown parchment-like face expressed only a death-like awfulness, and made you feel as though you saw life, distorted and wretched, gazing through a human skull which death had long since claimed but which would not die. That wretched old chief told me that he could remember quite well the first white man who had visited his Island, and as he gazed upon me I saw a gleam sparkle out from his hidden eyes and I instinctively wondered what might have happened to that white brother of mine who had fallen into the clutches of that fearful cannibal when he was lusty, strong, glowing with hunger and lust of blood. I do not think he was a Samoan. Many of the older inhabitants of those days were chiefs from other Isles who had fallen through some great tribal battle or had committed some crime and so sought the refuge of another Island where they could dwell in safety, away from the hot vengeance of their own people.

I stayed for two nights with Marmona and his wife; they made me up a soft bed in one of their spare huts, but I did not sleep very well for my brain had an annoying knack of starting to think whenever I was left alone. As it happened it was a good thing that I was sleepless on those two nights. As I lay the second night turning over and over on my matting bed, I got so sick of it that I arose and

lit a cigarette, and without standing up I pulled myself towards the hole that served as a door, and pushing the sacking back I gazed out on to the moonlit village. The winds were all asleep and the shadows of the tropic trees and palms thrown by the moonlight on the wattle huts and roofs of the sleeping village lay perfectly still, and it all seemed as though it were some tremendous painted picture of a tropic South Sea village done in glimmering silver oils. As I gazed I felt that I was the only living creature in that ghost-like sleeping village, and then to my surprise a shadow moved across the moonlit patch, almost just opposite my hut door. Turning my head quickly I saw the frizzly head of a Samoan poke up out of the jungle ferns to the right of me. In a moment I dodged back and watched with one of my eyes fixed to a crack in my bedroom wall; my heart began to beat rapidly, for on all-fours he slowly moved along, stirring the grass aside silently with snake-like stealth as he came straight towards my hut! Every now and again he stopped and looked around to see if all was silent and unperceived. I began to feel in a terrible state of mind, and looking round I swiftly caught hold of an old club to protect myself with, for I saw that it was my sleeping place that his eye was on! He looked a great strong fellow and for a moment I wondered if I should wait and see what it all meant or go to the door and let him see that I had seen him, but extreme funk sent curiosity to the devil and I put my head out of the hut door and shouted Hallo! For

a part of a second his eyes stared astonished, and then like a startled kangaroo he arose on his feet with one hop and ran off with the swiftness of a race-horse.

Marmona and I talked it over next day and we both agreed that my midnight visitor was an envious thief, who was after my violin and thought to steal it from my hut whilst I slept. As I have told you before, the whole of the Pacific Islanders are born thieves, and I noticed that as Marmona told me his suspicions and waxed indignant over that midnight thief his own dark eyes gave one avaricious gleam as he caught sight of my violin, which he would have stolen in five seconds if he had thought I should never suspect him. For the brown men are no better than the whites, and will, in due course, all be virtuous and honest, valuing their neighbour's opinion more than the article which their hearts long to steal. When I look back and think of the native villages and the peace, with no police patrolling the village road with truncheons and bull's-eye lanterns to quell the courage of the evil-doer, I really believe the South Sea Island heart is not half so evil as it has been painted, and though I have travelled the South Sea villages, mixed with the native men and women, drank and laughed with them, separated them in their childish squabbles, I have never seen their women creeping about with smashed noses or swollen lips and blackened eyes, as I have seen the women of the white men on the cold streets of London Town.

The morning after my night fright I intimated to Marmona that I must leave the village, and he arranged to go with me with the idea of showing me the way through the forest to the village of Maffo, as far as I can remember that was the name, but so many of the village names were similar and extraordinary that I cannot be certain of my exactness in pronouncing them now. It was situated near to the sea. Mrs Marmona almost embraced me as I bade her farewell, and I held up her hand, bowed and gently kissed it in courtly fashion. I then did likewise to her late enemy who stood beside her; for I knew that had I not done so trouble would crop up as soon as Marmona and I were out of sight. Old Marmona's daughter, whom I have not mentioned before, but who nevertheless was a great deal by my side during that visit, came forward and gave me a beautiful native-made comb from her hair, and by the way she gave it I should think that it was the greatest compliment that a native girl can pay a youth. I kissed her hand twice and with sorrow in my heart waved my hands as I passed away into the forest. Poor old Marmona crept along in front carrying my portmanteau, which was a large silk handkerchief that held my violin and bow, a small tooth-comb, brush, and a clean shirt.

CHAPTER XIII

I tramp through the South Sea Forest alone—Play my Violin to the Natives—The Trader's Vision—The Rivals

MARMONA was a faithful friend, and led me through the forest, down the mountainous steep with the certain instinct of a blood-hound. Once on the track we called at a tiny South Sea home wherein lived some friends of Marmona's and to please him I took the violin out and played to them all. There were two daughters and several sons, and as they stood listening they jabbered and eyed me with wonder, for I made the violin wail and scream hideously as I found that, notwithstanding their love of natural song, the shrill notes pleased them the best. They gave us a good feed of baked plantains and other mixed food, and we could easily have lodged there for a week had I wished to do so. I cannot describe to you the beauty of the landscape that we tramped across. The bright winged birds whirred overhead, and often perched on the tropic trees around us and preened their blossom-like feathers, making strange noises, as though their beaks touched tinkling bells.

At sunset through the trees we saw the Pacific heaving far away and the white rising breakers for ever charging the shoreward reefs. It was a lovely spot, and nestled below in the hollow, between the

shore and the forest, was a small native village and the homes of a few traders. A little distance from the shore, by the promontory, a schooner lay anchored, and hovering around it the natives paddled in their out-rigged canoes. Arriving in the village, Marmona introduced me to some friends of his and I was glad of a rest; I had tramped a long way and my feet were a bit blistered, for my boots were getting rather thin. That night Marmona bade me farewell, and I gave him several shillings and he was very delighted indeed. Though I have read that the natives are very proud, and scorn to take money in return for a kindness, I never had the pleasure of running across those refined temperaments; indeed they all seemed to be true brothers to the white man in that respect, and the only little disagreements I ever had with my brown friends were in my "hard-up times," but I generally got into their good graces when the wherewithal was once more in my possession.

I stayed in that shore village for three days and four nights. There were several white traders living there, and I also got into conversation with the crew of the schooner that lay outside. It was an isolated little village and I got to know almost every one of the inhabitants during my short stay there, and I especially remember that little village because of the old white trader I met there. He lived alone in a small den hut by the sea; he had earnest thoughtful eyes, and as I sat and talked to him in the shadow of his one room I could see by his

face that he had been a very handsome man in his time. There was something in his voice that was musical and emotional, and as I played to him on the violin he made remarks about the operatic selections that told me he had seen better days and in a sense was originally a refined and educated man. Whether he was mad or not I cannot say, but when the village was all asleep that night he gazed in a frightened way all about him and told me to play certain old tunes, and as the moonlight crept over the sleeping village and perfect stillness lay over everything, excepting for the noise of the breakers beating down on the shore reefs at intervals, he would put his finger up to his grey-bearded mouth and say "Play softly, mate, they are coming!" Then with staring eyes he would gaze towards the forest and down shorewards, begging me not to stop playing as he stood by his hut door with eager eyes watching something going on that I could not see. After it was all over, and the terrible look had gone from his face, to my relief he bent his head on to his knee and cried like a child. So intense was his sorrow as I stood there by him that I almost felt the tears rise in my own eyes. I could not make it all out, for though his manner seemed insane yet there was something so earnest and manly in his eyes and in his actions that I felt safe with him by that lonely hut as the village slept. Then he told me the history of his life; and till I die I will remember that old white trader of the South Seas, and from the poem that I have written, inspired by that

strange sight and the tale he told me, you, reader, may gather all that I heard, which he swore before his Maker was absolute truth.

In my wattle hut by Maffalo I lie nor can I sleep,
Deep waters beat against my heart, thro' my head the night winds sweep,
For the brown one sleeps by the forest track with the banyans overhead,
And the white girl sleeps by the channel cliffs where the white men bury their dead.
And the tin roofs shine, as the traders rest by the beach and still canoes,
Where the shore-line huts in silence stand by the waveless straight bamboos,
And when the moonlight whitely falls slantwise across the hill,
And the palms and shore lagoons for miles, with the sleeping winds, are still,
The brown one from the forest runs, the white girl from the sea—
With shining eyes by my hut door in silence gaze on me.
And I cannot sleep as the dead eyes meet, fierce eyes of ebon-flame !
The grey eyes gleam thro' shadowy hair, as of old she moans my name.
In moonlight struggling silently they glimmer in the gloom,
As wails the native dead child far in the forest deep of doom ;
And the wistful unborn children rise down by the shoreward palms,
Peep from the sea with anxious eyes, and toss their small white arms !
But deep in my heart the dead one screams—from its grave across the steep,
And I know it will with frightened eyes soon out of the forest creep !
As I watch the figures, ebon and gold, oft brighten by moonlight,
Till the white one wins and the brown one runs back to the forest night ;

And, in vain, I leap to shadowy arms, as she crying flees from me,
Down shoreward runs, in a flash of flame dives back to the moon-
lit sea.

So, I drink and drink as the nights go by and the schooners day
by day

Taking my heart with the white sails home where the sunsets
fade away.

Till the sea-winds cease and the trees all sleep, and the hushed
waves are all still,

And the moonlight slantwise falls across the forest track and
hill

As I listening wait for the rustling sound with my dreaming eyes—
unshut !

Till out in the night by the pale moonlight their shadows seek my
hut—

Out of the forest depth one runs, and the white girl up the
shore

Till the dead child screams and the unborn watch the shadows by
my door.

I stayed in that village all the next day, and at sunset I bade Marmona's friends good-bye. Also I bade that sad trader farewell, and he held my hand for a long time before he said good-bye.

It seemed like some enchanted village of fairy-land as I looked back over the slopes and saw the sun like a large ball of blood sink into the sea and the moon rise over the mountainous country inland, peeping through the heavens of shadow and stars that brightened out in the east. I passed away from the place with a strange feeling in my heart for that lonely man and all that would happen when the sea-shore village lay once more asleep in the moonlight. I have heard many strange tales of spirits and "ju-jus" from men in my travels, but

never one so strangely sad and impressive as his, and I have often wondered if all that that old man told me was the outcome of a delirious brain or really some haunting truth that can be seen by the eyes of those hearts that sorrow.



NATIVE BAMBOO BRIDGE

XIV

South Sea Domestic Life—I attend another South Sea Wedding—
Meet Men flying from Justice—Bound for Tahiti

AT that time I was about eight miles from Apia, and though I was alone, and a bit depressed, I soon regained my spirits and tramped along whistling. To my right moved the deep blue Pacific waters, as the cooling wind gently stirred them and crept up the shore and fanned my perspiring face. No artist could paint in words or colour the beauty of the romantic scenery that lay all around me. The ocean's tremendous voice murmured wavy songs as it kissed the shore reef in snatches of whitened wave; the slope trees expressed the silent green utterance of mother earth, beautiful with sunset-coloured flowers in the piled carpet of jungle grass and blossoms of crimson and white wherein settled gorgeous butterflies. A native girl, standing in her brown velvety skin, waist deep in the grass, laughed and revealed her pearly teeth as I tramped by, expressing in her sparkling eyes the joy of the conscious universe. I waved my hand and smiled as her lynx-eyed bush mother watched her from a hut door just under three large coco-trees a little higher up where were several more huts. I saw a white man by one of them, leaning against a tamnu-tree smoking, so I altered my course and went up the

rocky slope and introduced myself. He turned out to be a deck-hand on one of the trading schooners that traded from Isle to Isle, and I saw by his face and complexion that he was a half-caste, his wife was a full-blooded Samoan. His name was Adams, he seemed mighty proud of it, as he told me that he was a descendant of one of the old *Bounty* mutineers and a high chief who had previously reigned in the Solomon Group.

“Come you, Papeteo,” he shouted, and up came his daughter. I do not think I ever saw a more beautiful native girl than she was as she stood in front of me with raised shining eyes and a wealth of waving dark chestnut hair.

“Pappy, go in and get him some grub,” he said, and off she bounded, and his wife, who spoke broken English, welcomed me, saying, “White mans, plenty eat sooner,” and so saying folded her brown hands over her stomach to hide the tear in her tappa-cloth robe which ended at her knees.

Inside their home I sat, talked and ate a splendid meal of grilled chops, cooked over their camp fire, as Papeteo’s tiny brothers and sisters romped around my stool, looked up at me with tiny demon eyes, and tried to feel in my pockets. When I had finished we both sat outside under the tall tropic trees, where high up droves of doves moaned and cooed as the sea-winds swayed the tops.

That half-caste trader was the bravest man and the most fortunate man on earth, for as soon as he had lit his big pipe and crossed his legs comfortably

he started off telling me of his narrow escapes in storms and in fights with the natives of the various Isles. I very soon saw that he was a swanker (they mostly are, the half-castes of the South Seas), but to be quite friendly I encouraged him and often looked up with assumed surprise and admiration to hear how he had saved my countrymen from being murdered by the Solomon Islanders, Fijians and other tribes by his own wonderful courage and herculean strength, and just as he was gazing into my face as much as to say "What do you think of a deed like that?" the red-hot ash from his pipe fell on to his wife's bare knee. Up she jumped with a howl and caught him a terrible crash on the head with a bamboo club, as she started to beat her thin dress with her hands, for it was all on fire. I leapt forward and tore the dress from her, otherwise I am sure she would have been seriously burned. All the husband did was to look horror-struck, and his half-caste skin went greyish-white. She had given him a terrible whack with the club, and I suppose he felt spiteful, for I noticed that his half-caste eyes looked at her with hidden pleasure as she wailed.

Papeteo came running up from the shore sparkling with sea-water, for she had been bathing in a tiny lagoon a few yards inland, and she quickly ran into the homestead den and got a large piece of cloth and wrapped it round her skinny-bosomed parent, and all was soon peace again. I learnt from that half-caste trader that he was in the employ of the missionary society and often went off on lecturing

tours to the many Islands, as he could, of course, speak the native language perfectly, as well as being able to talk English and a smattering of German.

My foot was so blistered and sore on the heel that I altered my mind about getting back to Apia and stayed there the night, and old Mother Adams was delighted when she heard I would do so and kept saying "A loo, O swa," or something that sounded like it, as her eyes gazed amorously at me. When her husband had gone across the slope to one of the other huts, to see some natives who were having a great feast over a wedding, she made violent love to me, jabbering something to Papeteo. She told her to get off, and as soon as she had gone she started stroking my hand and face softly and did many more embarrassing things of Samoan custom, till I was beside myself with worry, and I can tell you that when suddenly the half-caste husband returned, and she sat down quickly, I was extremely pleased.

That night I went with them all over the slope to see the wedding party. A pretty young Samoan girl had just been married to a stalwart fierce-looking native, and when we arrived the "Siva dance" was in full swing. By the rows of huts of the small seaside village the inhabitants stood and squatted, all singing in unison as the chief dancers, dressed in flowers and native muslin, and parakeet wings in their hair, whirled about and around like ghosts in the brilliant moonshine that came glimpsing through the palm leaves. It revealed the faces and shining eyes of native maidens as they lifted

their long arms and contorted their bodies, sometimes till their noses touched the forest floor. From time to time the squatting men, enjoying the scene as they stared in a circle around those night-dancers, shouted out the equivalent to an English "Encore!" as one fat native woman succeeded in doing things which seemed impossible, bending slightly forward, giving a sudden bound and for a second standing on her head with one leg pointing one way and the other in the opposite direction. And then she stood on her head in the moonlight till with another bound she regained her feet and started hopping and whirling away once more in full swing with nothing on, as, laughing merrily, revealing pearly teeth and clapping their hands, the chorus girls of that midnight stage kept strict time with their feet and bodies on the forest floor.

It was one of the most weirdly impressive scenes that I have ever seen, more fascinating than any I had seen before with Hornecastle. As I stood there with old Mrs Adams and her daughter Papeteo by my side, just behind the husband smoking, I turned and saw two more white men gazing on the scene. I was astonished to see them, as I had not seen any of my race about during the day, and thought I was there quite alone. They were terribly scrubby-looking and had a hunted look in their eyes, and as they noticed me they quickly said something to the half-caste, and he in turn quickly reassured them. They were two fugitives from

justice, who had committed some crime and were wanted by the Commissioners. Probably they had killed someone, and it appeared that my half-caste friend was doing his best to hide them till they could get away from the coast on some outbound schooner. One of them was a very decent fellow to speak to, and I gave him some plug tobacco and hinted to him that he had nothing to fear from me, and neither had he, for I was sorry for them; whatever they had done they had already done, and they were my countrymen. They had at first thought I was a young missionary, and when they found out that I was a wanderer only they were deeply relieved, and when the dance was over I went back with them, and found that they were staying in a hut just by my hosts. They laughed and told me that they had peeped through a crack and seen the whole of the episode when old Mother Adams had caught on fire, and chaffed me about her too. They were both thickly bearded and looked rather haggard and worried, and evidently had done something serious, but as the night wore on, and they drank from the large stone jar which stood in the corner of the hut, they became exceedingly cheerful, and seeing that I had a violin got me to play, and when I struck up a familiar strain actually started to sing loudly. Adams the half-caste came rushing in to us in a fearful rage and called them damned madmen, and everything he could lay his tongue to. I am sure he would have been expelled from the missionary society had they heard the way he swore and used

God's name. He managed to sober the two fugitives and would not leave the hut till they were both lying down. Of course had they been caught while being harboured by Adams he himself would have got into serious trouble.

At daybreak they were both awake and tremulously sober. "Good-bye, matey," they said to me as I too got quickly to my feet; "Good-bye," I said, "and God bless you," and then the taller one turned and put out his hairy sunburnt hand. I quickly clasped it and, saying "Good luck to you youngster," they both walked quickly down the slope shoreward; evidently there was an outbound schooner lying in the bay and they were taking their best chance.

It was a beautiful morning. Round the bend, sunrise was bathing the sea with crimson and gold, and the parakeets in flocks, screaming off seaward, passed over my head, and the damp scent of the bread-fruit trees and orange groves gave the place the atmosphere of fairyland. I caught sight of those two hunted men hurrying across the white beach far away, and that was the last I ever saw of them. I hope they got safely off and were better men afterwards.

That same day I bade Adams and his wife farewell, and pretty Papeteo gave me a tortoise-shell with a native engraving on it as a memento, and once more I started on my wanderings.

I eventually arrived at Apia, and going on to a trading cutter with a sailor, whom I had got to know

in the town, I saw an opportunity of sailing as a deck hand, and so on the *Polly Smith* I sailed away bound for Tahiti. We had on board several native passengers, two young girls, and several Samoan men with their wives and children who were going off to the other Islands to secure work on plantations. We had a fine time on those moonlight nights, as we crept along the equatorial Pacific Seas with all sails set, and on the decks the sailors danced with the native women while I fiddled away, delighted to be at sea again. The little Samoan children were the life of that boat; one tiny girl would stand on the deck by the galley and go through all the fantastic Samoan dances, throw her little legs about, stand on her head, wave her legs and hands about while upside down with as much ease as though she were on her feet. There was an English passenger with us, I think his name was Wallace. We became very friendly with each other; he was going to Tahiti on some Government business and came from Sydney. For many days we lay becalmed, and then a fine breeze sprang up and we raced away with full sail set for some days. As a rule the wind slackened by day and strengthened by night, and they *were* nights too, the fine tropic stars shining away overhead, the clear crystal skies imaged in the waters all around us as the small cutter drifted along, far away out on the lonely Pacific track. There were no islands in that part of the ocean, but we were all happy enough. The native passengers would loaf all day long looking over the vessel's side singing to

themselves, and at night we all congregated and had a sing-song. I would play the violin and do my best to keep time to the natives as they danced and rolled about as the boat heeled over. Mr Wallace sang songs and the half-caste cook got drunk on sly grog, did jigs and afforded us great amusement.

XV

Tahitian Morals and Duplicity—I play the Violin at Government Concert—Death of M'Neil—The Black Slave Traffic

ARRIVING at Tahiti our passengers went off to the plantations and I went off also as I wanted to see what kind of a place it was. The capital, Papeite, was a much larger and livelier place than Apia. The population consisted of all kinds of half-castes, Chinese, French, and Tahitian brigands. I went inland and tramped around the sugar plantations whereon worked the natives and Chinese. A good deal of the country was under cultivation. I shall never forget the awful-looking people that I came in contact with or forget the debauchery that I witnessed. The sole occupation of a good many of the natives was to drink as much as they could get down them and the women sold their bodies to the first-comer for the price of a drink. The missionaries were there by hundreds, it seemed; they were a mixture of French and English and had exciting times reforming those native women and men. I went into several of the native homes and found them very hospitable people. Some of the women had Chinese husbands and their half-caste children had tiny almond eyes, jet-black and sparkling. The Chinese of Society Islands impressed me as being much more wholesome in their way of living than

the Australian Chinamen, and they did not smell half so disagreeable. A Chinaman got jealous of his native wife whilst I was there and struck her with a knife. The Tahitians went for him and when I saw him you could hardly tell which was his head and which his feet ; anyway his brother Chinamen came into the village, rolled him up and gave him a decent burial, and his wife screamed and wailed away till I was glad to clear out, for it was a most painful sight to see her grief. She was a pretty woman, in fact all the young women were handsome, and the men too, but as soon as the women get over twenty they start to fade. A South Sea Island girl of ten years of age is as matured as a European girl of sixteen.

I found human nature was just the same there as everywhere else—everyone wanted as much as they could get out of you, and those who were better clothed than their sisters and brothers were vain-glorious and looked down on the others. Girls and boys made love to each other and eloped into the forest with the missionaries after them at full speed, and the brave old chiefs strolled about and spoke of the old times and smacked their lips and spoke on the sly of the missionaries, saying “ they were the children of the devil ” but addressing them to their faces with some such jargon as, “ Me Christian man now. One God. Good God, who no eat other God,” whereupon they would gravely walk away to sell their soul for a drink. They loved their old customs deep down in their heart and rubbed noses

with each other and cherished hopes that some day the gods would help them to drive the white men into the sea. But the older ones were even then fast disappearing, and drink and prostitution were raising the death rate of the native children, and so there, as elsewhere all over the South Seas, the race was fast dying out.

There were many traders there, and they all seemed to make plenty of money. You could always recognise a trader by his big hat smashed on his head and his slouching walk and his very often warty nose, that had started to blossom after drinking some oceans of beer. They were generally married men and often got into awful trouble when they were quite unsober by mistaking their Tahitian wife for their Marquesan wife, and mentioning the wrong name to their bride during the night brought down her wrath on to their wicked heads. I have often seen them with a black eye or a terribly scratched, clawed face, for women in Tahiti are as jealous as the European ladies, and will brook no rival; but of course when their husband is away with his other bride on some far-off Isle they do not let the grass grow under their feet, and often a white trader leaves his home in disgust when his native wife presents him with a half-caste baby with slit-almond eyes and a face showing strong Mongolian origin, or a little fair-skinned mite with pretty violet dark eyes that looks suspiciously like the village missionary.

In Papeite I made the acquaintance of René, a



KAROTONGAN SCENERY

Frenchman, who was a clever violin-player. He was at that time working as a clerk in the Tahitian Commissioner's offices and played at the Papeite opera house which was something on the lines of a bush town music hall in Australia. He was very kind to me and gave me several good lessons on playing the violin, for he had studied under some of the best French masters. He had some splendid duets for two violins and one night, when they had a ball on at the Papeite Government House, he recommended me and I got the engagement to go with him, and we played the duets together. He was a much better performer than I was, but he gave me the solo part and did all he could to get me the credit of the concert. All went off very well indeed till, when René and I were having supper with all the high folk of Papeite and I was feeling in very high spirits at the turn my luck had taken, for I was nearly on my beam ends when René got me that job, I bent over from my chair and looked out of the door and saw that my violin which I had left by the hat-rack had disappeared ! I got up and rushed off like a shot, and as I did so I saw one of the Tahitian servants bolting through the door with the violin. Shouting at the top of my voice I ran after him, cleared the steps with one jump, and there up the moonlit street ran the thief holding my violin in one hand. I had no revolver with me, otherwise I would have fired, for I was desperate. My violin was my all, and the fear of losing it put renewed vigour in my feet and I was gaining on the cursed

thief. "Stop or I fire!" I shouted, and as he was leaving the straight track he turned, and I held my hand up, as he thought, to shoot. In the moonlight he saw my white hand upheld, and thinking it held a gun he threw the fiddle down and rushed off into the scrub. My fiddle was none the worse for the adventure, but I was, for the night was close and sweltering hot, and I arrived back to the supper-table bathed in sweat and half dead.

I was at that time lodging in the north of the town with a storekeeper. In the same room where I was also slept a trader; his name was M'Neil, and he had been very ill and was at that time convalescent. He admitted to me that he had been drinking too heavily and had made up his mind to be a teetotaller, and, as he told me what a curse drink was, he kept lifting a bottle of whisky from under his bed and taking a pull at it, saying, "Man, jist a wee snack for the gude time's sake." He was really trying to break himself of the habit, and instead of drinking half-a-bottle at a time was just taking it in sips. By midnight he was quite drunk, and started weeping over his past sins, and kept me awake nearly all night saying over and over again—"Ma lad, keep off th' drink, 'twill be your ruin." He was not a bad man at all, and when he was sober during the day, and I played him old Scotch songs, for he would not for one moment let me play anything but Scotch melodies, the tears would rise in his eyes. He died two days after and I felt very much cut up, for I saw him die and he gave me an

old purse, saying, "Take it, guid lad, and think of me." His old comrade, a Scotchman, came in from up the street, held his hand and completely broke down, crying like a little child as M'Neil closed his eyes for ever. I still remember how that Scotch friend rose up, looked under poor M'Neil's bed, and gently pulled the half-full whisky bottle out, put it under his coat and left the room, still sobbing, for M'Neil and he had had many good times together and many a long talk and deep drink in that room as they lived over their old days in Bonny Scotland.

I was naturally very depressed after the death of M'Neil; I had only known him a few days, but in those few days I seemed to know more of his true character than you could see through in another man in ten years. I remember after a day or so I got in with a Dutch fellow named "Van Blank." He was also a lodger in my dwelling-place and he had held the Scotchman's arm as he stood by M'Neil's grave; otherwise I think poor old Mac (I cannot remember his name) would have fallen in. He had imbibed considerably, and it took Van Blank and I the whole afternoon to get him back to his room and put him to bed.

René, my violin friend, went off to Matahiva on some business, and I was at my wit's end to know how to get some cash and get away from Papeite. I was offered a job by some missionaries to go off to Raratonga to help in mission work for awhile. I considered seriously becoming a missionary myself, as it

seemed a paying game, and I never saw a mission man of any sect on the beach hard up. Van Blank had long since joined the mission and he introduced me to several young Tahitian mission girls who were devout Christians. They were mostly very good-looking, wore more clothing than the inland natives, were splendid dancers, and down in the thatched homesteads of the village of Tetua I went and stayed with Van Blank, and those mission girls, good gracious me! stood on their heads, screamed with laughter, waved their legs as I played the fiddle and all went back to the barbarian stage in five seconds, and after the dance I had to fly with Van Blank as twenty of them strove to embrace us, all at once! Next day Blank and I saw them in the mission-room teaching the native children to sing "Onward, Christian Soldiers," or a tune of that type, and as we looked in the school door they looked up at us gravely with their earnest dark eyes as though we were absolute strangers to the wild carousal of the night before. You could tramp the world over and never find people so clever in their cunning as the Tahitian Islanders, and yet they are, as I found, staunch friends in adversity and would never give a white man away to his superiors. And so all the creed denominations go swimmingly along, safe and happy in the giant hypocrisy of reformation that has brought such changes to the Pacific Isle, such happiness to the reformers, and such deceit into the hearts of the reformed.

A large trading schooner, the *Austral*, at this time

arrived in Tahiti and I once more secured a job as second mate and left the island. I heard that her final destination was Samoa and Tonga ; she was then bound for the Marquesas Islands. Before leaving the " Society Group " she called at " Fakarava," " Raiatea " and " Takaroa," beautiful Isles they were too, standing lonely out there in the wide Pacific, covered with luxurious tropical trees that sheltered the velvety skinned natives, many of whom were as wild as the savages of Captain Cook's days. Indeed, all the races that I came in contact with were as wild at heart as ever their ancestors were ; but they were clever, and they soon discovered the best policy, which was hammered into them by the arrival of a warship and a gun battery to smash them up and let them see the white man's power and the wisdom of following all his desires and ceasing all their own desires. Then the missionaries came and the traders brought the rum, and the money to buy the rum, and gave the women the opportunity to obtain the money, for it was the women of the South Seas that started to get the money and shared it with their native husbands. I think that must be the origin of the name " White Slave Traffic " of modern England. I know from my own eyes and from the lips of the sufferers of those far-off Isles that the Black Slave Traffic was a monstrous traffic beside which the English " White Slave Traffic " is a kind of sacred concert, comparatively speaking.

As far as I could judge and criticise the civilising

influence of Christianity in the South Seas was this—the English, French and Germans discovered a beautiful land in the South Seas ; a few months after arriving they blew the heads of some of the natives off, cowed them completely, took a battalion of sailors inland to the wild native village and those sailors all fell madly in love with the beautiful dark-eyed women who stood trembling before them, and by the time they were due to become mothers the fathers were in England, being paid their leave money at Chatham, while the missionaries, hot with haste, were outbound for the same Islands to reform the grieving mothers and make them more upright in their morals. When those missionaries arrived they put a “ penny in the slot machine ” on the shore, nailed a large tract on each wall of the heathen village homesteads, and then called the people Christianised as they knelt in their nudeness and penitence at their feet in chanting rows, repeating the Lord’s Prayer with bowed heads, as the missionaries lifted their eyes heavenward and did not miss their boot-laces till long after the reformed heathen had departed.

XVI

Hafiao—Rival Marquesan Queens—Behind the Veil—Vaea Mountain
—I meet R.L.S.—Thakambau the Last of the Fijian Kings—Apia

AFTER a monotonous voyage of adverse winds and a typhoon that brought seas over and washed me out of my bunk, smashed our deck in and carried away all the cordage and boats, we arrived at "Hivaoa." The natives swam out to us in shoals ; on they came as the anchor dropped, lines and lines of bobbing frizzly heads with swimming eyes, gliding along to the paddling hands level with the water, while racing along in front of them came canoes heavily laden with cargoes of natives evidently more successful in life than the poverty-stricken swimmers who only possessed their own skins. We threw ropes over the ship's side and up they came, clambering, and danced over the decks. Stalwart, fine fellows they were, with large lustrous eyes, and as soon as they leapt to the deck and shook themselves as dogs do after a swim, they started rushing about singing and jabbering for a job to take us ashore in their canoes, and the skipper stood by his cabin aft with a big cigar in his mouth, shouting, "Keep yer eye on the God-damned devils," for he had turned his head for one moment and with native alertness one of them had dived into his cabin and collared his best white duck suit. Down came a large wooden plank over

the poor devil's head as he dropped the suit on deck and with a bound went over the side into the sea.

It was after sunset before I went ashore, and with several of the crew we roamed about visiting the natives in their thatched homes and saw the native children romping around as they sneaked out of their beds to peep at us and the swarthy mothers and fathers, squatting on the floor, cross-legged, invited us to drink and eat. All about us as we walked under the palms from one home to another we saw the shadows moving as the men and women roamed about, passing from clump to clump of palm-trees which shaded the Marquesan homesteads. It was just like some fairyland, as over the clear skies shone the Southern stars, and often came the singing of the natives and the beating of their wooden drums from where some of the families were giving parties over a birthday or the anniversary of a wedding, enjoying themselves in the same spirit as they do in the suburban homes of English towns.

I saw a lot of old chiefs and wrinkled dethroned kings and queens during my stay there. The girls were nearly all dressed in leafy girdles and the youths likewise. I had heard a lot about Hivaoa from Hornecastle and I remembered that he had several wives there and large grown-up families, but I did not meet any of them to my knowledge. I only stayed there two or three days and then joined the boat again and we left for Nuka Hiva. The natives there I found were very similar to those of Hivaoa, but the Island itself struck me as very

prosperous, being a good deal under cultivation. Whilst there I went inland alone and made friends with a Marquesan chief named Hafiao. He could speak English fairly well, also a little French. I remember him well, because he was such an intellectual-looking old fellow and looked very much like Gladstone, but he was more powerfully built and of course brown skinned. He told me he was over a hundred years old, and he looked it too. He had a nice house and three pretty native women looked after him. I am not so sure that they were not his wives. He told me that nearly all the whites that called at Nuka Hiva came especially inland to see him, and he was as proud as anything when I told him that Robert Louis Stevenson was greatly impressed by him and his kingly bearing. Of course I made that all up, but while he puckered his wrinkled old face up and tried to tell me of the "great white people" that had called upon him, he mentioned the name of "Stessen" and from what he said I should imagine that he meant "Stevenson," for he described him to me at my request, and most impressively told me that he was "good white mans who saw that he the great Hafiao was no ordinary man, but a brave and mighty king of men." He also told me that R.L.S. had come especially across the seas from the great "white country" to see him and kneel at his feet; and as he told those tales of his proud imagination he lifted his intelligent eyes to the skies and his shrivelled lips trembled with emotional pride at the thought that,

though he was no longer a ruler of men, there were white men living who had bowed the knee to him and assured him that he still lived in the memory of men as great as ever, though humbled by advancing civilisation and the wrecking hand of cruel Time. And, to tell the truth, that deserted forgotten old chief of barbarian Marquesan tribes had more of the look of born kingship in his stalwart shrivelled anatomy, as he sat there almost in tears over revived memories, than all the kings of Europe bunched together ; and I shall never regret going on my knee before him and bowing my head in a moment of emotional impulse as I bade him farewell and pressed a plug of ship's tobacco into his majestic hand, which gift so delighted him that he forgot the great majesty that for a moment had crowned him, and with an aged shrill voice shouted, " Good mans, white boy," and stood upright and gave a kind of delighted double shuffle at such a stroke of luck.

In that same village I also met wrinkled old native women who gazed with scorn on the young native girls who wore tappa girdles from their waists to their knees. One of them told me she had been the most beautiful woman of the Islands and much loved by the bravest warriors of her day. She was not unlike the old Marquesan Queen whom Horncastle introduced me to, who had had her photograph taken by the Judge's son whom I met at Samoa, but she had not the queenly bearing, and when I crept into the next hut I learned from another de-throned queen that it was really she who was once

the most beautiful of queens and the envy of all brave warriors, and she tried to get out of me what the "bad no good woman" next door had told me; but I kept a still tongue, for I saw how things were between them and did not wish them to murder each other over the awful jealousy that I saw each had for the other. I can still see their brown wrinkled faces under the starlit palms peeping from their den doors as I bade them farewell and passed away. I never saw such evil looks as they sideways gave each other as I crept quietly on. They each thought they had succeeded in proving they were old-time queens. I did not particularly like either of them, for each had gazed at me with odd looks and stroked my white hand with their shrivelled dark paws, smacking their remnants of lips, as though remembering old days and cannibalistic feasts.

Of course it may have been purely imagination on my part, but I could not help feeling as I did, for I had seen a good deal in my wanderings among the South Sea Islanders, much more than I have told you in these reminiscences—for there are things which I must leave out, things which are too dreadful to describe in cold print to civilised eyes of the home country, but are well known to the travellers of the days when I was a boy and saw the smouldering out of the true savage races of the South Seas. I lived on the Islands and mixed with the people as though I were one of them, and though the outside world lived under the impression that all the old savage

instincts had died out, I knew that they had not. The natives knew they would be punished for cannibalism and other crimes of a bloodthirsty heathenish character, and so it was all practised in secrecy, and to this day I will swear terrible things are done on the quiet! Do not the civilised polished towns of Europe harbour in their very midst men who are dangerous criminals and addicted to heinous crimes? Often those very men mingle with you and even gain your admiration and respect, for you do not dream of their true character, and yet men think that the whole of the aboriginal South Sea races have completely changed their old instincts, and all are now Christian, just as they profess they are, and nothing is done under cover as it is done under cover in European cities!

I remember how Hornecastle got hold of a book which praised the reformation of the South Sea savage and the glorious work of the American missionaries. The old fellow was eating an orange as he read, and as he roared with laughter he swallowed the whole of the half orange, turned purple in the face, and when the native put his fingers down and cleared the throat passage the old chap sat upright, put his hand on his stomach and, to my astonishment, still continued to explode with laughter, roaring out at intervals as he nearly choked, "God help the damned heathens," "Holy Moses and Missionaries," and then buried his nose in the book and started to read again with extreme delight and twinkling eyes, for I think of

all men he knew the stealthy lives that were being lived behind the veil of native life in the South Seas, where often men disappeared and were never heard of again, as the Polynesians, Melanesians and the half-castes saw the longed-for chance occur and got their own back! Aye, there are hundreds of skeletons whitening in the forest of those Pacific Isles, skeletons of men who fell by the stealthy war club or had their heads blown off by the old-fashioned breech-loading pistols given to the natives by traders for shiploads of copra, palm oil, and sometimes for help in kidnapping girls, who often disappeared from their homes and were never seen again.

I believe if a man like Hornecastle had written a book telling all that he had seen in his own time and the time when I was on those Islands it would have been one of the most terrible human documents ever read by the eyes of men, so terrible in its revelations of bloodshed, trickery and lust, both on the white and native side, that very few people would have believed a quarter of the truth told. There are no more undiscovered shores to be found in the world now, and never again in the history of the world will the wanderers from a highly civilised race suddenly come across primeval races in far seas, who will leap from the forest and gaze with astonished eyes into the eyes of men who are their brothers of long ago, lost in the dark of ages and returned to reform the ways of the old, and heartily enjoy the change from the new.

After a stay of about two weeks I sailed on the *Austral* away from the beautiful shores of "Nuka Hiva." Far away the whitening waves, tossing on the reefs, faded as the sunset struck the inland forest palms and mountain ranges, and then the stars came out and overhead the song of the sails started to sing and once more I was at sea. It was a long voyage; we called at the Caroline Islands, and after an absence of quite five months I once more arrived at Samoa, and got paid off by the skipper and stopped in Apia, resting myself for several weeks, spending my days in violin-studying and calling on the storekeepers. Afterwards I went to Upolu, and while strolling by the cedar-trees that skirted the shore forest I met Robert Louis Stevenson. "Hello, young man," he said, as I looked up and recognised him, "are you still living here?" "No," I answered, "I've been to the Marquesas, and Fiji, in fact all over the place." I told him of the chieftain Hafiao who had told me that Stevenson had bowed the knee to him. He was extremely amused at all I told him, and I got to like him exceedingly as he began to talk in an earnest way about the Island customs and what the home folks would think of life in the South Seas and the women, for as we strolled along some pretty native girls went by with baskets of fish, their lava-lavas on, their bare brown bodies shining in the sunlight. We stopped them and R.L.S. bought one of the baskets of fish and invited me to his friend's house, and I went with him and stayed and had supper

and entertained them with the violin. I think the gentleman whom he was staying with then was an American, and had something to do with the Legation offices. I had a very pleasant time, and felt extremely at home with the earnest kind-faced man who has added such interest to the sad romance of Samoa, for as the world knows he died there and was buried on the top of Vaea Mountain, and to this day that mountain is looked upon as a sacred spot by the Samoans who loved R. L. Stevenson, and the natives never hunt or fire guns or shoot the birds that roam and sing by that mighty sepulchre, for it is their faith that his songs are still being sung by the birds as the years go by and he sleeps on that mountain top.

But to go back to the invitation which I had to supper.

I had a most enjoyable evening; there was a Mr Herd also in the party. The house was only a one-storey dwelling-place, and the room wherein we dined a large dim-lit place with two windows facing seaward. The overhead hanging lamp-glass had been smashed through the clumsiness of the native girls who waited at the table, and I was deeply thankful that they had done so, for I was pretty shabby and threadbare at that time, and the gloom made me feel more at ease as I sipped my wine and had very little to say, having no confidence in myself through the knowledge that R.L.S. was a writer of books. He seemed in a good mood as he sat at the other side of the table in his white duck

suit, his lean bare throat moving above his loose low shirt collar as he and his friends spoke of their experiences in the Islands and bubbled over with laughter. The native girls, attired in fringed *ridis* and *tappu* cloth reaching from their breasts, and down to their bare knees, rushed round the table waving palm leaves to create a breeze, and repulse the mosquito droves that made desperate attempts to get their share by dining off us. The American Legation gentleman seemed to be a jolly customer, and partook frequently of the whisky.

Robert Louis Stevenson seemed very temperate; he smoked cigarettes and drank the pure juice of limes, holding them over a glass he squeezed them in his hand till the glass was nearly full, added whisky and drank at a gulp, throwing the skins of the limes over the heads of his friends, out of the open window, only just missing them, and seemed greatly amused as they dodged. He treated the native girls and boys who stood around with great kindness, speaking to them as though they were little children. I think he spoke to them in the native language. They seemed to know him; after the supper was over, I noticed their good behaviour and respectfulness, as they crossed their brown hands, closed their eyes and repeated word for word after R.L.S., as he bowed his head and said grace.

“Well, Middleton,” he said, as our host sat down to an old American organ and started playing softly, his feet going up and down ten revolutions a second, as he pedalled the leaky bellows, “which



SOUTH SEA LAGOON

do you like the best, the Old Country or the South Seas ? ”

“ Well, for climate and novelty, I like this place, but I often have a longing for the homeland.”

“ So do I. We all love our native land the best at heart,” he said, and I could see by his expression that his dreams were often overseas, for he lapsed into silence, threw the cigarette away that he had only just lit, and placed another one in his mouth, and walked up and down, as was his habit at times when in conversation with anyone.

I remember that he asked me if I was going back to England again, also if I liked sea life, and when I told him of some of my bush experiences he seemed deeply interested, and asked me a good deal about the Australian blacks. He was greatly interested in their habits, and seemed to know a lot about their history and wandering instincts, and remarked upon the great difference between the intellects of the blacks and the Islanders of the South Seas, as he sat there gazing with his keen inquiring eyes, fingering his chin as the cool wind drifted through the open window. I can still vividly remember the delight in his face as he watched the native servants. I played the violin, accompanied by our host on the organ, who played by ear, and made up for his indifferent accompaniment by singing at intervals, as I did my best to entertain. R.L.S. joined in by humming. We were suddenly disturbed by a jabbering noise outside, and then the door opened and a native woman, with barely anything on

except the ridi, poked her head and body half in the room and said something to our host the American, in the Samoan language. It appeared that he was a medical man, and had been attending her child who was suffering through influenza, which had become suddenly worse, so she and a gathering of friends had rushed hurriedly to our host for help. R.L.S. and I accompanied him, as he quickly shut down the organ lid, and off we all went out into the night.

Across the forest track we hurried. Like big children, Samoan mothers, men, and their naked little ones, went running along the moonlit track in front of us, the wailing mother and father of the sick child pattering beside us, looking with relieved eyes, because we were white men, thinking that our different skin made us potent and that all would be well when the doctor reached their child. We had to walk almost half-a-mile, and then they all turned off the forest track to the left, and under the palms, to where stood their large hut homes; bending down we all entered the sick-room. It was a sweet little mite, emaciated through chest trouble. Its tiny bones seemed to be all out of place, protruding under its soft velvety brown skin, as it gazed wistfully up with small bright fevered eyes, as we all leaned over its small mat bed.

The American tenderly picked her up, gave her physic, and did all that was best for the infant, then whispered some hopeless opinion to R.L.S., who tenderly bent over the little patient, as concerned

as though it were his own child, as he chuckled with his lips, and touched it softly on the chin with his finger playfully, till it actually looked up at him and gave a wan smile. The parents fell on their knees delighted, and started rapidly to say the Lord's Prayer together as others shouted "Folofa-Mio," which meant "better to-morrow." It was a weird sad sight, and when we passed out under the coco-palms into the brilliantly lit moonlit space I noticed Stevenson and the doctor were very quiet, for we felt pretty sadly as our medical friend had very dubious hopes as to its recovery. A Samoan quack medicine man had been practising on the sick mite, and the disease, through improper treatment, had got the upper hand. Stevenson went off soon after we reached the house again, and though it was very late, I would not accept the invitation to stay the night, and went back to my lodging by the shore side, near Apia Town, a little shanty place of a young trader, who had let me share his home. When I arrived back I felt a bit depressed, but my friend cheered me up. He was a lively fellow, crammed full up with reminiscences, having been for some years trading among the Islanders, and he would tell me in vivid language about his experiences in the Fijian group. He had known and lived with the son of Thakambau,¹ the last of the great Cannibal Kings, who had then been dead some two or three years or more, and terrible were the deeds of that

¹ Thakambau went on a visit to N.S.W. and brought measles back to Fiji, which carried off a quarter of the population.

old king before he became Christianised¹ and handed over the Fiji Isles to the British Government. I had personally met old men chiefs whose sisters had been roasted in the "Bokai Ovens" at the grand cannibal festivities of their young days.

My comrade kept me up nearly the whole night cheerily telling me of the wild escapades of those days, and was extremely amusing as he described Fijian weddings, which were conducted something after the Samoan fashion as far as the fantastic dancing went, but there the similarity ended. By night most of the weddings were performed, the king or head chief of the tribe taking a seat on the throne, solemnly gazing on as a kind of spiritual figure-head, as from the forest for miles around came leaping the natives, attracted by the boomed notes of the *lais* (wooden drum), all to assemble and witness the wedding, as the native bride, flushed with pleasure, attired in the scant robe of the period, danced the wild fantastic can-can of the South Seas before the assembled encoring tribe, dressed only in a string of shells that jingled at her *sulu*-cloth. There on the chosen moonlit night under the *tamnu* and bread-fruit trees she swayed and swerved in all the postures that would reveal her beauty to the bridegroom's eyes, and the ring of natives would make the forest and hills re-echo as their voices extolled her female charms, as the old high priest chanting the special

¹ The Fijian race is fast dying out. Thousands of Indians arrive yearly, and the result is that Mohammedanism is secretly overthrowing Christianity and the noble, if futile, efforts of many true missionaries in Fiji and elsewhere;



NATIVE GIRLS MAKING KAVA

service gazed enviously, nudging the bride as an encore hint whenever she did anything especially pleasing to the dusky onlookers. "Mbula! Mbula!" they would shout when at last, perspiring, trembling and excited, she stood at rest. "Mbula! Mbula!" they would still cry, which meant "may the gods send thee many children," and then the bridegroom also danced as the old king or chief descended from his throne to welcome the bashful bride, and to bow her into his home before the great wedding feast, for it was the custom of certain tribes that the bride should receive the king's kiss first. More I cannot say, excepting for the grim rumour and respect for the first-born, whose lineaments often resembled those of the old king who officiated at the wedding, and such was the great respect held for those children who were the first born, and consequently of blood-royal, that the unloved maidens of those wild Isles, as innocent as in the Garden of Eden, and of the ways of the Western world, would often ambitiously throw themselves across the path of the royal favour.

Oft sought the king the unloved forlorn maid
With witnesses to prove she'd been betrayed!

On the other hand some of the tribes outdid the high standard of the morals of advanced civilisation, and it was considered the height of impropriety for a maid to eat in the presence of a marriageable man, and everlasting disgrace lay on the head of the native girl who had once touched a bed mat whereon

had slept a man, and many of the old customs of the South Seas are still practised secretly, and this was, and is, common knowledge to the white residents of the Pacific.

But to go back to my comrade the trader, I stayed at his homestead for some time. It was a romantic spot ; by our front door curled the waves up the shore, and by night across the moonlit bay in canoes paddled the natives, singing as they fished.

We made a neat galley cooking stove just outside by the door, whereby we sat at night, as the fire blazed and the cooking fish spluttered in the frying-pan. My chum was a splendid cook, and served up many dishes of yams and bread fruit, entrées, done in native fashion. From the village a mile away, inland, the natives would come every morning and clean our one-roomed dwelling out. On the wooden walls above our bunks were photographs of our relations and friends in England. I was very happy there with my amiable chum, who was always in a joking mood, and would cheerily sing as I played the fiddle.

He was a bit gone on a half-caste Samoan girl, and the only little hitch that disturbed our friendship was through my foolishness in responding to the native girl's wish to learn to play the violin. I was innocent enough, and as soon as I saw the way the wind blew I shut right down, and the fiddle lessons ceased, and so the sulky look on my comrade's face faded and once more the cheery smile returned ; and by the crackling fire and spluttering stews, into my

ears was poured the lore of the South Seas, with the human note of reality in it, till we retired to bed, and the warm wind in moonlight waved the shadows of the palm leaves outside over our faces as we lay unsleeping in our coffin-shaped bunks, my chum one side and I the other side, talking and dreaming till "Are you asleep, Middy?" sounded far away, as I sleepily answered, "Yes" over and over again as he talked on, till at last even the sound of the waves outside faded away and we both slept.

The natives got very friendly with us two, and extremely jealous of each other if we hired one of them more than another, and terrible were the tales we had to hear about the one whom we had hired.

"He not Christian man. Sin much, and steal 'nother man's wife" and so on, till we thought it advisable, before there was a murder in the camp, to make a bargain with the lot, and hire them all at regular intervals to do our cooking, wood collecting and the rough general work.

XVII

Apia—R.L.S. visits Samoan Homesteads—Apia Beach Incident—Samoan Music and Dancing—I am nearly drowned—Native Song—Native Music and my own Compositions, which reproduce South Sea Characteristic Music and Atmosphere—I sleep in Cannibalistic Cooling-off Larder—"Barney Dear" and Old Naylor

ON the beach about a mile from Apia, in our ramblings together, we came across Robert Louis Stevenson. He was paddling in a shallow by the shore, his pants tucked up to his knees, his legs sun-scorched and browned. It was fearfully hot, and at first he did not recognise me, for I was as brown as a nut, and had on a tremendous umbrella hat; the rim was a foot wide and dipped downwards. I had told him when I last saw him that I was going away to South America, as at the time I thought I had secured a berth on a "Frisco" schooner that lay in the Bay, and so he was somewhat surprised to see me.

I had just caught a monster sea-eel, and as he gazed upon it I offered it to him. He would not take it till I convinced him that I did not want it. His friend plucked a palm leaf and gingerly grabbed the slippery victim, and as he did so, we were all suddenly startled by hearing shouts and the sounds of pistol shots along the shore.

"What's that?" said R.L.S. He seemed pleasantly excited at the idea of some adventure coming,

and we all went off together in the direction of the noise. At that time there was often a feud between the various native tribes who differed on some political matter; also there were often fights between the natives, some who were adherents to King Malieatoa Laupepa, and others who swore by Mataafa. It so happened that it was only a squabble of a minor kind, and when we arrived near the scene of the conflict, the ambushed natives bolted.

Stevenson seemed somewhat disappointed. I gathered from his manner that he would have loved to have seen a real native battle, for his eyes flashed with excitement at the prospect of what might be happening as we went up the steep shore, and his friend, who was a careful and jovial-looking man, about Stevenson's own age, warned him to be careful as he heedlessly went forward.

Out came the native children rushing excitedly from among the forest trees; Stevenson spoke to them half in pigeon-English and half in Samoan, as they excitedly pointed toward the direction in which the guilty natives had gone. All being quiet, and the prospect of more excitement from that quarter disappearing, we went back to the shore, and searching about found the eel which Stevenson's friend had dropped at the sound of the pistol firing. Having found it, we all went off into a native homestead some distance away from the shore, wherein lived a family who appeared to be on very good terms with R.L.S.

They were all dressed in the "upper ten" native fashion of Samoa. One of them was wearing an

old American naval officer's cast-off suit. The women had their hair done in fashionable style with red and white blossoms stuck in at the bunched sides, also on their native girdles, and what with their plump handsome faces and intelligent eyes, looked strikingly attractive. There were several children, and they all welcomed him and rolloped around us with delight.

Stevenson was soon engaged with the elder, who, I think, was a Mataafa chief, who could not speak English; but R.L.S. seemed to understand all he said, and by the way he made him repeat phrases over and over again, I should think the chief was correcting Stevenson's pronunciation of some Samoan words.

The native boys and girls were dressed neatly in ridis, and tappu-cloth blouses, their hair parted and combed smoothly, and very polite, too, they were, as they brought Stevenson their school-books, wherein they had written their English lessons. Stevenson seemed to take a deep interest in their efforts, patted them on the heads approvingly as he examined their books and this greatly delighted them. In the corner of the large shed-like place, wherein we all stood, the youngest son of about six years of age, quite naked, stood on his head singing with gusto, as R.L.S. gave him a lead pencil as a gift, for he seemed to be very fond of children and greatly enjoyed seeing their delight. Lifting the little girls up, he held them high over his head, as the parents smiled approval at his antics to make

them laugh, and Samoan children are never so pleasing and pretty as when their cheery little brown faces laugh, as their mouths stretch, and all their pearly teeth are exposed to view.

As we said good-bye to the chief and his wife, Stevenson put the youngest girl on his back as though to take her away with him. Although she was only a mite of about three years old, she seemed to see the joke, and waved her hands towards the homestead as we all walked away : then when he put her to the ground she scampered off so fast homeward that you couldn't see her tiny legs going !

I am telling you all this so as to attempt to give an idea of Stevenson's character, as he appeared to my eyes as a lad. It was then evening time, and the sun was setting over the hills as we all went down the forest track, and in the distance two white women and a native were coming up towards us. It was R.L.S.'s wife and a friend. Mrs Stevenson affectionately greeted him with a loud kiss ! And then started to give him a dressing-down for going off and not keeping some domestic appointment.

She was a vivacious amiable lady, without any side whatever ; dressed like an Australian squatter's wife, and bare throated like Stevenson himself, and they both wore white shoes without wearing socks, in sandal fashion.

As we walked along the track Stevenson was very observant and asked the natives the names of various tropical trees. He had a cheery musical

laugh, and a pronounced habit of gazing abstractedly in front of him while anyone was talking to him, a habit which was especially noticeable when his wife was with him, for he seemed to look upon her as a sort of helpmate to relieve him and take the burden off his shoulders, by answering and apologising to those who interrupted his meditations. At other times he was just the reverse and strangely talkative, and could not talk fast enough to his friends, whom he seemed very much attached to, as he took down notes in a pocket-book. He had the appearance of a man of very strong character, affectionate and tender to children and all those about him.

I should think he was one of those who would show great courage if he were called on to do so, for once on Apia beach a white man was thrashing a Samoan boy who had been stealing fruit and fish from a basket which he had left outside a grog saloon. Stevenson, who happened to be strolling down the beach to take a boat out to a schooner anchored in the bay, caught sight of the coward blows being inflicted on the frightened lad, and as the trader did not cease, Stevenson went straight up to him and pushed him aside, and heatedly expostulated with him about his brutality. The ruffian stared astonished at R.L.S. and then used some offensive epithet, at which Stevenson's face went rigid as he stared at him with flashing eyes, and almost lost control of himself. I saw that had not the man had the instinct to see that Stevenson was not the slightest bit frightened of him and

gone away muttering to himself, Stevenson would have knocked him down.

I think it was that same evening that I went to a native feast at Satoa village. The guests were mostly of the Samoan best-class natives. It was a lovely night. Overhead sailed the full moon in the dark blue vault of a cloudless heaven, as by the huddled native village homes the assembled privileged guests squatted around, forming a ring of dark bodies as they watched the weird fantastic dance which celebrated the birth of a child to a celebrated chief. The stage of the forest floor was adorned with the Samoan professional dancers and singers. I shall always remember the weird beauty of that romantic scene as they swayed and danced, chanting strange ear-haunting melodies, all their faces alight with animation and the joy of being alive as they sang old South Sea love songs, suddenly stopping in their wild dances as the words of the choruses breathed thoughts of love and impassioned vows of plighted lovers. They would stop perfectly still and gaze for a few moments, staring in each other's eyes like statues, or the figures of romantic love pictures, only their lips moving as they sang the words of delight into the listening maids' ears, then once more suddenly start off whirling round with their arms, swaying rhythmically, their faces gazing upwards, and sometimes over their shoulders.

I can truly say that I have never seen anything so really romantic, or heard music that so truly expressed human emotions, excepting perhaps

when, some years after, I was troubadouring on the frontier of Spain, and played the violin, accompanying the Spanish peasants as they sang in parts the romantic "Estudiantina." The Spanish maids gazed into their lovers' eyes, as they sang, much the same as the savages of the South Seas did on that night of which I am now telling you.

A day or so after the preceding incidents, I made the acquaintance of a Mr Powell, who was a friend of Stevenson's. I was playing the violin on an American ship that had put into Apia harbour, and he was on board. He was one of the head missionaries, and struck me as a very pleasant gentleman. I was trying to get a berth on the boat, which was going to San Francisco, but I did not succeed. The night before she left I was in the fo'c'sle, playing the fiddle, with the sailors who had accordions and banjos, and as we were playing "Down by the Swanee River" R.L.S. peeped in at the door. I could just see him by the dim oil lamp, as he gazed over the shoulder of Mr Powell, his friend, who was with him. His face lit up with a gleam of pleasure as he listened to the rough sailor concert as one of the crew danced a jig.

Though Stevenson at the time must have been in consumption, he never struck me as delicate, but, on the other hand, looked one of the thin wiry kind, always alert, and boyishly curious in all that was going on around him; when he laughed it was as though to himself over some pleasant memory, and his eyes gazed with a feminine gleam, half

revealing the emotional strain of the woman and the firmness of the man in his intellectual face—the mixture that all brave men are made up of. I was unusually observant at that time through my increased knowledge that he was a writer far above the average, and I also noticed the respect with which he was treated by those around him, and especially the natives, who were comical in their unconcealed pride when he spoke to them.

If I had seen and spoken to R.L.S. without knowing who he was, I should have thought he was a skipper or mate of some American or English ship; his manner was easy, in fact, almost rollicking at times.

I met Mrs Stevenson again later, and she asked me to come up to their home and bring the violin, and chided me for not keeping an appointment I had made before. I promised to go, but never went; unfortunately I went off in the morning of the appointed day, on a cruise with my comrade. A hurricane came and blew us out to sea, several times we nearly turned upside down and once a sea went right over the boat, and away went my comrade. I leaned over the side to drag him back, and he grabbed hold of me and over I went also. We could both swim, but I went under, came up and found I was under the boat. It was a terrible feeling of despair and fright that went through me as my head bobbed under the keel; the universe seemed to be a tremendous black grip that had got me into its death-clutch. All the life in my body seemed to wrench my

bones apart as I swallowed water and gave a desperate plunge downward in my last bit of consciousness, and came up to the surface just by the boat's side.

My comrade clutched my head by the hair, and when I was in the boat again safe I almost hugged him with affection, the wind and the flying clouds overhead, all sunlit, made me feel delirious as I thought how near I had been to never seeing them again! At last, after a terrible struggle, we landed some miles round the coast. Our hands were bleeding and blistered through straining at the oars to keep the boat's head to the seas, and desperate bailing to stop us from being swamped.

As we landed on the beach and pulled our boat safely up the shore, an old native man came running down from the palm patch and offered us shelter, which we gladly accepted. He turned out to be an old servant of some Mataafa chief, full of spite for being out of favour with his late illustrious master, but proud of being a late vassal to Samoan royal blood. He had a nice roomy homestead, two large rooms. Though he was old, his wife looked only twenty. They had one child, a few months old. My chum and I kissed it affectionately and drank bowls of kava which our host kindly gave us. We stayed the night, slept on sleeping mats. All night torrents of rain fell, the hurricane and wind nearly blew the house down and lifted me off my mat, for the room was open three feet from the ground all round in the Samoan style. It was a warm wind; with the moan of the seas breaking on the shore below, the moaning



PARA RUBBER-TREE

of the bending coco-palms and the wailing cry of the baby at regular intervals, I had no sleep.

In the morning we went down to the boat; our fishing tackle, revolver and my coat had vanished from the locker. I had my suspicions about our host, and we felt very much annoyed, for we could not go back and accuse him after his hospitality, as we were only absolutely certain in our suspicions, and had no witnesses to prove we had been betrayed—like the astute Fijian maids about whom I told you some pages back. I deeply regretted the incidents of that cruise, which caused my not being able to keep the appointment with Mrs Stevenson.

When I arrived back I went to their home, but they were all away on a cruising trip, I think. I stayed with Holders, my comrade, for some little time after that, long enough to teach him to play simple melodies on the fiddle, and on those nights I composed some of the melodies of my "Entr'actes," "Song of the Night," "The Monk's Dream" and many others which have since been embodied in my compositions for pianoforte, orchestra and military bands.¹ I also composed at that time my waltz, "A Soldier's Dream," which was played at Government House, Sydney. I received a letter of praise from Sir Henry Parkes and felt very pleased; that waltz became popular all over New South Wales, although it was unpublished, and played from manuscript.

HOLDERS was not one of the polished kind, but he was better, being a brave good-hearted fellow, and I

¹ Published by Boosey & Co., London.

liked his companionship all the more because he did not drink. Though I found drunken men amusing in my travels of the South Seas, my instincts secretly detested them, and gave me a kind of sorrow akin to sympathy for men so afflicted.

Eventually we both secured berths on a large schooner, bound for Fiji. On board was an American missionary who had not been long out from Home. He became very friendly with me, and I liked him very well, and there was a link of comradeship between us for we were both homesick. The crew were nearly all Samoans who cheerily sang the whole day and night. I slept in the deck-house with them as there was no room aft, where I should have slept, as we had four passengers. The skipper was never sober, and came to the deck-house one night and continued to sing. I think he had got the delirium tremens. He made us crowd sail on when it was blowing a gale and take sail in when a four-knot breeze was on; swore that he saw spirits dancing on the deck, and that the natives had put evil spirits and demons on his track. He went off to sleep at last, and I and the mate took charge of the ship and the passengers were much relieved, and the Samoans started off on their old idol songs *ad libitum*.

Two of them had fine voices; their songs were old folk-lore chants telling of South Sea heroes. I would get them to sing to me and so learnt them off by heart and played them on the violin, but the melodies all seemed to lose their wild atmosphere

when played as simple strains and divided into bars, unwedded to the Samoan words and the intonation of the wild childlike voices of the Islanders. Most of the South Sea strains are in minor keys; I give you here as near as possible my own impression of the melodies as I heard them sung.

Andante. Chant Style. Composed by A.S.M.

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When we arrived at Viti-Levu, I went ashore and stayed for several days and had the pleasure of hearing a Fijian princess sing native songs. She was a granddaughter of King Thakambau, and resided in one of the best houses in Suva, was a good hand at playing the guitar and took an interest in me, as I was a musician; her husband, a Fijian chief, had a deep mellow voice which was astonishingly musical for a Fijian, and they sang together to me in their native home, squatting on their mats side by side. The princess was a beautiful-looking woman for a full-blooded native, and I spent a good deal of time with them, and really appreciated her songs and playing. Some of the melodies she sang had the Western note in them. As near as I can I reproduce here one of my own impressions of a characteristic Samoan song's note.

SAMOAN LOVE SONG ¹

MINOR.
Moderato. mp Words and Music by A.S.M.

Mia Ta - lo - fa, The chiefs are sleep - ing, the
cres. seas in moon - light *dim.* sing. etc. The

REFRAIN. *Moderato. con espressione.*

night-winds are sing - ing my Ma - la - boo maid
 Un - der the co - - - co - palms. etc. COPYRIGHT.

I could not stand the skipper of the boat which we had come across by (I think the name of the schooner was the *Nelson*) and so I left, and my friend Holders with me. We got into pretty low water in about a week, and both eventually secured a berth on another ship, a small barque, which was going to the Marquesas Islands. The mate was ill, and went into hospital at Suva, and I secured the berth. She was not sailing for two or three days, and so we were still stranded, beachcombers and cashless, but I met a Mr Fisher, who was a wealthy trader and had settled on the Islands. I went up to his house with

¹ "Mia Talofa": Samoan waltz, for pianoforte and as a song. Also for orchestra and military band. Published in London.

my comrade and took the violin for an evening's pleasure. We arrived a few minutes before the dining hour (in the true poet and musician style of the South Seas and Western Seas) because we had not a cent between us and on the Islands it was a great breach of etiquette not to treat the host before the meal hour. Mr and Mrs Fisher were on the lookout for us and our programme went off well, for we sat down to dinner almost immediately. We had a splendid time, received some cash in hand, warmly shook our host's hand, and departed late at night in a misty dream, for we were not used to the strong wine which our host was so liberal with, and seemed to walk on air as our legs went up the white moonlit forest track as we tramped along together merrily singing years ago.

Next morning we were aboard the boat and stopped on her till she sailed, and I think we put in about six weeks of cruising, calling at Samoa and then going to the Marquesas Islands. I went ashore at nearly all the old places. In Hiva-oa, my comrade and I saw the old cannibal courts wherein the grand "Long Pig" feasts had taken place as the natives ate the bodies of their dead who had been slain in battle. It was sunset as we stood by the big banyans gazing on the terrible arena and the sacrificial altar, whereon the mortally wounded, still lingering, received the last club smash, that sent their souls to Eternity and their bodies to the stomachs of mortality, and as I watched the natives, who with childlike eyes stood by us cadging for money, sunset blazed on the

primeval ruins of that terrible amphitheatre and before my eyes the vision of the dying sun-fused twilight lay over everything. I saw the tiers of long-ago cannibal guests arise in the mist, with their hideous faces aglow with hunger as the mangled victims fizzed on the cannibalistic spits. I heard the sounds of the long-dead laughter as the coco-palms and banyans around sighed into silence as a gust of wind came in from the sea, and with the horror of what must have been, I kicked the native and pushed him away as he clambered, begging for money all the time that I was watching and dreaming.

We then went to the native village, and became acquainted with a half-caste Marquesan. He was a convivial old fellow and followed us wherever we went. We could not get rid of him ; we gave him many hints, and even told him at last that we wanted to kneel and pray together and would he please depart and leave us to our devotion ; but no, he was as relentless as Fate and immovable, and so, not being able to kill him, we put up with him. He took us miles away to show us another old arena where the Marquesans had in the past fought their historic duels, till the victim fell and was eaten.

Tired out we slept in a little stone house till day-break ; it was a snug little room, with stone shelves in it. On one of these I slept, out of the reach of tropical lizards and other odious insects. In the morning I asked our "old man of the sea" what the house was, and found that it was an old dead-house, a kind of cooling place where the bodies had been kept

before they were cooked. I had slept soundly on that shelf. I didn't even dream! And how many thousands of dead men, dead girls, dead mothers and children had slept their last cold sleep on the spot whereon I had innocently lay, breathing and warm? I had a cold chill on me the whole morning as I thought of the dead of the past, and how I had warmed that last bed. At last we were rid of the half-caste and rambled about on our own, and saw hundreds of natives at a village near Taapauku. It was a beautiful spot by the mountain. Banyans, tropic palms, coco-nuts and gorgeous-coloured flowers swarmed everywhere, as between the patches of trees, across tracks passed the natives, almost naked, singing and carrying loads of fruit, etc., as they stooped and went into their native dens that stood in the cleared spaces.

That night we saw two Marquesans fighting with clubs. They were jealous over a woman; there were no other whites (excepting some Chinamen) near at the time, and we could do nothing. The fight did not last long. They held their clubs in a firm grip, and swayed and ran round each other seeking a weak spot. They were swarthy men, and very powerful-looking, and as we watched under the verandah of a native house, down came the club on the head of the smaller man and the blood and brain matter splashed all over the place as the skull flattened like an egg-shell: I will say no more, excepting that I felt sick for some days. On the way back we met our "old man of the sea" again,

but managed to give him the slip as we ran down a side forest track as fast as we could go.

Telling you of him reminds me of an experience I had in Sydney once. I had met by chance, in a saloon in George Street, an old man who had been a sailor. He had been drinking, and I treated him, as he kept imploring me to do so, and at length he became very confidential. I gathered from all he said that he was a social outcast; but nevertheless I liked him. He was really a most queer character and in the end became an intolerable nuisance. He managed to know where I lived, and wherever I would go he would go, and if I got ahead of him, and was remorsefully pleased that I was at last rid of him, up he would come! He had the instinct of a bloodhound, I think.

I lived in a little two-roomed wooden house near the bush beyond Leichardt, off the Paramatta Road, Sydney. He was homeless, and so I took him in and gave him a bed on the floor, but I was down on him if he was drunk. His name was Naylor and I think he was a Welshman; he had a beautiful voice, and though he was an old villain, he would sing most pathetically as I played the violin by night in our little home. He was so drunk repeatedly, and caused me such sorrow, that at last I turned him out. I thought I had got rid of him, but as I lay asleep at midnight I was suddenly awakened by hearing the sound of singing coming toward my home, down the road—it was Naylor! for I recognised the voice. He was singing “Barney, take me Home again!”

and, notwithstanding my stern resolution to have no more to do with him, my heart was touched and made me follow my impulses as the silence of the night was broken by the song of appeal. I crept to my window and peeped through a chink; there he stood white bearded and drunk in the moonlight, appealing to me with his song over and over again. Of course I let him in, and night after night I was disturbed by that old song.

One night the crisis arrived. I was suddenly awakened by a terrible crash at my front door, and the old "Barney Dear" was being sung with ferocious energy. I had overslept; he was outside terribly drunk, imploring to be let in. I was obdurate; and would not stir. At last his voice as he shouted, "Dear old Middy, let me in, I've got a roasted fowl here for you," woke my curiosity, so anguish-stricken and appealing was his voice that I jumped up at once and looked out of the window. A large fire was blazing in my yard, and over it, spluttering and fizzling on an extemporised spit, was a fowl cooking! Unplucked, entrails and all, there it steamed, just as he had stolen it off the roost of my neighbour's fowl-house, a hundred yards off.

As I opened the door I gazed sternly at him. He seemed surprised that I was not as pleased as he was with himself. I positively refused to eat of the fowl, and at this he got into a fearful rage, and kicked it as it hung on the spit. Well, I even forgave him for that night's work. He's dead now, and I always feel a bit sad when anyone sings, "Barney, take me

Home again." I remember years after, when in England, I sat by the fire telling my mother and sisters of old Naylor, and how relieved they seemed when I told them I had let the old man in, when he had sung, "Barney, take me Home again."

It is strange how secretly in our hearts we have a world of sympathy for the villain, especially old ones, and had Naylor been a good pious old man he would have never been heard of.

A very strange thing happened some years after, when I was mate on a Clipper boat. A Welsh sailor by the name of Naylor, a member of my crew, showed a strong resemblance to the old Naylor of my Sydney experience, so much so that, one night while I was on the poop, I called him up and said, "Are you any relation to a Lloyd Naylor, an old man whom I had the pleasure of knowing in Australia?"

"That must have been my father," he said, and he was delighted to know that I had known his father. I did not tell him of my experiences with his father, but said, "Naylor, your father was a fine man, a great friend of mine," and sneaking the fellow into my cabin, I opened a bottle of whisky, poured him out a tumbler full to the brim, and by the way he smacked his lips I perceived that he was a real chip of the old block.



NATIVE POTTERY

XVIII

Back in Apia—Robert Louis Stevenson—Chief Mate Herberts lost Overboard—Savage Island—Thoughts of the Workman's Train to London and back to the Suburbs

FROM Hiva-oa we went to Fatou Hiva, then to the Paumotu group that sparkled like Isles of Eden in the vast shining water-tracks of the Pacific; for miles and miles there are islands dotted, and I felt some of the enthusiasm that R.L.S. felt when he visited the same Islands, and he did not exaggerate about the beauty and novelty of the Marquesas and Paumotus group. I heard him telling some friends of his experiences at Hiva-oa and elsewhere as he delightedly told them anecdotes of Marquesan etiquette, and I daresay I saw him writing some of the experiences which he gave to the world in his books, for one day in Apia, while I was having some dinner in the German Hotel, I sauntered around and, gazing through one of the doors, saw Stevenson quite alone, sitting at a little table with a bundle of paper by him, writing; he stooped very much while he was writing, which must have been very bad for anyone who suffered from chest complaint.

By his side was a glass of something; he was quite oblivious to all around him, and did not notice anything. I think he often went to that silent hotel room so as to get away from everyone and write.

A gentleman came into the bar while I was there, and walking towards the door of the room wherein Stevenson was writing he was spotted by the hotel manager, who shouted to him that the room was engaged, and I believe Stevenson tipped the manager of the hotel so as to be left to himself.

After calling at Society Islands we left for Samoa, where once again I met the incorrigible Hornecastle. He had been away to the Solomon Group, and as I strolled out the next morning after my arrival, I met him on the beach in a hot argument with two Samoan sailors, who were demanding their wages.

“Not a God-damned cent,” Hornecastle was shouting, as I came up. It appeared they had contracted to do a week’s job and had done one day of it and then demanded the full week’s money. That was real Samoan all over, especially those who were Christianised; they were terrible hypocrites; would do you by tricks, and then go off to the mission class and shout “Me good Samoan mans, all good, no steal. Halee, hal-ee ju-ja!” rolling their eyes skyward terrifically the whole time. Some of them are really serious in their belief and they are then very dangerous. I met a fierce-looking fellow one night and he started to try and reform me. I was sitting talking to Hornecastle and two Americans at the time, and they had been giving him a drink or two and then they started to chaff him about the missionaries, and I laughed at something Hornecastle said about a missionary who had married; in a

moment he lifted a knife, and if I had not dodged swiftly I should have had it in my ribs up to the hilt.

He was not a full-blooded Samoan. I have never seen a Samoan who had once accepted your friendship turn traitor afterwards. But even the true Samoans are not so trustworthy when they have got the religious mania on them; they are a superstitious people, and the solemn-voiced missionaries chanting into their childish ears create extraordinary illusions in their minds. Some go raving mad and others go off to the other Isles and live a life of isolation and devote all their remaining days to begging the one great white God to save them from hell fire. I have seen them myself in this miserable state, deserted by all their relatives, and when they become dangerous they often suddenly disappear, for the Samoans quietly finish them off on dark nights! They club them and bury them with sorrow in their hearts, just the same as Europeans do, only our methods are perhaps the unkindest—we bury our insane in an asylum and they bury them under the forest earth and flowers. They do have lunatic asylums in the Islands, but they are for the milder cases, and the Government found that the incarcerating principle was very much abused, for the Samoans soon got to know of the free food, lodgings and comforts of the asylums of the South Seas, and drastic measures had to be taken to end the numerous cases of mild madness that kept seizing Samoans and Fijians who were down on their luck and wanted

a rest. I do not know what the South Sea Islands are like now, but when I was there penal servitude was one of the greatest honours that could be conferred on the middle-class Fijians, Tongans, and Samoans, for they got food in the prisons that they only smelt outside, also warm comfortable beds, and when the discharge day arrived they could be seen leaving the prison gate wailing bitterly over the cruel flight of time! Nor is this an attempt of mine to be funny. I have seen the natives deliberately come on to a schooner's deck, and right in front of my eyes start to unscrew the cabin skylight to steal it, so that they could get, as they say, "in pison place."

Again I fell in with a "new chum" who had just arrived and cleared from a schooner. Together we secured positions as superintendent post-diggers for the German Commissioners.

We had several natives under us. It was a look-out job; we had to watch and see that they toiled without cessation. At first we were kind to them, but it did not pay; the natives were very much like children, they soon took advantage, and so we soon changed our manner, looked stern as charity organisation officials, and once more obtained the approval of Van Haustein, the head overseer.

We had been extremely short of cash. The store-keepers required the wherewithal down (as elsewhere) before parting with necessaries which we had not got, and which we anxiously needed to make us respectable Samoan citizens. We did not stick

the job more than two weeks. It was squally weather the whole time, and my eyes often inclined seaward as longing thoughts came to me of home and England.

About this time I once more met Stevenson. It was a wild night. I had just returned from a short cruise to one of the off Isles of the main Samoan group; rain was falling heavily, in true South Sea style. I had taken refuge in a native bungalow by Apia beach. Close by lived my friend the Samoan shell-seller, whom I have before mentioned. We were almost drenched to the skin, and were talking with some natives and an old shell-back who also had taken shelter, when out of the darkness, across the open track, came hurrying Stevenson. He was dressed in a large extemporised hood of sail-canvas to protect him from the torrent of rain, probably lent to him by some friendly trading skipper. Breathless he stood beside us, was quite chummy with the natives, and seemed in a most amiable mood; he was smoking, talking to the natives one side in Samoan and joking with the shell-back, who "sir-ed" him, the other side. It was a terrible night. As we stood there we could hear the seas thundering against the barrier-reefs as they rebounded heavily and threw their manes of spray shoreward, where lay the wrecked warship *Adler* with a broken back, high and dry, thrown up by the hurricane of some time back. Overhead moaned the bending coco-palms that stood scattered about amongst the native bungalows. Soon the roof of our shelter started to

badly leak, whereupon we all decided to make a dive for the old shell-seller's home, hard by. Stevenson led the way, enjoying the venture, laughing and running like a schoolboy. Though the distance was only a hundred yards or so, we all received a good soaking, Stevenson excepted, who held his canvas sail-sheet with arms outstretched as he ran, making a sheltering roof over his head. The shell-seller was asleep on his mat, but upon our arrival at once got up. He slept "all standing," in the middle-class South Sea style, and was not overburdened with clothes. Lighting his candles, he did his best to welcome and entertain us. As I have before said, the walls, indeed his home itself, seemed composed of shining shells, all the varieties of the South Seas, pearl, red, white and glittering rows, small ones and some weighing half-a-hundredweight, made up the length and breadth of his walls, beautiful shapes and curves, glittering as they reflected the candle gleams. As we all stood gazing in the gloom, Stevenson forgot the late hour and the rain, and with enthusiasm went off into natural history as the old fellow, who was an enthusiast in his art, got very delighted to be able to expatiate over the various specimens, the depths and dangers he had encountered whilst gathering together his vast shell tribe. He was overjoyed when Stevenson bargained with him for a quantity, and salaamed in a ridiculous way, till Stevenson's mouth curved with humour as he strove to be polite to the old chap every time that his garment, a torn sailor's shirt, touched the ground in front as he bowed!

I do not know if that particular shell-house has been described by visitors to Apia of that time ; if not, it should certainly have been numbered amongst the curio sights, both for its ingenious construction and for the combined artistic and commercial instinct of the Polynesians that it revealed. As we stood smoking in the doorway that faced inland, we could hear the songs and laughter of traders and sailors who drank deeply in the small grog shanty not far off. I have no doubt that Stevenson did not seek its shelter because of its extra gloomy side rooms kept by dubious Samoan women, and to be seen going in or out on a dark night would not enhance the reputation of anyone. It must have then been close on midnight ; the rain suddenly ceased sufficiently to encourage us all to go out and venture on a run for it. Between the squalls we all made headway, tacking from bungalow to bungalow ; some of the inhabitants we found awake, squatting just inside the door-hole. As we dodged from shelter to shelter Stevenson seemed to enjoy the whole thing as much as a boy on a truant night out. Of course, we all were familiar enough with native homes, but the late hour, the rain-dodging, the jovial receptions we had as we suddenly all scrambled into them without ceremony, was an experience that had a deal of novelty in it, and at times whilst we were on flight strikingly weird, for as the moon overhead burst through the flying scud, Stevenson with his oilskin canvas sail stretched out by his extended arms flapping looked like some forest fiend running,

only his long tight-breeched legs revealed as he flew ahead of us all across the moonlit track to the next shelter. As I write it seems like a dream to me that the lively boyish-mannered man of that stormy night in Apia years ago was the now idealised poet and author, Robert Louis Stevenson.

Before I left the Islands I went off on a schooner to Ellice Islands and then on to Santa Cruz and called at the Islands of the Solomon Group. In a typhoon that struck us fifty miles north of Rotuma we lost the chief mate, Herberts, and a Chinaman who was a deck hand. I was asleep on deck at the time right aft, snug by the stern sheets. Before I went to sleep the night was calm and clear, the stars shining brilliantly all around, and we were just drifting to a lazy breeze at about four knots an hour. Suddenly I was awakened by a terrible crash and an awful typhoon was on; the seas were rising rapidly and it seemed that hail and rain were falling in a deluge, but the sky was quite clear overhead, for it was the rifts of the waves all around being whipped off by the wind. I scrambled along the deck, the skipper was calling me. "Hi, hi, sir," I shouted, and in a trice we got the sails in, and then, as I stood by the skipper holding on to some cordage for dear life as she lay over, the seas lifted their heads to windward and as their tops hissed and foamed a tremendous sea came over. I distinctly felt the boat sink under the weight of that ocean of water. The skipper grabbed hold of me and I grabbed hold of him; the sailors forward by the fo'c'sle saved



LOADING BANANAS

themselves by rushing in the fo'c'sle alley-way. We heard a cry above the thundering of the waves and then the vessel righted ; the skipper was overboard head and shoulders, half through poop bulwark bars and cordage ! I had hold of his leg ! I was holding on to save myself, and so saved my life and his too ! Two sailors came to our assistance ; we were both half insensible but scrambled to our feet as Alf, the bos'n, shouted " Sir, the mate and the Chinese hand have gone overboard." I shall never forget those words, and the sudden realisation of what it meant, as we all stood and gazed out across the black waters as the mountainous seas arose slowly and grandly, blazing with phosphorous foams, and as they travelled onward the typhoon blew with such terrific force that our clothes were ripped up ! It was impossible to attempt to save them, our boats were all washed away ; once we all thought we heard a faint cry across the waters, and that was the last of John Herberts, chief mate, and Ching the deck hand.

I stuck to that skipper and eventually arrived back at Vanua Levu, and went over on a cutter to Samoa again, and for a long time I was despondent and had sleepless nights, as I would lay awake and remember.

Before I left Samoa I went over to Savage Island with Castle, who seemed at that time mighty pleased with himself over some contract he had got to take a cargo of copra and other stuff to Tonga. It was at Savage Island that I stayed with an Englishman

who had married a native woman. He had several children and they seemed very happy. I stayed with him for two weeks before returning to Apia with Castle. He would often talk to me about England in a sentimental way and knock the ash out of his pipe and sigh, and yet he seemed, as I have said, happy in his free life, for he had a beautiful plantation and grew all kinds of tropic fruit, and his wife was a most pleasant woman; indeed I think he was much happier than thousands of English people in old England who live in the London suburbs and toil their lives away to bring up their children,

And for their sakes eternally
Ride up to London Town,
Each morning pulled up in the train
And each night pulled back down!

XIX

Father Damien and the Leper Girl, as told to me by Raeltoa the Samoan

I WILL now tell you of one of those missionaries who were sincere in their faith, unselfish in their ambition and moreover suffered in sympathy over the sorrows of the sick. In a village home about eight miles inland from Apia, I had the good fortune to come across a pure-blooded Polynesian who was a poet and musician. I think I stayed with him for about five or six weeks, but in that little time we became the best of friends. I well remember his intelligent brown eyes gazing delightedly around as I played the violin to him and his pretty daughter, a child of eight years, as she sat on a mat by the door and clapped her little brown hands with hysterical pleasure at the sweet noise of the "piddle," as she called my fiddle. I would extemporise a chanting accompaniment to his native compositions as he sat beside me, and his wife sang away in the shadows of the homestead, like a wild bird. She, too, had a beautiful face; her eyes were very earnest-looking. They had four children altogether, and as I sat by night in their snug little room, I could see the four little brown heads lying fast asleep in a row in the next room, all stretched out on one large sleeping mat.

Raeltoa, for that was his name, was a Catholic and had known Father Damien, who lived and died just about that time on Molokai, the leper island of the Hawaiian Group. As a boy he had lived with Damien in Honolulu, and had been a servant to him, and so I heard first hand from Raeltoa little incidents of Damien's life and character, the man who has since those days become famous the world over for his devotion to the lepers and who sacrificed his own life so that he could minister to their needs and brighten their lives of living death with the hope of another life beyond their own loathsome existence. All lepers were searched for and caught as though they were escaped convicts, and then exiled for ever to Molokai, a bare lonely isle of the Pacific, whereon they lived in wretched huts, wailing their days away as the dreadful scourge ate deeper into their wasting bodies. One by one as the months and years crept by they died and were buried by the solitary missionary Damien, who lived alone with them and buried thousands with his own hands. Eventually he contracted the dreadful scourge himself and died, but not till he had caught the ear of civilisation afar and had vastly improved the conditions of the leper isle and built better huts and made the lepers more contented with their lot.

Well, as I was saying, Raeltoa knew him well, and told me that, though Damien was very morose and would get at times into a terrible rage with him, he was a good master and would treat him and all the natives who were under his care as

though they were his own children, "and he most true to God," said Raeltoa, as the tears crept into his eyes over old memories. Then he told me how Damien would sit up all night long "talking to great God playing and playing" (meaning praying). It appeared that Raeltoa had a relative who had signs of leprosy. She was a Samoan girl of about twenty years of age, and when the Government announced that all the lepers were to be exiled to Molokai she was broken-hearted, for she was "nice happy and much love my brother," said Raeltoa. One night, about three months after the search parties had been in force, she came to Raeltoa's home, and flinging her arms about him, wailed and appealed to him to save her. The tears were in the Samoan's eyes as he told me all this. It appeared that a jealous woman, who was also in love with the man that the poor leper girl loved, had told the missionaries or the authorities that Loloa, for that was her name, had signs of the leprosy patch on her shoulders, and so they were after her. For several weeks she had been hiding in the forest, trembling and frightened out of her life, till at last, hungry and nearly dead with grief, she suddenly appeared at Raeltoa's home. He had hidden her for several days, and then she agreed to go with him to Damien and ask for his protection. One night, with Raeltoa, she came out into the forest, almost resigned to her fate—for it had come to her ears that her lover was paying attention to the woman who had put the leper-hunters on her track, and now she felt that she had

nothing much to live for—and the poor forsaken leper girl took the risk and appeared in the doorway of Damien's room at midnight with her one true friend by her side. In her childish native language, she told Damien the truth as he sat in his hut, gazing steadily in front of him, for it was his duty to give her up to the authorities. As she knelt before him with uplifted hands, her eyes made more beautiful through the earnestness of despair, Damien still gazed upon her as though fascinated by her sorrow and helpless loveliness, and then he bade her rise, and told Raeltoa to take her home again, and hide her before he was tempted to do that which he ought to do. So Raeltoa took her away again and Damien and he built her a little hut by the forest, where she could be isolated and cared for, "and she was there for many many moons," said Raeltoa to me, as I listened.

"And what happened then?" I asked Raeltoa, and he bowed his head and said: "Loloa was happy, and she loved the white missionary, 'Father Damien,' more than she loved the man whom her rival had stolen from her, and so she was happy," and as he said this he sighed and dropped his eyes, and I knew that he had also loved the beautiful leper girl Loloa. "And what became of Loloa?" I asked again.

"They came one night when all was silent, excepting the sighing of the coco-palms by the voice of the sea. I was alone at my home dreaming, when I heard the scream far off in the forest, and I knew

then that they had found her, and they took her away, and I never saw her again, and Father Damien prayed for many days and many nights and did eat of no food, and I saw the white missionary cry, and cry, to himself many times, and a long time after he too went to Molokai and one year after Loloa died and Damien buried her," and saying this the Samoan placed his arm gently round his wife, who had sat listening in a wondering way. She could not understand all the language which we were speaking in, but she nestled closer to him as he spoke, for his manner was earnest, and his eyes had tears in them. I also was touched, for I knew I had heard the sad truth of a terrible drama of life, and I saw it all in vivid mental flashes as Raeltoa eagerly told me the secret of his heart and the truth that he had known, and I read the affection and compassion in his eyes for the woman he had loved and the splendid friendship for the man who had befriended her in her terrible sorrow, and who afterwards shared her fate, and lies buried near her on the lonely leper Isle of Molokai. I am glad that now, years after, I am able to tell to the world through my book that which I heard from the lips of Raeltoa the Samoan.¹

I made his little daughter "Damien," for he had called her after the leper missionary, a small violin and bow. I sat all day over the job, and made it from a cigar-box, and fixed two wire strings on it. It was not much of a success, but the child and

¹ Raeltoa lived at Honolulu for eight years before he returned to Samoa with his parents.

parents were delighted, and as the tiny brown girl toddled about with nothing on, grinding away mimicking me, as she pulled the stick to and fro over the strings, I was very much amused and pleased that I had done it, but I was extremely sorry after, for the poor mite became fond of me and followed me into the forest, and as I lifted her up to carry her over a fallen tree, my foot slipped and, falling with her in my arms, I broke her leg. I was in a terrible state as I carried her home to Raeltoa. As tenderly as I could I held her, and when I took her into the hut I told them what had happened. Instead of them both flying at me in a rage, as I thought they would surely do, they both quickly reassured me, and Raeltoa went to Apia, got a German doctor, and in a fortnight she was rapidly recovering, and I would often sit by her and pick at the fiddle-strings and amuse her. I taught her to say several English words which she soon picked up and laughed delightedly as she repeated them over and over again.

Raeltoa would take me away to the coco-nut plantations where he worked, and the natives collected and dried the heaps of copra which was bought by the traders and taken away to Australia. The scenery round his home was very beautiful. The slopes by Vaea Mountain ran down to his homestead, thickly covered with jungle, mangroves, guavas and bananas, banyan and many other tropical trees, the names of which I did not know. There were at that time several other bungalows

hard by, wherein lived married native couples and some of the white traders with Samoan wives. They were the real old beachcombers and "black-birders" who had made and were still making good incomes by stealing natives, and selling them to the stealthy slavers that called in Apia harbours presumably for cargoes of copra, but really for natives, whom they enticed on board by splendid promises of a glorious sea-trip. They baited their promises with spoonfuls of condensed milk and cabin-biscuits, and while the natives stood on deck smacking their lips with delight, up went the anchor, and before the wretched natives realised what it was to really leave their native land, they were powerless and far at sea. I've seen many a Samoan mother rocking herself to and fro wailing and lamenting the loss of her bonny son and very often lamenting the loss of a daughter too.

Raeltoa and I went to the top of Vaea Mountain once; when you are half-way up you can look right across Apia and see the beautiful bay and farther across the sea. The jungle at some parts was so thick that we had to cut our way through it. I found some pretty tropical bird-nests, and as we climbed up the frigate birds flew over our heads. We eventually got to the top of the seaward side, right up against the sky. It was very silent and beautiful, almost noiseless, excepting for a bird singing now and again in the big-leafed dark green scrub that grew thickly just below. I did not dream as I stood up there that I was standing on the spot

which was to be the silent and beautiful tomb of the man who was living miles away down by the river that ran seaward, for that is where R.L.S. lived in his secluded home, "Vailima." I am sure that no poet who ever lived has found such a grand silent spot for his long rest as R.L.S. found on the top of that mountain that stands for ever staring seaward. I often look up at the moon on stormy nights under other skies, and fancy I see it shining over Vailima Mountain, dropping its silver tide over that lonely tomb, and on the jungle and forest trees of the slopes all around, and over the highways of the sea where now thunder the mail steamers bound for South America.

It was about that time that I made the acquaintance of a gentleman named Joyce, who had been a chemist in Sydney. He was a remarkable-looking old fellow and was touring for his health. He had small grey quick eyes, and a monstrous beard, and having no hair on his head he had managed in a most clever way to lift his heavy grey side whiskers up over his eyes and on to his bald head, so that when his hat was on the whiskers protruded and looked as though they were genuine locks in large quantity under his hat.



COCONUT PALMS AND PASTURE LAND

XX

Mr Joyce and Mythologies—Numea and the Convicts—I play Violin to Native King and get a Knighthood!!—I lead a Native Orchestra of Barbarian Instruments

JOYCE took a great fancy to me and I to him, and I was eventually engaged as his travelling secretary. He was very fond of music and would get me to play his favourite melodies, and as I entertained him he would sit by his bungalow with his hands on his knees, and often would give me a gracious smile as he gazed through his big-rimmed spectacles. He took a passage on the schooner *Barcoo*, bound for Rarotonga, and I went with him. We had some terrible weather on the voyage and poor old Joyce was sea-sick the whole time, and as we skimmed along with all sails set heaving to a broadside swell he looked the picture of woe as he spewed in the schooner's scuppers. In his sorrow he forgot his hat, and his whiskers pulled up and tied in a knot on top of his head doing duty as hair gave him a woeful look and I felt very tenderly for him; for he could not help being old and bald—could he?

Rarotonga was a lovely Island. As they loosed the anchor ready to drop I gazed shoreward and saw the grand mountainous country brilliant under the tropical sun and covered with vegetation. Close to the shore stood the coco-palms, and by the sheds

on the beach under the shelter of the palms stood the natives, fine-looking men and women they were, some half-dressed and some only in their lava-lavas. As soon as we dropped the anchor they swarmed round the schooner in their catamarans, bringing us corals and other curios of the South Seas. That night we enjoyed ourselves ashore, and were specially entertained by the King and Queen. They were both dressed in old dressing-gowns, and as they sat on the throne I played them a selection on the violin and the King knighted me on the spot.

Joyce was delighted with all that he saw and kept saying that his health was improving rapidly, and to tell the truth he got badly smitten with love over a Rarotongan girl, and under very suspicious circumstances disappeared for twenty-four hours. Next day he took me inland and up in the hills he visited the natives in their primeval homes. There were a lot of missionaries about and they all looked happy and prosperous. Joyce was deeply interested in the mythologies and genealogies of the Island races, and would go inland for miles so as to investigate native manners and characteristics. I remember well how he would see a fine specimen of the Polynesian fair sex walk out from her forest home, and rush up to her, take his rule from his waistcoat pocket, start to measure her from head to foot, open her mouth wide and examine her teeth, all the time taking notes down in his pocket-book, while the astounded native stood like a machine, obedient as a statue, knowing that a good

tip would end the examination. "Of decided Maori origin," he would mutter to himself as he lifted the limbs up and examined the soles of the patient's feet.

I must say I enjoyed Joyce's society, for he was immensely amusing and so serious in all that he did. Sometimes he would run across a native with a face that suggested the palæolithic period, or a terrible Mongolian-nigger mixture, and then out came his camera and he would snapshot them with delight. He would measure their limbs and turning to me point at the hideous nose, or extraordinary pot-belly, and say, "My boy, this is a fine specimen of the neolithic age." Then he would start to give me a lecture as to the reasons of certain abnormal conditions, while the grinning native showed his big teeth and did the right about turn and stooped to show to Joyce the different parts of his anatomy.

The next day Joyce made me tramp right up to the forest that lay at the ridge of the inland mountains and that night we slept in a native bungalow with two old Rarotongan men who had promised to take Joyce into the hills and show him an Island South Sea god. It was a beautiful moonlight night. Joyce lay on the bed of leaves beside me asleep, his beard tied in a knot over his head so as to keep it well trained, and as I lay sleepless, watching and thinking, a shadow fell across the tiny room. "Look out, Mr Joyce," I shouted and not a moment too soon either, for there stood one of the Rarotongan old men with a war-club upraised. I sprang

to my feet and gave him a tremendous shove. He was a strong fellow, and as I fell he got hold of me with a firm grip, but I was desperate and strong too, and I made a great effort and got him under me, and then he fixed his teeth in a fleshy part of my shoulder as I gripped him by the throat with all my might. In the meantime Joyce had rubbed his eyes and was hastily searching around for something to strike the native with and then down came his camera, crash on the old man's head! His teeth at once relaxed their grip from my flesh and up he jumped and ran off out into the moonlit night, running fast with Joyce's camera in his hand, for that no doubt was what he was after.

We never saw him again, and poor old Joyce was so nervous, and so was I, over the night's experience that we gave up searching for old idols and left the inland solitudes and went back to the bay and, knocking about for a week or so, finally sailed for Numea, where Joyce spent days among the "libres" (time-expired convicts). He also took me into the prisons, where we saw the most wretched men and women in existence, suffering transportation for life, the map of despair seared on their faces as they gazed through the bars of their small whitewashed cells as Joyce and I were taken down the hushed corridors of the gaol wherein men were incarcerated and brooded till they died. We also saw the guillotine whereon the refractory convicts often met their end and man's inhumanity to man finished in sudden deep sleep.

I do not know what Numea is like now, but it was a kind of mortal hell in those days, and I was sorry that Joyce had taken me there as I lost a good deal of respect for human beings and all my faith in a fatherly overwatching Providence. Joyce for a while gloated over all that he saw and heard, but in a week he too sickened of Numea and ended the trip by taking a passage and paying mine also to Suva. There was a schooner just about to leave, so off we went, and after staying at Suva for a fortnight proceeded by another boat to Tonga and finally went across to Apia, where Joyce intended shipping for Sydney.

Once more I fell in with traders, and stayed at and around Samoa for another three months, during which time I went off roving and stumbled across the village where lived King Mataafa. I was introduced to him by one of the chiefs, a fine-looking Samoan of six feet, who turned out a good friend to me. Mataafa honoured me with his friendship, and I gave him great pleasure by my violin playing as I sat on a mat in the royal native house, and he sat in front of me drinking "kava," while his retinue, following the laws of Samoan etiquette, imitated the royal gestures. I stayed in the village for several days and I saw the chiefs and other Samoan royalty go through many weird court dances, dressed up in picturesque fashion, robed in stitched palm leaves, flowers and tappu-cloth lava-lavas. At all those functions I played the violin, and indeed I was the court musician and

conductor of the primitive orchestra of South Sea bone-clappers, with instruments of jingling shells and weird bamboo flutes and barbarian war-drums. All these were played, screamed and banged at full speed as I too fired away on my violin, doing my best to keep the *tempo* going, as the dancers did high-step kicks and flings that would have sent any European to the hospital with dislocated joints, but which did not even make those strange dancers perspire, with such ease and elegance did they perform the original dances of those climes. One old native woman with a big red blossom in her dark shaggy hair kept bowing to the ground and with pride revealed the tattooed descriptions of fighting warriors brandishing war-clubs, and other strange inscriptions which were deeply engraved from her shoulders to the lower part of her broad bare back!

I became acquainted at that feast with a young Island princess, the daughter of one of the Samoan or Tonga kings, I really forget which. She was very beautiful, and was one of the dance leaders, and as I watched her dance, attired in a robe of flowers, and broad tasselled rudi, she gave me many interesting glances and I must admit that I was extremely flattered and swiftly returned the compliment. When all was over I got Pomby, my friendly chief, to lead me to her and we gazed into each other's eyes with interest and embarrassment as we met, and that night by moonlight I had the pleasure of escorting her across the mangrove swamps which lay

across the track. I often saw her during my stay. She was the most English-looking South Sea Island girl I ever saw and had a voice like a musical bird and eyes that breathed the tender light of poetry, and I have often wondered what became of that beautiful princess of the Samoan Isles.

XXI

Little Damien's Grave in the Forest—I go peddling in the South Seas—The Art of Tattooing—About Apia and Samoan Life

I MET Raeltoa in Apia one afternoon. He caught hold of my hand and kissed it, and was full of grief, for poor little Damien, his daughter, was dead. I felt terribly cut up at hearing about it. She had caught influenza. Poor Raeltoa, I did my best to soothe him, and at his intense wish went out with him to the little grave. It was a terribly lonely pathetic spot—a tiny mound under a small coco-palm; the flowers were dying over my little dead friend, and Raeltoa and I stood there side by side and both felt very unhappy. I stayed with Raeltoa that night, and the next night, but did not sleep, for on the wall just by my bed hung the toy fiddle I had made and the bow. The strings were broken and the little warm hands that had held it lay in the grave. We were a sad family, Raeltoa, his wife, the children and I, and when I bade them good-bye they had tears in their eyes, and I also felt sad.

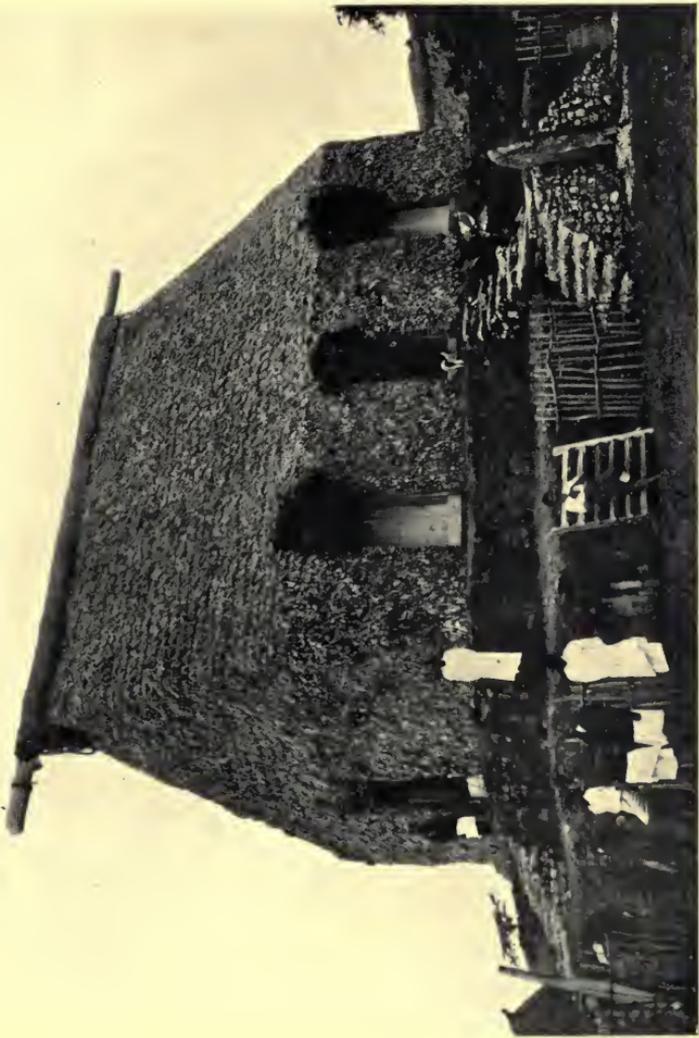
After bidding Raeltoa good-bye I found myself once more on my "beam-ends" and was extremely pleased to fall in with a young trader who hired me for canvassing purposes. He had purchased a quantity of trinkets and gaudy underclothing with the intention of travelling inland to the native

villages, and so for some time I was employed in bartering with the Samoan men and youths. I often watched their delight as they attired themselves, as soon as they had purchased our goods, in old shirts of various shades. The dusky maidens danced and whirled with hysterical pleasure as they pulled on the yellow stockings or stood smiling in white shoes, on their arms tin bracelets sparkling with jewels made of coloured glass, while my friend the Cockney trader perspired with delight over his bargains, and the sights that we saw. "Gaud lummy ducks!" and "Ain't this all right?" he would say as we watched the different youths and maidens doing double shuffles and turning head over heels as we dressed them up. Then we passed on under the tropic palms and mangroves to the forest track that led to the next village.

After I gave up peddling in the South Seas I became acquainted with a young apprentice who had left a ship at Apia, and he and I went off miles away to Tutuella and camped by Pangopango harbour and on the shore side we built a little hut and lived Robinson Crusoe lives. My comrade was a most cheerful companion and came from 'Frisco. We had fine times in that hut under the coco-nut trees, and lived mostly by fishing; the ports and lagoons below were crammed with small and big fish. We had an old catamaran and sailed around dressed in shirt and pants only, and we got so sunburnt that we were very nearly as brown as the natives. I could almost write a book about those times, so

varied and delightful they were. Arthur Pink, for that was my comrade's name, got a berth on the American steamer and went back to 'Frisco. He was a manly fellow, a staunch friend, and I was grieved to lose him. Before he went he got in with a Samoan tatau (tattooer) and had the history of Samoa tattooed on his back and legs, chiefs, women, birds and flowers, etc.; he tried to persuade me to get tattooed but I declined. Tattooing is a great art in the South Seas and the natives go through a deal of pain during the operations. Some of the flesh engravings are exceedingly well done; they perform the operation with an instrument something like a small tooth comb made of bone. The women try to outrival each other in the beauty of the tattooing which is mostly done on the lower part of the back and the thighs and hips, wonderful schemes of tattoo art.

Before closing this chapter I will give a few details about the Samoan and South Sea groups and the people thereon. The chief Isles of Samoa are Upolu, Savaii, Tutuella and Manua. They are all of volcanic origin, are surrounded by coral reefs and palm-shaded lagoons; from the shore side to the mountain slopes inland grow the dark coco-palms, the beautiful bread-fruit trees, mangroves, plantains and other wild tropical bush and fern-trees, wherein sparkle and flit gorgeous-coloured butterflies, green parrots and cooing droves of Samoan doves. In the shades of the forest and thick scrubby vegetation grow scented flowers and over the forest



NATIVE HOMESTEAD

paths as you pass along in the cool evenings the winds from seaward, hovering in the thickets steal out in whiffs to your nostrils, whiffs that smell like honey mixed with the ripe breath of decaying bush flowers ; on the slopes grows the beautiful hibiscus.

The mountain peaks, just inland, rise to the height of four thousand and five thousand feet. Dotted with forest they stand in rugged grandeur against the sky, and when the trade winds are blowing thick clouds come sweeping in from seaward, smash against the peaks on their swift flight, twisting and curling into a thousand magical shapes that fade away like monstrous herds of phantom elephants and distorted mammoth things as moonlight steals over the flying mist. Some of the mountains have enormous craters wherein grow baby forests, haunted by singing birds. In the gullies far below and miles beyond are native villages, homesteads that look like sheds, open all round so that the wind blows through and keeps them cool. From the forest up there you can see the heaving Pacific Ocean twinkling in the moonlight.

Apia is the capital of Upolu and has a very mixed population. The white buildings are mostly stores kept by Germans ; nearly all the large buildings are missionary halls and churches, German, American and English chapels, wherein they teach the natives hypocrisy and the misery of hell, and they are such adept pupils that they soon outrival their teachers in the great art of artfulness. A good many of the Samoans can read and write

English much better than the poorer class of England can. No Samoan would eat or even smell the food that the middle classes of England live on.

The main trade of Samoa is in copra. Copra is dried coco-nut and is exported to Australia and elsewhere. It is picked and cured and packed by the natives under the supervision of the whites, Germans and Americans, who get good profits and often make a fortune. It has never been known or recorded in any book that a Samoan ever made a fortune, which seems remarkable when we consider that it is his own country. There was a Samoan chief in the old days who endeavoured to make money out of his copra plantation, and bought up a lot of territory for coco-nut growing, but the missionaries, acting for the traders, frightened him out of his life, told him he would go to hell for putting his heathen mind into mundane things, and for his sins they fined him heavily and pinched all his copra plantation. He turned out to be a good chief and went into the building line and built many fine houses for the missionaries wherein were many rooms and great comforts. For this work he was given one tin of condensed milk a week and at the completion of the contract a paper-covered hymn-book.

The Samoans, Tongans and Tahitians are a handsome race, the men standing nearly six feet ; they are well built and of a sunburnt colour, have dark bright eyes, thick curly hair which they dye to a golden hue, their temperament is cheerful, and they

are always singing. The women are very good-looking, with roundish faces and full lips ; their noses are inclined to get flat as they get old ; they have earnest kind-looking eyes, well-shaped bodies and good limbs whereon the tattoo of ancient pictorial Samoa is beautifully engraved so as to show off the curves of the back and thighs and give them an antique appearance. In fact when they stand quite still under the coco-palms you could almost imagine they were beautifully finished statues if it were not for the flies buzzing round their eyes making them blink.

The native children are wistful, plump little mites ; much prettier than European infants and very intelligent. They can swim at three months old ; talk, run and sing at a year old, and if a Samoan had a child that sucked a dummy at six years old and wailed drivelling along in its pram at an advanced age, as the children of the wealthy class of England do, they would look upon it as a great curio and smother it for shame on the first starless night.

They are a clean race, and, except for the odour of the scented coco-nut oil which they polish their velvet skins with, do not smell of perspiration as the clothed white do in hot weather. A Samoan could not sleep or rest if a flea found him lying on his bed mat ; if a flea is discovered in a Samoan house they know that a new-chum missionary has been hovering near. The native girls and women are naturally modest and they will blush at any coarse words or suggestions from white men ;

but they are very fond of finery, and so often fall before the lure of the whites, who are generally thousands of miles away when the victim becomes a mother. At heart they are extremely religious and innately feel that some great Power watches over them, but this feeling is gradually dying away under the influence of the missionaries, who look so human to their eyes as they live in luxury and wax fat in the best Samoan houses. The Samoan has seen everything as it is and knows that the white missionaries and traders are human beings like himself, looking for all they can get and enjoying life to the uttermost, and so the glamour is fading in the South Seas as it has faded in the West, where many still believe all they hear and read about the converted heathen who would rather die than sell his honour.

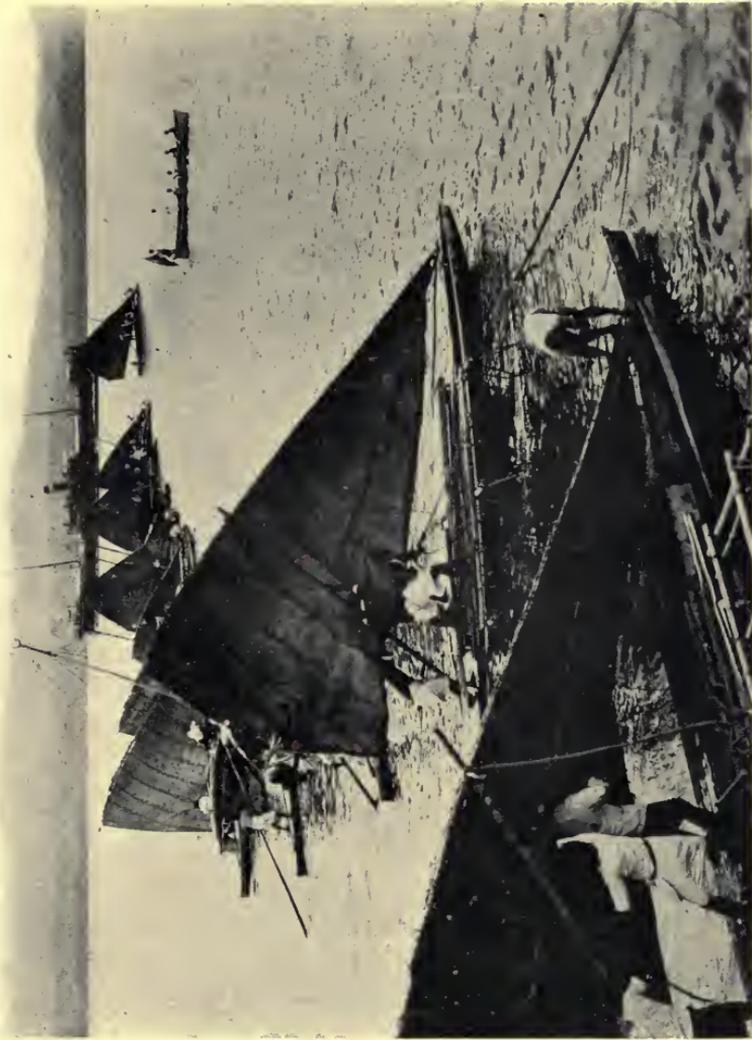
The whites consist chiefly of tourists, traders and missionaries of various sects. Many of the missionaries are honest in their profession, really believing all they teach, have weary eyes and remind one of those bedraggled flies that crawl up the window-pane looking for light. The traders are mostly rough, sunburnt, crooked-nosed men and do their best to do well and work hard at their various trades. Some are a strange mixture of the bushman and pirate. The honest ones toil hard to make money and settle down prosperous in a shanty, furnished with a large spittoon, pipes and cases of the best imported whisky, and a shakedown bed, as close as possible to the ground, so that they can crawl by night on their hands and knees from the

nearest Apia bar-room straight into bed. Stolid, square-headed Germans abound and speak as though they helped to create the universe, drink a deal on the sly, are very coarse when drunk, and it does not matter how well a thing is done they are sure to say "But you should see the way they do that in Germany." Most of the Europeans wear white duck pants and broad-brimmed straw hats, and do a deal of leaning against palm-trees, smoking and spitting, also loafing by Apia saloon-bars, where they stand in huddled groups beneath the coco-palms and watch the Samoans toddling by to the mission-rooms with Bibles under their arms.

As the steamers and schooners call into the harbour, tourists and sailors come ashore ; some go on the spree, some get drunk and others go curio-hunting. Sometimes the élite of Australian towns arrive on tour and gaze on everyone with patronising eyes. I saw one lot from Sydney arrive, people of high standing too ; they had receding chins and staring eyes like bits of glass rubbed over with fat and spoke with very conventional voices. The natives, scantily clothed, go shuffling through the streets, singing and jabbering. Apia smells of ripe bananas and tropical vegetation. It is the modern Garden of Eden ; the ghosts of Adam and Eve roam the forest by night and listen to the laughter and wails of their fallen children as they eat of the forbidden fruit and the ships creep into the bays and again go seaward back to the shadows of the cities.

Sailors and rovers settle down in the South Sea

capitals, talk all day of Rio, Shanghai, and Japanese girls that did the Eastern can-can, drunken sprees in 'Frisco, phantom ships and wonderful fifty-day voyages from London to Sydney on the *Cutty's Ark*; old sea captains, mates with master certificates, disappointed men, wrinkled and sea-beaten Scotch engineers, dreaming of Glasgow, engine-rooms, donkey boilers and sea bilges, and that beautiful young woman at Marseilles who lay in their bunk berth so drunk that they could not wake her when the anchor was going up, so kept her aboard in secret the whole voyage out to Melbourne, where she went ashore and became a lady governess, taught French, eventually married a vicar in the suburbs and became "Visiting lady" and was beloved by all for her purity and winning ways. The ancient old man from the Solomon Isles with sad eyes is to be seen there too, still laughless and grim over the tragedy of that long-ago night when his white wife disappeared, and after exploring the Island forest the cannibalistic natives found him starving, gave him drink and meat, and next day by the strangest coincidence possible he discovered that he had eaten his own wife. The great truth of truth being stranger than fiction is vividly revealed in all you see and hear in the Islands of the far-away Pacific, where the good men brush aside the conventionalities and go the whole hog, and the old sinners of the European cities, seeking a haven of rest from the law, with all their passions withered and asleep, become virtuous and moralise. They



NATIVE CANOES, FIJI

are strange old fellows, good company and extremely interesting as they sit by their bungalows and talk at night by South Sea shores. The waves steal over the coral reefs and murmur mysteriously by the lagoons of magic lands, dark with forest branches ; midnight stars are reflected in the clear harbour waters as the blue vault of heaven over your head gleams with worlds that are twinkling and flashing and you dream you hear them singing, and see writ on the wonderful canvas of starry space the bright eternal words, expressing the tremendous loneliness of Infinity that swallows up human imagination, leaving us only wonder and hope.

XXII

I leave the South Sea for Australia—Arrive in Sydney—I get hard up and take a Partnership in a Flower Seed Business—The Stockman's Daughter Ethel—I meet an old-fashioned Australian Bushman—He gives me a Night's Lodging—I meet with Queensland Blacks—Alone in the Bush—Brisbane

WITH regret I now leave the South Seas and once more start off on my wanderings accompanied by my modest and faithful friend who always sang happily or sadly in response to my own feelings—my violin.

Hornecastle was sorry to see me go. He and several comrades saw me off as the anchor went up and I sailed away. I felt sad enough, for I had seen some strange times and a good deal of life in those lovely Isles of the Pacific.

I can still see the outriggered canoes following our ship across the bay out to sea; they were filled with Samoans waving their hands and crying bitterly as their departing relatives, all huddled round me on the deck, sobbed loudly as they too waved their farewells, wiping their eyes with their hands and tail ends of their scanty clothes, old sailor shirts and cast-off European underclothes. It was a sad sight to see them moaning by the ship's rail and those who saw them off paddling away to keep in sight as long as possible—daughters and sons, fathers and mothers, bobbing about in the sunset water, some with their babies perched on their

backs, as the ship's screw thundered full speed ahead and they faded away.

Those emigrants were innocent Islanders, who I have no doubt had been promised fine rewards to entice them to leave their native Isle for a term of three years, where to go I did not know. Some of the sailors said their destination was New Guinea, others the Queensland sugar plantations; anyhow I am quite sure the best of the bargain was not on their side. One of the women made an attempt to leap over the ship's side and escape, but her friends held her back, but they all continued to wail and howl like children as they fully realised that they were really off on the big ship bound for other lands! Some of them lay on the deck flat on their bellies, beating it with their hands; the elder men gazed with tears in their eyes across the wake at their home-staying friends, till the following canoes and their native shores died away. I doubt if many of them ever saw their native Isle again. I hope they did. They were stuffed down in the fore-peak just by the fo'c'sle all together, women and men.

In a few days they were all themselves again, pattering along the decks singing away, cursing the cook's life as they took their food to him to cook, bread-fruit, stuff which he baked for them in the galley, also jams which tasted something like dried-up baked turnips. I shall never forget the surprise of those Samoans as we entered Sydney Harbour. As soon as Circular Quay came in sight round the bend they lost control of themselves completely,

waving their arms about in their excitement pointing to the big buildings, opening their mouths, showing their white teeth and shining eyes agog, just like little children at their first Lord Mayor's Show.

Two days after I met them walking down George Street dressed up in robes and sandals, all close together looking at the shops. They stay in Sydney a few days and then they are shipped off to their final destination.

I was glad to be in Sydney again, where I met chief-mate Poppy, who afterwards was an officer on one of the clipper ships whereon I too voyaged. He was a fine fearless sailor, square built, and had merry grey eyes. I spent a lot of time with him for I had a little cash left and took things easy for a few days.¹ I went to the post office and found two letters from home and some cash. I immediately wrote to England asking forgiveness for not writing before and assured them all that I was getting on well. I forget now what I really said in that letter, but I know that I gave myself a leg-up, as they say, and did a bit of blowing on my own account. Anyway whether all I said was true or not it made them happy and I was very pleased also when the reply came telling me how proud they all were at my success in life, and two or three pages of good advice how to keep the success going.

Ah! dear English people, do not believe all the

¹ Mr Poppy later became captain on a clipper ship, and was lost with all hands off Cape Horn.

wonderful things you hear from your children abroad. Did you hear the real truth you would not call round on your relatives reading that letter over and over till your voice got husky, but it may be that you would sit on your bed and weep your heart out. I've seen your successful sons, have sat by them in the dirty lodging-house attic and watched them write those things that made you happy. I have also been their solitary visitor in the hospital as they died of disease and then I have sent the last letter home and felt too wretched to write home myself. Of course some *do* get on and do very well, but some of the adventurous boys are weak with their passions, and so go to the wall. I could say a good deal on this subject, but I will leave it for someone else. But while I am on the subject I must say it would be well if fathers took their sons aside and told them of those temptations and the awful results before they sent them across the world alone. I will tell you this much—hundreds of fine young fellows have found themselves stranded in the colonial cities, slept out, got into bad company and yielding to the temptations of despair have never been heard of again for five or even ten years, as most of the Australian gaols are away in the bush many miles up country and the prison notepaper arriving in England would tell the tale. So time goes on and the bright English lad, the pride of the school and the mother's joy, emerges from the gaol door, embittered by confinement, his only comrades the convicts who were released before him and whom he

naturally seeks in sympathy and so becomes that which he never in his wildest dreams dreamed of becoming. But I must not get into the habit of moralising over the downfalls and temptations that meet the emigrant youth who arrives in the colonies as I did, expecting to see a workless world and a life before him of charming adventure. So I will proceed with my own immediate experiences.

I am by nature very lazy while I have got money in my pocket, and this failing impeded my progress in the times I am telling you about. Nevertheless I enjoyed myself, went up George Street and purchased a good rig-out, and then went round sight-seeing and very soon I was on my beam ends again. I was lucky enough to fall in with an English fellow who lodged with me in a side street out at "The Glebe." He and I became good comrades and as soon as he got to understand my position and dubious future he took me also into his confidence and we eventually became partners in the flower seed business which he carried on from an office in "The Royal Arcade." It sounds a big address, but it was only a small office. I think the rent was eight shillings a week. In that little office we packed up the flower seeds together and I myself blossomed into a real business youth once again, but it was not half as lonely as that teashop of mine which I have told you about.

Off we would go each morning out into Sydney suburbs, each with a little bag crammed to the brim with choice seeds of English flowers. I at once

wrote home a letter pouring over with enthusiasm about my dreams of future wealth, coming from a prosperous business, but the hard work soon began to tell on my temperament, and my resolution to get on in the world by doing work oozed away as I perspired at the doors of the wooden houses out in Burwood and Paramatta, while my chum stood illustrating to the open-mouthed colonial women the height and beauty of the flowers that would glorify their gardens if they bought our seed.

Well, to cut it short, my comrade went off to Melbourne to some relatives and handed me over the whole show. This turn of affairs renewed my old trust in the business, and though I was sorry to lose my friend I bucked up and kept on with the business. Indeed, it was my only hope; my best clothes were in pawn, also my violin. I went next morning to the office and filled up hundreds of bags with seed which I thought corresponded with the flowers illustrated upon them and off I went, taking a book with me full of the names of customers, and very soon I ingratiated myself into their favour and they all promised to deal with me as they had done with my comrade.

How it all happened I don't know, but I had made a mistake and placed a hundredweight of turnip and cabbage seed into the choice flower packets, and when I went off to Paramatta, my best district, a week or so after, I was met at the doors by irate men and women who swore that I had deliberately played a trick upon them, and when I

arrived at the house of a nursery garden manager who had bought a whole year's stock from me and found that the whole of the specially laid flower beds were producing nothing else but cabbages and turnips, I had to fly for my life. One old woman raced after me down the Paramatta main road swearing that she would do for me ; by Jove, I did run as she waddled shouting far behind ! And that was the end of the flower seed business. All of those people knew my business address, as it was on the packets in large crimson lettering, so I crept into the office early next morning, packed the scales up, locked the door and bolted off. The scales were the only things in the office that I could raise money on and I sold them for fifteen shillings and that same day I took a berth on a coaster for Brisbane.

I think it took three days to get round. I was delighted to see the old place again. I had taken my violin out of pawn and the day after I arrived I went away up country and got a job on a ranch about fifty miles from Cooktown, and there I blossomed into a real "boundary rider," as they call them out there. My boss was an Irishman, his wife was English, and a dear creature she was too. There was an old Chinaman working for them and he got fearfully jealous of me as soon as I became a favourite with the girls, for Kelly, that was my boss's name, had three daughters and one son. I did not like the son, he was a grumpy ignorant chap, and I had as little to do with him as possible.

Ethel, the eldest daughter, and I became good

friends and I taught her to play the violin ; she was not what the world would call good-looking, but I saw something in her face that put good looks in the shade. She had fine grey eyes, and one evening when we were sitting by the homestead in the bush, and the parrots were settling to roost in the gums and orange-trees around us, I leaned over her to show her how to hold the violin bow in professional style, and she gazed up at me with an earnest look, and before I could help myself I held her closely to me and kissed her. She blushed and we forgot all about the violin practice and many were the nights that she and I went out into the beautiful bushlands together and I made her happy. I knew that she loved me ; her mother was in the secret and gave me every encouragement, and though I got to hate the monotony of bush life I put up with it all gladly so as to keep near that simple bush girl. I thank God that I did too, for the first great sorrow of my life came out of my affection for her. Suddenly she became sick ; to our horror she developed typhoid fever and I was the last to kiss her dead face. I cannot tell you any more about it even after all these years ; a part of my heart is in that lonely bush grave away across the world in Queensland.

I was terribly cut up over that sorrow, and though that homestead of the bush became more lonesome to me than ever, I stayed on for nearly two months for the sake of the stockman's wife whom I became very fond of as she knew my feelings and I knew hers. I am not ashamed to tell you

that when at last I wished her good-bye I broke down and kissed her as a boy would his mother. I often wrote to her afterwards and I have some of her letters now, and beautiful letters they are too.

I did not care much where I went at that time. On an old Australian hack I rode away intending to go to Cooktown so that I could get round to Brisbane, but the spirit of adventure was in my blood and I altered my course and left the track and travelled north-west. I had a good swag of provisions made up for me by the stockman's wife, and so I felt secure as far as food was concerned as I rode over the scrub-covered rolling hills of that lonely country. That night I made a fire just to keep me company and camping there alone with the birds and trees around me I slept with my heart in that bush grave.

Next morning I rose early and started off again and before sunset I came across a shanty wherein lived an old bushman. He was very kind to me and asked me to stay the night, which I did. I slept on a trestle bed by him in the one dingy small room. He was an old man, and as the moonlight crept through the small window-pane and revealed his sleeping face I noticed that he had lost all his teeth, and every time he breathed his lips would puff out and then go inwards, making a ghostly chanting noise at regular intervals throughout the whole night. I got quite nervous and never slept a wink till daylight crept across the tree-tops outside and a kind of sweet reality stole over the hut-bedroom as



HOMESTEAD SCENE, QUEENSLAND

I closed my weary eyes and slumbered, but only for about ten minutes, for he had slept well and waking up with the light he started to make a deuce of a row, chopping wood. I left early that morning and from that day to this I have never slept with toothless old men.

He was a real Australian bushman, I could tell that by his conversation, which consisted of about twelve words during my stay, the longest sentence of all was the first at our meeting by his hut door when he looked at me for a minute and then said, "Want some tucker?" meaning food. "Yes, thanks," I answered, and when I had eaten up ravenously all he put before me he sat and smoked by the door, and after an hour's silence said, "Turn in?" Again I answered "Yes," and when I left in the morning he simply said, "Good luck, chum," and closed the door on me. This sounds a bit far-fetched, but it's true enough! Through living in the bush they all get taken that way and almost forget their own language and look upon you as a nuisance if you ask more than one question a day.

Once more on my own, as they say out there, I started off. It was sweltering hot. I did my best to keep in the shelter of the tall gum forest that covered the hills for miles around me, and seeing no more signs of houses about the whole day I began to consider it would be best for me to alter my course and make for Cooktown as I originally intended doing. I did so, and camping on the steeps that night I saw a ring of smoke curling up almost

opposite to the side of the slope whereon I had camped. Leading my horse I went over the rim of the hill expecting to see a homestead, and as I looked down a swarm of black awful-looking faces huddled around a bush fire looked up at me with startled eyes. I had stumbled across a camp of the roving Queensland blacks! There they sat, black, pot-bellied, nude women and men, some of them holding short clay pipes between their thick protruding lips. I had heard that they were quite harmless, and so I bravely walked down the slopes and introduced myself. The head of the band was a stalwart ferocious-looking fellow and tried to speak to me. "White fella all lone," he said. I shook my head and said "No," at the same time pointing behind me over the hills so as to let him think that I was not alone. There is nothing like being too careful with blacks; they are harmless enough, so I had heard, but I did not want to give them a chance to profit over their old instincts. There are even white men in lonely bush lands who would crack you over the head if their exchequer was getting low and the addition of another man's would make the outlook brighter, and so I was wise in my answer.

I shall never forget the sight of those aboriginals and their startled eyes as, squatting there, some huddled in dirty Government blankets, they watched their meal cooking, which consisted of green frog and fat lizards that bubbled and squeaked in the glowing fire ash. One fat, awful-looking

woman asked me in broken English if "white man got baccy." I felt relieved to think I could do her a good turn, and quickly gave her a small piece of ship's plug tobacco, which she snatched out of my hand without a word of thanks. They were all nearly naked; there were four women and about a dozen men and they all continued to stare up at me as I stood by them, their bright dark eyes shining through their thick matted hair. The old woman to whom I had given the tobacco quickly tore it up with her long fingers and sat there with her chin on her knees puffing at her short clay pipe, her lips dribbling and smacking together like the flapping wet sails of a becalmed ship as she puffed away.

It was terribly hot, and as the sunset died away behind the gum clump on the skyline I took off my coat and vest and kept only my pants on, tied the legs of my horse so that she would not roam too far off and sat down by those wild bush blacks and taking my violin out of my swag I started to play a jig. Their eyes lit up at once with wonder and I was obliged to let them all carefully examine the instrument. They looked inside of it, turned the pegs and even smelt it, but could not understand where the music came from, and the one baby that clung by its mother looked at me as though it would have a fit each time that I started to play. They had no idea of melody but a good idea of time, and all started to move their bodies to and fro as I extemporised a strain which I thought would suit the occasion. One old fellow with extraordinary

thin legs and a big protruding belly started off in one of their native dances. Up went his legs skyward and once or twice he almost turned a somersault, and his shadow in the moonlight mimicked him on the slope side as its head bobbed out of the gum-tree tops that towered just over him. I did not like the idea of sleeping with them, so I packed my violin in my swag and pointed to the hills and intimated to them by nods and signs that I must go and join my comrades, and off I went over the slope, and as soon as I thought I was clear away from them I camped at the bottom of a steep gully and, tired out, I fell asleep.

When I awoke the sun was blazing through the trees at the side of the gully height, and I sat up, and looking round I missed my swag. Running to the top of the slope I looked around ; my horse too had vanished. As quickly as I could hurry along I went down to where I had left the blacks. There was the fire ash and round it a circle of naked footprints, but not a sign of them in sight. They had crept over the hills while I had slept and stolen my swag and horse and left me standing alone in that wild country perfectly helpless with nothing on but a pair of pants !

I gazed like one in a dream on those footprints and the camp fire ash. I was terribly thirsty and at once started off to find water. I was soon successful and on my knees I blew the scum off the creek pool and drank. I don't know how I got through that day, but I did, and before nightfall

I had reached a wooden house on top of a hill. I crawled round to the side door and knocked. A young girl opened it and seeing me in such a state quickly slammed it and the stockman came rushing to the door to see what was the matter, a gun in his hand, and if I hadn't been quick, as it was nearly dark, I really think I should have been shot. I soon explained matters to him and he proved a kind fellow, gave me an old suit and I stayed there for three weeks and helped him to build an outhouse. He paid me well and I arrived back in Brisbane with nearly five pounds in my pocket.

I had had enough of the Australian bush and made up my mind to get employment in the towns. Before my money had gone again I started to look for work, but only succeeded in getting a job in a restaurant in Queen's Street. My duty was to wash the dishes and wait on the customers. It was not at all in my line, and I could not get any sleep.

The first night was an unpleasant one; my bed was one of a number in a dirty top room and up till about two in the morning the door would keep opening as those who were partially sober carried in men who were blind drunk and placed them on the beds by me. I sat up in my bed utterly miserable and watched one red-nosed, black-bearded besotted-looking man drivel at the mouth, swear and groan as he made vain attempts to get his boots off, and once or twice he looked round at me with an idiot-like stare and said, "Hello, maish, s-how are you?" and bending towards me affectionately,

tumbled on the floor. And another one in the far corner would often stick his head out of the dirty sheets and shout, " Wash's the time ? " So no one will blame me when I tell you that I crept downstairs at daybreak and bolted. About a week after I was covered with a tremendous rash and was the most miserable youth in Australia. I took a motherly woman into my confidence and I soon got rid of them : bugs and fleas are real comrades compared to those terrible things that I took away with me when I left that restaurant bedroom. I can assure you that I never worked in a restaurant again and even now I am nervous in the presence of drunken men whom I do not know well. Hornecastle was bad enough, but there was something about him that inspired confidence as well as disgust.

I always found the motherly women were my best friends when I was in trouble, for though I had not got a cent they generally took me in and waited till I obtained employment. I suppose they saw that I was young and respectable, and in the colonies, in those days, there were hundreds of young fellows on their beam ends who were trying to make a way for themselves, and as they always paid up at the first opportunity these women generally had faith in the derelicts that tramped about the towns of " the land of the golden fleece " looking for work.

I got a job in a furniture warehouse and stayed there for quite three months until business got slack. I being a new hand received the " sack." My roaming instincts took me down to the wharf and I

was in with the seafaring men again, heard once more the wonderful tales of adventure on the seas and in far countries, but I was not quite so interested as I had previously been, for I too had seen a bit of the world and no longer believed all that those sea-beaten old salts told me. Nevertheless I liked their companionship; they were so frank and jovial in their narratives. I came across two or three of the men whom I had known when I was first stranded in Brisbane and several of us got a job painting the side of a large sailing ship that lay alongside. I slept on board with the crew in the fo'c'sle and got in with a young German who had worked his way out at "a shilling a month" and had not got the pluck to leave the ship, and so intended to work his passage back to London. Influenced by me, however, he altered his mind and stayed behind. He was a steady fellow, older than I was, I think about twenty years of age. He had one failing which I well remember: he was always running after the girls and thought of little else.

XXIII

I stow away—Rescued by Sailors—Emigrant Derelicts—I go up
Country—Memories

THERE was a large tramp steamer alongside of the wharf; she was getting up steam to go away and was bound for London. I thought it was a fine opportunity to try and get a berth together, but it was no go, as they say, so my German friend and I made up our minds to stow away. I had about two shillings in my pocket, so went up into the town and bought two loaves of bread and one pound of cheese, and that night without any trouble we stole aboard and went down the stokehold and hid away in a coal bunker, and being young and optimistic we both slept well. In the morning we sat side by side in the blackness of that ship's hold and heard the noise overhead as they hammered the main hatch down and the rusty rattle of chains as the tug boat took her in tow.

“Do you think they will lock us down?” my friend said, and I began to feel in a bit of a funk; she was still alongside, and we both crawled out of our hiding-place to see if the bunker lid where we had crawled through was still open. It was shut! I am sure that we both turned white at that moment, but we were feeling desperate and my comrade climbed up and, pushing the bunker lid, to

our intense relief it opened and let in the light.

“Let’s get out of it,” I said, and in a moment we both crawled out on to the deck. We were then on the starboard side; the funnel was smoking away and the crew all on the port side drawing in the tackling; otherwise we should have been noticed. Quickly creeping along the deck I saw the forward hatchway open.

“Let’s get down here,” I said, and in a trice I jumped down and falling on a bale of cargo slipped to the lower hold. She was carrying a light cargo and was evidently going to call somewhere else before fastening down for the long voyage across the world. I had fallen with a fearful smash, and looking up to see what had become of my chum I saw his face peep over the hatch-side and then dodge away as the crew overhead lifted up the hatchway covering and down it came with a crash. All was at once dark. I was then alone, a prisoner at the bottom of that ship’s hold.

At first I felt dazed and strangely calm; then I suddenly realised my position and cried out at the top of my voice and scrambled about in the dark over the bales of cargo trying to get up to the hatchway and make myself heard. What happened to my friend I don’t know; he certainly never told the crew about me, and though I hoped he had done so I hoped on in vain and lay there almost breathless with horror as the time went on. Then I felt the motion of the vessel as she moved away and before

nightfall I heard the seas beating against the ship's iron side as I sat imprisoned in the dark below the water line in the worst predicament that I ever was in in my life. To make things worse out came the rats! It seemed to me that there were thousands of them scampering about the cargo as I shouted myself hoarse, praying to God that I should at last be heard, and when everything seemed hopeless I sat for a time and felt pretty bad.

Presently a reaction set in and I started exploring, thinking that if I could get up forward toward the fo'c'sle I could thump on the deck and the sailors in the off watch would hear me. I began to feel terribly sick as the vessel pitched and rolled and the smell of the cargo thickened the already stifling atmosphere till I heard myself breathing heavily.

Crawling slowly along I managed to get to between-decks, and to my intense relief I saw a wisp of light through a chink. You can imagine my delight at that moment as I made towards it. It was the forepeak hatchway. I heard voices; someone was sitting on it! Placing my mouth against that crack I shouted "Hello!" and I heard the voices suddenly cease and someone jump; as quickly as possible I shouted once more through the crack. "It's all right, I'm a stowaway! Don't give me away." "Who are you, matey?" came the answer. All my old courage returned to me when I heard that gruff kindly voice, and I quickly enlightened the questioner, and in ten minutes I was out and snug in the fo'c'sle sitting on a sea-chest, the crew around me. They

were English sailors and you can bet they did not give me away. I discovered that we were calling in at Sydney. It was an easy matter to keep me hidden for two days in there among them. The only one I had to keep out of sight from was the bos'n.

We had a fine time that night; one of the men had a banjo and another a fiddle. I borrowed it from them and we had a concert to ourselves. They fed me up too, I can assure you that sailors are the finest men in the world to fall in with when you are down on your luck. It was an easy matter when we arrived in Sydney Harbour for me to get away, and they managed it. As soon as the anchor dropped and we got alongside they gave me the tip, down the gangway I went, and some of them stood grinning on the deck as I stood on the wharf safe and waved my hand back to them.

I had a good wash and brush up and soon looked very different to what I did when those sailors first discovered me, begrimed, smothered in coal dust and perspiration. There I was, once more thrown up on the beach in Sydney.

I will draw a veil over a good many of the days of my life after that time. I fell in with the ne'er-do-wells of the Australian cities, the happy-go-lucky castaways of "better times," who slept out on the "Domain," in dustbins and in the cave holes of the rocky shore round by the Botanical Gardens, where you could sleep and hear the waters creeping, singing up the shore by your pillow all night long, as you slept a penniless beggar far from your native

land. You could open your eyes in the silent hours of the night and see the outbound sailing ships as the rigging flitted across the moonlight and the crew sang some homebound song as the ship met the outer foams and started on the long, long track home. The awful stench from Woolloomoolloo Bay came on the wind round the bend at intervals, like the hot breath of reality across your dreams.

I read some wonderful poems in those days, sad ones too, poems with weary eyes that told the remorse, the long remembering, but not the tale itself. Dressed in rags I have seen them sleeping on "the rocks" as the white Australian moonlight revealed pinched refined faces; men they were from the cities of the world, who were hiding from their homeland disgrace, and some who had believed the Arabian Night tales from the Land of the Golden Fleece, sold up their all in England to sink to the lowest depths of poverty and humiliation in the country where it is every man for himself and God for the lot.

How well I remember that time and those nights among the Lost Brigade, as they slept huddled around me on the matting of the "Donkey's Breakfast," as they call the bunk mattresses which are thrown away and piled up in wharf sheds when emigrant ships arrive. Snoring wrecks, a few with low-bred faces who could not read or write and others with refined-looking faces notwithstanding the scrubby beard that half hid them, many boys also around, too shabby to get work and too wretched

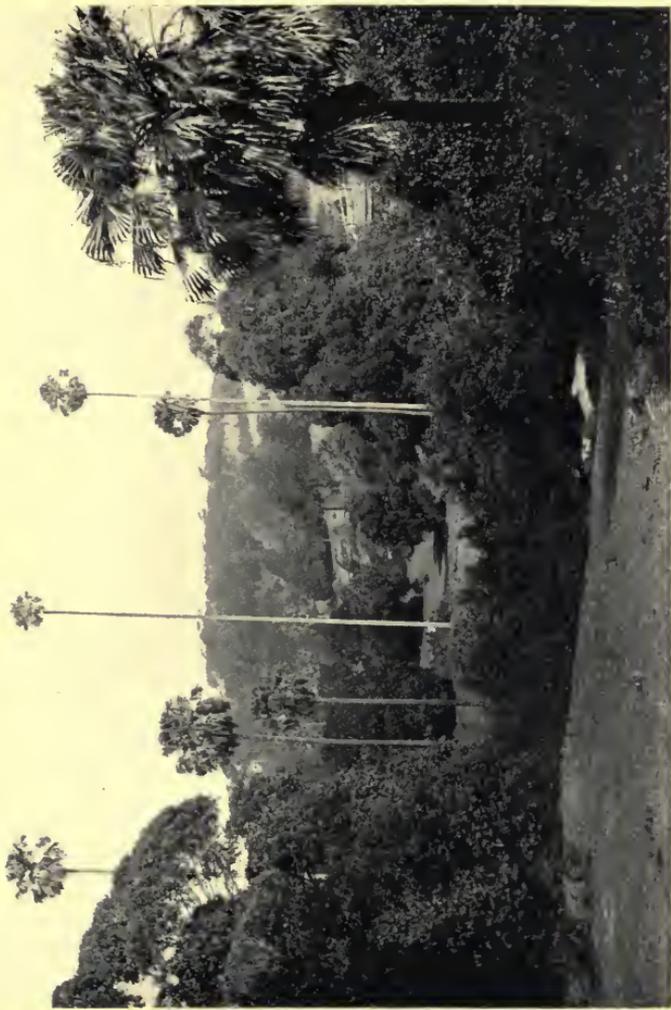
to want it. One young fellow, through starvation and homesickness, went off his head. He had an emotional, girlish face and was not more than eighteen years of age. We cheered him up and I'm sure I did my best, but he would keep muttering to himself and swore that spirits were charging him in regiments all night long as he howled and brandished his arms about fighting them. One night he got up and ran off ; we heard a splash in the bay. He was buried out at "Rookwood" with the hundreds of others who sleep in nameless graves, forgotten for years, till *Lloyd's Weekly* says, "Wanted, the whereabouts of A. B. ; left home in the year ——. Mother inquires."

I have been telling you the seamy side of the life of the seaboard cities. Of course it is not all seamy. Sydney flourishes and is happy, with her big streets, her skirts dipping into the bay, her bright Botanical Gardens, a kind of tropical Hyde Park kissed by curling sea waves, and near those gardens is the wide Domain. What a happy hunting-ground for an Australian Charles Dickens that Domain would have been, and still is ! The emigrants still go seaward and are dumped down to scramble to hell or dubious fame and fortune, while the ships go flying homeward to old England full up with the remnants who landed on the preceding voyage out !

After coming ashore from my stowaway trip, I lodged in a small top room in Lower George Street, which was very different to Upper George Street.

By my dwelling-house the Chinese lived in their opium dens. Some of them were very well off and had managed to secure white wives. How those white women could stand them I don't know. At sundown they would stand by their den doors and looked like mummies peeping from their upright coffins with twinkling eyes! Wrinkled yellow faces they had, and you could always tell their presence by the peculiar smell that came in faint whiffs from their shop doors mingled with the odour of orange pekoe, for they mostly sold tea or pretended to, but really played "fan-tan" in those gambling dens, and did other awful things as the innocent old shrivelled spy stood at the door watching, picking his yellow teeth with a long skewer. No one in Australia has ever seen a Chinaman drunk; he takes his opium and nectar in an arm-chair in the stuffy room at the back of his shop, and with his long opium pipe in his mouth goes off back to China in dreams, when his stupefied head no longer hears the traffic outside as the crowds hurry by and the Jack Tars from the men-o'-war boats in the bay go rollicking up the street "half seas over," singing, arm in arm, and inside that innocent-looking den the white wife goes through the celestial's pockets as the Australian "bum" stands up at the street corner waiting with greedy hand to receive his half. Five hundred yards up the street stood the splendid post office and all the business shops of the commercial world of Sydney.

After a month's stay in the town I once more



CABBAGE-TREE PALMS AND BUSH LAND

went up country and secured work on a station, staying there nearly nine months. I became quite colonised as I toiled in the pumpkin fields, rode for miles over the slopes behind the flying sheep, and slept in a little outhouse by the stockman's homestead. I would sit and dream of home as over my head the parrots wheeled away toward the sunset and the station children romped and screamed with laughter. Sometimes as I sat thinking and remembering my mind wandered back to Queensland and Ethel's grave in the bush. I often lay in that little hut unable to sleep till dawn crept over the gum tops and the lyre-bird's song chimed the first peeps of sunrise over the hills. Two miles away was another station whereon worked two other young Englishmen. I often rode across the bush at sundown to see them and we would sit and yarn together about England, and all get homesick over our dreams. Dell, the youngest of the two, was thrown from his horse and killed. His friend William and I often went across at evening time and placed flowers on his grave and then walked away with thick throats, unable to speak to each other.

The Australian bush is the most melancholy place in the world to brood over sorrows. The music of most of the bush birds has a prophetic note in it—they wail away as though foretelling dire disaster; after sunset myriads of frogs and locusts start to chant and chirrup mournfully; over the solitude comes at long intervals the wail of the dingo, and often like the phantom of some lost dead child from

the gullies a wailful scream from a bird that no one ever sees. I have often lain in my bunk by night and looked through the little window hole and watched the migrating cranes and other birds with long outstretched necks pass under the moon, bound southward; they looked just like skeletons on wings, their bones tinkling together as they passed swiftly across the moonlit sky right overhead. I devoted a good deal of my time to music and violin-playing in those quiet bush nights, and some of the very melodies which are in the strains of my military band solos were composed at that period.

William and I became close friends, linked together by the sorrow over our dead comrade, and eventually we gave notice to our employers and both went off "on the Wallaby" and "humped the bluey," as they say in the bush.

We followed that life for a long time and became real "sundowners." The atmosphere of that roving life has never wholly left my mind; the songs of the birds in the gums and the winds moaning and bending the leafy clump tips overhead during the nights, as we slept below, still echo through my memories. He and I were happy together, and I found him a beautiful friend. I can see his sky-blue eyes now, as he wondered and listened to me when I told him of my adventures in the South Sea Islands. Night after night we would sit by our camp fire and stare, side by side, into the glowing embers as overhead sang some sweet night bird, serenading our memories as we dreamed of

home. My chum had a quiet earnest voice and would sit there and sing wild sea chanteys as I played an accompaniment on the violin.

And often in the night I hear,
Above the wind and rain,
My old chum singing in the hills
Those wild sea songs again.

He had an old bent-up cornet in his swag, and I took a few lessons from him, and while I practised the scales in the silence of the night the very hills seemed astonished as the echoes answered one another and died away across the solitude, and away the frightened bush animals scampered as though the devil was after them ! And sometimes in the daytime as the parrots passed overhead across the blinding sky they would hear those notes and croak dismally and hurry faster on their skyward voyage.

One evening, just as we were camping for the night, we sighted over the slope a genuine old bushman tramping along with his swag on his back. We invited him to stay the night ; it took a long time to wake him up, but we succeeded, and his scrubby sunburnt face lit up with delight as my comrade sang and I played the fiddle. I never before or since saw such a dried-up old relic as he was. He had a big broken nose and black teeth through chewing tobacco plug for many years. I never saw him spit ; he swallowed the juice. We managed to draw a few remarks out of him, and I remember him saying that he had known Ned Kelly the bushranger in the

early days and mumbled a deal about how the times had changed and the meanness of the station bosses, for he seemed to get his living by cadging at the stations as he tramped along from day to day and month by month, looking for work. He seemed very methodical in his habits, for as we sat by the fire talking, and darkness came swiftly across the slopes, he at once carefully took his boots off—he did not wear socks—and, placing them side by side under his dirty blanket swag, put his feet toward the camp fire, laid flat on his back, bit a large bit of black tobacco plug off, and chewing the end fell asleep.

He left us in the morning at daybreak, went across the scrub with his swag on his back and disappeared under the gums and never looked back once.

Some of those old swagsmen are wise old men with venerable grey beards, mouths that seldom speak, and their grey eyes gaze steadily as though they can see through you, for they have wonderful instinct developed through years of practice.

XXIV

The Deserted Hut—Visiting in the Bush—Stockriders

THERE were a lot of lonely men in those days, tramping the ocean-wide bush lands, real helmless derelicts of humanity, as they staggered on the currents of luck into the stockman's farm at sunset, wailed their pitiful tales of better days behind, mumbled their thanks over the tea and sugar given by a kindly hand for their billy-can, and tramped away once more into the solitude of gums and scrub. On and on they go that way till they die.

One afternoon, while we were both sitting under the shade of a gum clump out of the stare of the flashing eye of the sun, I noticed some white bones gleaming in the dried-up grass and scrub. It was the skeleton of some bushman; a rotten swag blanket lay under the white skull and the knee bones were drawn up to the chest, showing the way he died out there alone. As the white night mists crept over the hollows and the winds stirred the gums over that relic of loneliness, both sad at heart, we turned away and did not camp till we were miles away from that spot. The impression left after that sight hung on us for a long time.

Once we came across an old bush shanty by a river side. We crept in its little doorless room;

through chinks overhead we saw the blue sky and the blossoms of wild vines that clung over the rotting roof. The old chair was still there velveteed all over with grey moss, and the hearth was thick with bush flowers. On the wall still hung the photo of a young girl; the face though nearly faded away was a strikingly sweet one; we felt instinctively that some sorrow, some long-ago romance, was connected with that photograph. There was the mouldy bunk-bed wherein the bushman had slept, and outside under an old gum, surrounded by wattle bush in full bloom, was a grave, a small roughly made cross over it, and that told us all as we stood by it while the frogs chanted in the marsh just below. I can tell you that the sight of that tiny ancestral hall, rotting out there in the silence, and the grave hard by, affected me much more than if I had stood among the ruins of Imperial Rome.

A day or so after we arrived at the station, about twenty miles from Arrawatta, and both tired out fell asleep on a bank just below a stockman's big wooden house and were both suddenly awakened by a loud, gruff, but kindly voice saying, "Hello, youngsters, would you like some tucker?" We sat up quickly and did not require any persuasion as that big bearded fellow astride his horse told us to follow him up the slope. When we arrived inside his wife had the table already laid; they had noticed us both asleep on the slope outside and there is no place in the world that can beat the colonial squatter for helping the bush wanderers who are down on their

luck. By Jove! we did have a feed, and as my friend and I told the tall daughter, the squatter and his wife our adventures and all we had seen they seemed to admire our pluck and did all they could to cheer us up and invited us to stay the night, which we did. There was a vineyard on the next slope, and in a shed close by enormous bins full of the new season's wine. I think we must have drunk about two quarts each; I know that it livened us up, and that night before going to bed we all sang and my comrade and I sang and played to them some homeland songs. They had a visitor over from the next ranch. He was an Irishman with merry blue eyes and a large pug nose. He owned the world's largest feet; I never saw such feet, and though he got drunk and did step dances and jigs and swayed dangerously about, he never fell, for as soon as he lost his mental balance his feet came to the rescue; on them he swayed often with a terrible port or starboard list, but always just in the nick of time slowly righted himself. Irishmen are like Englishmen out in Australia. When they hear that you are from the "Old Country" out comes their hand and in a firm grip you are sworn friends. The Irishman will give you anything you ask for, will half undress himself and place his clothes on your back, even though you don't want them; you are liable, however, to be sworn enemies at daybreak when the reaction sets in, but if you know the way to manage them they are soon smoothed over and you will find that you can

keep about half of the clothes without further threats.

We were near the border line that separates New South Wales and Queensland then, and when we left next day we came across the drovers marching across the country behind their cattle, bound south I think. I can still see them in my mind as they passed away from us over the sweltering hot plains, sitting astride their horses and cracking their stock whips over their heads as the long ring of dancing flies that wheeled round and round their big-rimmed hats parted in two and then joined itself again, started to dine viciously off the eyes, necks and steam that rose from the stockrider and his steed. It's not all honey (except for the flies), but nevertheless the bush drovers in their wild life on the plains have happy lives; always on the move, they camp, yarn, smoke and sing across the bushlands, always many miles away from the spot where they camped the night before, and they have supplied the Australian poets with any amount of inspired work in the songs of the bush and of the rollicking men of the plains.

About a week after seeing those drovers pass by we arrived at a place called "Bummer's Creek" and stayed there for several days, helping Riley the boss to build some outhouses. There seemed a good many loafers hanging about that small township, for the Australian bush climate does not inspire men to work. We were offered two horses at five shillings each and I at once bought them. We



PASTORAL SCENERY, N.S.W.

sat astride, William and I, and proudly waving our hands bade the men of the township farewell as we started up the slope. I plied the stock whip and in less than half-an-hour we had almost travelled three hundred yards ! I was not much of a judge of horse-flesh at that time, and I felt pretty wild at being so sucked in. Two of the bushmen crept up the slope and then suddenly discharged their revolvers close to the ears of those two horses of ours, and that seemed to wake them up and off we went ! Before sunset we looked back and were out of sight of the township. I got terribly sore through the protruding backbone of that stubborn beast ; sometimes William would dismount and laughing get behind and push it as its big eyes stared like soap bubbles with fright. I felt sorry for it though, especially when its underlip protruded as though through extreme nausea it yearned to be sick and couldn't. My comrade's horse was nearly as broken up as mine. We held a consultation together and decided to turn them adrift. Away they went across the bush that night ; we saw their delighted tail stumps sticking up as they galloped across a patch of moonlight and disappeared and became wild horses of the boundless plains.

XXV

Before the Mast—Bound for San Francisco—Man Overboard—I see 'Frisco High Life—My first Funeral Expenses—Joss Houses—Guest my Friend.

I WILL now leave my next three months of bush life unrecorded, as it would be very much the same as I have already written about. William and I got South Sea Island mad. It was my fault. I used to tell him about my experiences and as I told him of Papoo and various other Samoan and Fijian beauties, his eyes would gleam as he listened, until at last his sole ambition in life was to go to the South Seas. Indeed I got a bit of the fever on me to go out there again, and when we at length arrived in Sydney I tried to get away with him, but as luck would have it he managed to secure a billet on the German boat as messroom steward. I was very sorry indeed to see him go, and he too when I said good-bye to him. We had been happy and seen a lot together in our twelve months' friendship. I stood on the wharf and waved good-bye to him. Dear old William, I often wonder what became of him; I never saw him again.

A week after he left me I shipped before the mast on the *Cairnbulg*, a large sailing ship bound for 'Frisco and then round the Horn home. We had a terrible spell of bad weather. About two weeks

after leaving Sydney, one evening just as sunset faded a typhoon began to blow. We were all sent aloft to take in sail ; but it was too late, the main-mast split and went overboard, taking and throwing one of the crew into the raging sea. He still clung on to the tackle of the broken mast as it floated upside, and then a big sea came down and he was washed off. We hove her to and lowered the lifeboat ; over came the seas like huge icebergs, crashing to the decks as she shivered and groaned and pitched with her broken masts and torn sails, swaying and screaming beneath the storm-swept sky. There was no slackness of volunteers to man the lifeboat as those white-faced sailors with the soul of pluck in their eyes stood by and the chief mate took the helm. They lowered away ; three times they were nearly upset and thrown into the sea as the ship lay right over and the big iron side seemed to lay under the lifeboat's keel. At last they got her safely on the water ; the skipper stood on the poop, the hurricane whipping his shouted orders away like pistol shots as a sea came over and washed three of us along the deck. We all came crash against the bulwark side, scrambled to our feet and rushed back again to see if we could catch sight of the lifeboat that was out on the pitch-black waters. How she lived in that sea was a marvel. They came back, but without our comrade : he had gone for ever, and that night we sat in the fo'c'sle on our sea-chests puffing our pipes deep in thought, feeling very sad and wretched, and I heard the drowned sailor's

special chum crying in his bunk opposite me for a long time as overhead the look-out tramped to and fro and the fixed-up wind-jammer once more tore along on her voyage. The empty bunk of the lost sailor which was just below mine got on my nerves, and often when I was tired out and turned in I lay sleeplessly thinking of the poor fellow away in his ocean grave behind us, and would get up and go on deck and finish by sleeping on the forepeak hatchway.

When we arrived in San Francisco our ship had to go into dry dock to have a new mast fixed in and I got in with some American fellows ashore, and what with the beautiful climate and congenial society and "being sick of living on "hard tack," "soup and bully" and salt junk, I resolved to leave the ship and stay behind. One of those shore friends of mine was the manager of a dancing saloon in the north of the city, and he told me that if I could play dance music on the violin he could offer me a good salary. I got hold of a good book of dance music and, taking a small room near Kearney Street, I practised the whole day long for nearly a week, and soon got my hand in and eventually became a crack hand at the job. The orchestra for that dancing establishment consisted of two violins, a banjo and a harpist. The ladies who visited that secluded hall were painted up to the eyes, some of them were pretty old stagers painted and dressed up; whirling round the ballroom they passed off as girls in their teens.

I had a good opportunity of observing the visitors

of that 'Frisco "high-class dancing saloon." I found out after a little while that it was used for various different crimes, and one night just as we had finished the overture and the old Californian roués were taking their partners, a fashionably dressed lady burst into the room and shot her husband in the neck. I heard one of the bullets from her revolver whiz by my head. The painted lady who had been hanging on the wounded man's arm fainted away and there was a terrible scene altogether, but the whole matter never reached the public, it was all hushed up as the victim was a gentleman who held a high position on the Bench. I think he was a judge. I did not even care to play the fiddle to that crowd, but I persevered and sawed away night after night. I received exceedingly good money for the job and had no need to mix with the crew that danced to the strains of music, as those wicked-looking members of the Californian "élite" revelled in the atmosphere of freedom and all the dubious games that caused the downfall of their old ancestors Adam and Eve.

I was then living in apartments in F— Street; it was not a very fashionable residence, but my comrade, whose name was "Crane," lived there, and persuaded me to live near him. He told me that he was an Englishman and talked a good deal about dear old London, thinking that it pleased me. There also lived a man in the same building who I was told was the captain of a large sailing vessel. He was a suave-speaking man, and spoke with a strong

Yankee twang, wore side-whiskers, and every time I chanced to meet him on the stairway, he was most genial in his remarks and would praise my violin-playing, for I would play a good deal during the daytime, not having much else to do. One morning my friend Crane opened my room door and, coming in with a long face, sat opposite me and said, "I say, Middleton, the Captain's in great sorrow, his wife's dead, and if he can't raise fifty dollars she will have to be buried in a pauper's grave." I was very much touched as he continued the tale, and told me several distressing details of the affection between that captain and the poor wife, and when at last he described the death scene the tears came into my eyes, and I at once volunteered to advance the necessary cash, so as to give the poor fellow's wife a decent funeral.

Crane knew that I had nearly eighty dollars in the bank, and when I stood up and said I would go and get the money forthwith, he wiped his own eyes, so touched was he by my impulsive kindness. I went off and got the money, and coming back I said to Crane, "Where is he? Is he in his room?"

"Yes," Crane answered, "but he's so broken up, and moreover he's so sensitive about borrowing money from anyone, that you had better leave it on the toilet in his room, when he goes out, and I will explain all to him." I at once accepted his idea and understood, as I too would have been sensitive in those days at borrowing fifty dollars.

That same night as I walked down the street on

the way to the dancing saloon, I met Crane and the bereaved Captain. I felt a bit uncomfortable at first, and so did the Captain as he turned his face sideways, pulled his whiskers and exchanged a quick glance with Crane and then nearly tumbled over. I saw that he was "half seas over," but I forgave him; I knew that sorrow had driven better men than the Captain to take an extra glass. Well, to cut a sad story short, I went over to the Captain's house next day to attend the funeral. I had not been invited, but I wanted to do the thing properly. I had got the address out of Crane, and the time, and about ten minutes before the procession was to start for the cemetery I respectfully touched the knocker with a mournful tap, tap. I shall never forget the face of the awful virago who opened the door, and as soon as I mentioned the Captain's name and told her the purpose of my visit she glared at me and then roared with laughter. I lost my temper at last and said, "I've paid fifty dollars for the funeral." That finished it, and then I heard the truth. The Captain was a card-sharper and I had been done! Even the little 'Frisco kid of about ten years of age looked up into my face with a partly sorrowful and partly contemptuous expression that I was such an ass. I never knew which one really had my fifty dollars, Crane or the Captain. I suppose they shared it. I never saw the Captain again, but one night as I was going to leave my room to go off to work I saw Crane dodge on the staircase of the next floor. He had called to see if there were any letters

for him. I said, "Hi, Crane, I want to speak to you." He came into the room smiling. He had a white-livered face. "Where is my fifty dollars?" I said. And then I had my first and last fight. The look in his eyes broke the last thread of control in my temper, and I let out and gave him a terrible smash in the jaw. He hardly defended himself; he was such a coward, and so ended my friendship with Mr Crane and my trust in "confidence men." I have met many well-dressed men since that time who agreed profoundly with all my ideas, and ended by telling me of their rich old uncle who was waiting round the corner for ten dollars to get back to his exchequer, but I've had my lesson, and if I met another man who wanted money to bury his wife I would not advance it till I saw the coffin, and even then I should respectfully lift the lid before I left the room.

I never saw such a wild place as 'Frisco was in those days. Seafaring men from all parts of the world congregated there much the same as in the Australian sea-board cities. I know not if they were trade union men, but they all looked very independent, chewed and spat much the same as the sailors of my previous experience, excepting they were virtuosos in the art and could send a stream of tobacco juice over their left shoulder without moving the face from its frontward stare. Most of them had billygoat whiskers, and cadaverous faces whereon was written "recklessness"; they mostly lived on beer which was handed to them in vast

glasses which they called "deep seas," "schooners" and "shea-oak." Those who are on the rocks never bother about food, but live on free luncheons which you can help yourself to if you buy a drink; the food is sometimes "hot sausages, roast beef, cheese and biscuits."

I found the 'Frisco restaurants Oriental palaces compared with the Australian dining-rooms. The Chinese were there by thousands, smoking their opium and sleeping in awful hovels, such as damp underground cellars, like rats in a hole, and often as you walked by Jackson Street you knew they were under the pavement because the hot, fevered stench came up through the paving stone cracks that let in air to their subterranean dens. As in Sydney they live by gambling and pray for luck in their "Joss-houses," and you would always know that the "Fan-tan" was on by the yellow nose and alert small eyes of the old spy peeping at the door, keeping "tiggy" in case of a police raid.

At this time I got in with an elderly fellow named Guest. He was a real "knock-out" for yarning and told me many thrilling tales of adventure as we sat or walked out together. He had lived a good deal in Australia. He and I went out through the Golden Gate together, and visited Farallon Islands. He was hard up and I paid the expenses; he was a good chap and thankful too, and would have done the same for me I knew if I had run short. He seemed to know a lot about Australian gaol life and I think he had lodged in one of them against his

wish, and so I have not told you his right name. He would tell me many of his experiences and I think that he had escaped from penal servitude at one time or other, for he always, when dwelling on his bush life, let out in some way or other that he nearly stumbled across a township during his wanderings, which was strange considering he should, from my own experience, have been very pleased to do so.

One night we sat together in my little room in Kearney Street. I was strumming on the fiddle and he sat by the window smoking and started one of his yarns. He had a mysterious face, and a quiet earnest voice, and whenever he was serious I would listen carefully to him, and that night he seemed more serious than usual.

“Put your fiddle down, Middleton,” he said, “and I’ll tell you about my hut experience.”

I was so impressed by that tale of his that I think I will tell it you here, as nearly as possible the way he told it to me, as I sat there by the window. Slowly he began : “I was fairly bushed once in North Queensland ; it was the time of the great drought. I hadn’t even a swag and it was that sweltering hot that I lay stark naked in a swamp by a gully for half the day. I felt pretty sick too, for I had drunk nearly a quart of the frog-spawned water which was nearly black with ooze and dead reptiles, and I got the fever in my blood that bad that I kept seeing faces swim over me in the steam that rose from the two-inch-deep scum as I lay flat on my back. Phew ! it makes me sweat now as I think of it.

“ Well, that night as soon as the sun sank like a clot of blood below the skyline, I rose up, full of aches and pains and nearly dead, wiped myself down, put on my pants and shirt, which I had used for a towel, and started staggering off determined to make a last attempt to get to some township or shanty. I think I must have lost my head a bit then, for I got shouting and tearing at my throat as I stumbled along. The moon was up, and for miles over the flat country I could see the gum clumps standing perfectly still, for there was not a breath of wind. Presently I heard a dingo wailing and then silence again as a wind sprang up and over my head the gums' leaves stirred a bit and the cool air washed my parched body over as though dead fingers were caressing me. Then I could hardly believe my eyes, for across the grey slopes far away I saw a small light. By God, didn't that light buck me up as I scrambled along and crawling up a small slope on all-fours, for I was then too weak to walk up anything, I found myself standing before a small hut. Outside was a large rain-water tub. I gave the hut door a crash with my foot and then head first went for that tub. 'Who's there?' someone said as I heard the bolt drawn. It was a woman's voice. 'It's only me,' I answered as she stood at the door gazing astonished as I wiped my mouth. I looked a terrible guy standing there bare-headed and steaming, for I had ducked my head in that water butt; my boots were open at the ends like an alligator's jaws and I only had my pants on, so you can imagine I did not

look the kind of visitor that a woman longed to see at a lonely bush hut at midnight. Anyway she soon saw that I was genuine enough, and in no time I was sitting inside feeling wonderfully refreshed as I drank a large pannikin of hot tea and washed down some food. She was a wistful-looking wench, and I wondered a bit where the boss was, as she sat there white-faced and the open door let the midnight wind in and the moonbeams and shadowed leaves crept over the walls and on to her face and knees from the trees outside. I told her my tale, and then she told hers. Her husband lay in the next room dead, and the young fellow who worked for him had gone off nearly fifty miles to get a coffin for the body. I felt that I was dreaming as I sat there and the night wind blew at intervals and sighed across the forest gums.

“ ‘ When will he be back ? ’ I asked her.

“ ‘ Not till to-morrow,’ she said, and as the hour was getting late and I started to yawn and nearly fell asleep as I sat on the wooden bench, she asked me if I would mind sleeping in the next room where that thing was ! At first I hesitated a bit, but not liking to look a coward I pulled myself together and said, ‘ Well, I don’t mind,’ for I saw that I should have to sleep outside if I didn’t, as there was only one room besides the small kitchen where we were, and just by where she sat twitching her fingers on her knees was her own bed made up. She gave me a small bit of candle and pointed to the long couch as I entered that hushed room and quietly closed the

door behind me. It was a large room and as I looked around I caught sight of a long trestle up against the farther wall right opposite the small window across which hung wild vines. I began to feel pretty bad; my past experience had a bit unnerved me. Placing the candle on a little stool beside me, I settled myself on the couch, inwardly cursing my luck at being given only one inch of tallow candle. By faith, I could not keep my eyes off that thing. I heard my own breath as I lay there all of a sweat, and then the candle spluttered and went out, and as the wind blew outside, and the shadow of the boughs through the window moved to and fro on the walls just above the shrouded six-foot figure, my eyes stared and stared and it seemed as though the protruding feet moved as the moonlight crept in patches over the trestle. And then a terrible thing happened.

“ I swear by all that’s holy I tell the truth—the top of the white shroud moved back and revealed a long grey-bearded face! My feet also slowly moved off that couch to make a bolt from the room, and likewise those dead feet moved slowly towards the floor to stay my flight! I was paralysed with terror. I tried to shout, but something gripped my throat. Up rose that dead man’s finger as with bright eyes gleaming he said, ‘Hush, I’m not dead!’ Outside, as he said that, I heard a whisper and the crackling of twigs and a shadow whipped across the wall as someone passed by the window. In a moment I recovered. ‘Not dead?’ thought I.

‘I’ll show you to play this trick on me,’ and I leapt to my feet, but the old bounder was too quick for me. Crash over my head went something, and before I could get out of the door he had vanished, shutting it with a bang behind him. I heard a scream. Taking a woodman’s axe from the wall I crashed away at that door to get to the woman who had befriended me. Down it came as I smashed away.

“Rushing into the room I looked round. I was too late. I stumbled over something huddled on the floor, and saw that the worst had happened. I turned round and looked through the hut door over the moonlit slopes; with the jaw-rag flapping behind him ran that monstrous man who had feigned death; in front flew a little man. I heard a scream as he uplifted his gun and shot him and then turning it on himself blew the top of his own head off. It all seemed to happen in an instant, and there was I left alone by that hut. By the door stood a coffin and that told me that the second victim was the man who had gone off to do the undertaking job. I at once started off from that cursed place, for I knew that were I found there the whole tragedy would be fastened on to me,” and saying this he knocked the ashes out of his pipe and wished me good-night and went off.

XXVI

I play the Violin at Fashionable Concerts, etc.—Ship before the Mast for Sydney — Go Up Country — Sheep-shearing — The Shearers' good Resolutions and the Fall

I NEVER knew what to make of Guest ; he certainly believed all that he told me. He eventually came to my lodging and lived in the next room ; he had an old duck, I think he said it was eighteen years old ; he carried it about much the same as folks do a pet poodle. I never saw such a wise and affectionate thing as that duck was. By his bed in a large collar-box it would sit the whole night long and follow him and me about the room like a kitten. How he got it and why he was so fond of it was a mystery to me ; he was the last man in the world one would have thought to have a pet duck and put up with the nuisance of it, but he had the duck right enough, and when we sat having our meals together it would push its beak under our arms and steal the dainty bits off our plates. That was nuisance enough, but the smell of it was outrageous and I very seldom had luncheon with Guest afterwards, but had most of my meals in a restaurant hard by.

I was still engaged at playing the fiddle at the dancing hall, and now and again I accepted engagements to go out to balls, etc., among the " élite " of San Francisco. It was at the palatial residence of

a 'Frisco nabob out at Menbo Park that I played my first public solo. I was terribly nervous. The solo I played was Rode's "Air in G," and I gave as an encore the "Cavatina" by Raff. Guest was there that night; I had managed to get him a ticket and borrowed a decent suit for him. I was sorry after that I had invited him. He got drinking too much, and though I had warned him to behave himself he shouted at the top of his voice as soon as I had finished my solo, "Good old Middleton! Give us another." I turned hot all over and the perspiration whisked off my brow as I bowed to the applause of the audience and the pretty girl at the piano gazed up into my face and quickly placed the music of the "Cavatina" on the pianoforte and I was glad to start off playing again. I made several mistakes but I don't think anyone noticed them; my name on the programme was not Middleton but Signor Marrionetta! and everyone, of course, had great faith in the playing of a gentleman with that name.

Through my musical ability and enterprise I saw a good deal of 'Frisco "high life," and after a deal of experience I came to the conclusion that low life was only the crude essence of high life. One set wiped their noses with a silk pocket handkerchief and the other with the thumb and forefinger, but both acted under the same impulse. The real curse of those early engagements was that after I had played the ladies would circle round me, quizz me up and down, old and young plying me with questions, telling me how they would love to spend their

lives listening to delicious strains of music ; they thought I was a soft sentimental poetical youth, green to the ways of life, and little dreamed that I had seen them all, so to speak, dancing in the South Seas with nothing on !

I was very homesick about that time and as Guest had made up his mind to go to Alaska I made up my mind to get out of 'Frisco and home to England. I threw my job up and not having enough money to pay my fare home I set about trying to get a berth on a ship. I will not weary you with my disappointments, but I eventually after many hardships got a job as deck-hand on the *Alameda* bound for Sydney. I had made up my mind to get to Sydney first and then get a berth on a ship that went by the Suez Canal route. After a rotten trip across tropic seas, working like a nigger, and sleeping in quarters that would have made the 'Frisco Chinamen sniff with disgust, I arrived at Woolloomoolloo Bay, was paid off and wandered about for several days.

I could not discover any of my old acquaintances that I would like to have seen. The *Lubeck* was in dock, but though I tried all I could to see if William my friend had returned, I could get no information. There were hundreds of English fellows trying to work their passages back to England and every week the deep-sea boats came through Sydney Heads with hundreds of passengers on deck gazing with admiring eyes at the beautiful scrub-covered hills of Sydney Harbour, their hearts beating happily as the relatives and friends waved their hands on the

wharf. I often stood and watched the sisters, brothers, and lovers meet, and as the ships left the wharf for England once more I stood and watched the farewell hands waving as the great P. & O. or Orient liners sailed away, taking the hearts of the pinched white-faced, ragged brigade with her.

Failing to get a berth or a job at violin-playing, I availed myself of an opportunity offered me to go up country sheep-shearing. The new friends I had fallen in with told me that I could earn a splendid wage at the job, and though I knew nothing about the work, I believed them and went off.

We went a hundred miles by rail and tramped the rest, and when I eventually reached the sheep-station I had no boots to my feet, and my trouser legs were torn away through tramping through stiff scrub. I never had such a rough job in my life as on that sheep-shearing station. Hundreds of men arrived day after day from different parts of New South Wales, and clamoured for work. They were men of all degrees, swagsmen of long experience, and men of no experience, new chums and old chums. I got in just in time to get a job as a "rouse-about," and then became a "penner-up."

Many of us slept in camp tents and I made a good bit of money by fiddle-playing. I extemporised a small orchestra, which consisted of a concertina, two banjos and a bone clapper, and when the work was done we would sit under the blue gums and, as the sun twinkled on the skyline and disappeared, start

the concert, and never did I have such an appreciative audience as they stood, those rough unshaved men leaning against the trees or sitting on stumps smoking and listening to the melodies that took their hearts back to the homeland, and as we played away and the marsh frogs croaked they would join in the chorus of some old song and put their whole soul in it. "Play that again, matey," they would say as some strain touched them and awoke memories of long ago. I've often seen the tears in the eyes of those men, and I liked them; some of them were old enough to be my father. They were mostly men of a sentimental turn of mind and good men, as far as their intentions went, but they all found it so hard to make their actions harmonise with their intentions. They work hard when they do work, and after the shearing season go off with a big cheque and a firm resolve to start a little business or go back across the seas to see the old faces again.

With their billy-can swinging in their hand and their swag on their back they start across the bush, outbound to the new life of quiet and sweetness, and then the dreadful fall comes. Hot and tired they all stumble across the grog shanty in the bush town, outside of its wooden door they drop their swags to the ground, gaze in each other's eyes with that querying look that says in silent language, "Well, I don't think just one drink would hurt us," and then each one carefully looks at the other, as though to say, "Mind, Bill, only one this time," for they have all been through the same old fiasco

before, made the same good resolutions and alas, then do as they will always do, for that one drink resolves into two. Each one looks once more at the other and each one relents and grants his comrade one more drink. "Yes, Bill, but mind you that's the last," and then one poking his head out of the grog shanty sees the sun setting and remarks to the others, "It's getting late, chums; we'd better camp here for the night." They all agree, and again all agree that another drink could not possibly hurt any of them. By that time they are getting half-seas over with the extra drinks in between which they each swallowed while the other wasn't looking! Then the loud songs commence, and the yarns of past brave deeds, and the grog seller rubs his hands, delighted to see them getting affectionate one with the other as each finds his appreciative listener. By this time their voices can be heard at the township homesteads two miles over the hills, and the folk come from far and near to hear the songs, and to see the drunken spree of the homebound shearers. Already the dance has commenced, and the banjo is going full speed, "pink-a-tee-pink," and then a space is cleared for the grand fight over the awful insult to the man from Stony Creek who has been doubted when he said he knew where gold could be found by the ton, and he found it but it was so heavy that he couldn't carry it into town.

By midnight all the money is nearly spent, and on the slopes by the grog shanty most of them are sprawling fast asleep, the more excitable ones lift-

ing their hatless heads up now and again, gurgling out some spasmodic strain of the last drunken song which they were singing just before they fell down.

At daybreak they are standing outside of the grog seller's door kicking it with their boots, their mouths fevered and parched by the awful poison which they drank the night before, and so the great resolution ends once more. With their billy-cans and swags they depart across the bush on their several ways sad men on the "Wallaby track" homeless and penniless. And so they go on till they die, and I can well tell you all this because I was with those men, heard the good resolutions, saw the tears rise in their fearless eyes as they spoke with emotion of the happy-to-be future, and then witnessed their fall. With four of them I tramped away across the bush solitudes to look for work in a world of stern reality, for wherever you go in this world you will find that you cannot live on dreams.

XXVII

Lost in the Bush—The Drought—We find dead Comrades together
—Horse and Rider

It was my luck to be on the lonely track humping the swag when a great drought swept its burning wave across the whole of Australia. On the borders of Queensland I had been with two more English emigrants working on a selector's ranch at "Sunrise Creek." Dorrell was the boss's name and he had a splendid stock of sheep and many acres of land under cultivation. He proved a fine man to us lads and treated us as though we were his own sons. I taught his daughter to play the violin and he was so proud when she was first able to play "Home, Sweet Home" that he smacked me on the back and gave me a week's holiday. But life in a selector's homestead is extremely monotonous, and after staying there six months I bade them all farewell, and with a kindred spirit started off to tramp to Maranoa with the idea of getting across to Queensland and into more lively surroundings.

It was on that tramp that the great drought struck the country; forests that were green shrivelled to grey and then to brown, as the fiery blast from the white hot sun day after day crept over the sky as we tramped along. The wind blew like the hot blasts from some volcano; the swamps and creeks



MODERN SHEEP-SHEARERS

and pools soon became baked and cracked shallows, wherein the very frogs stuck in the dry ooze, died and stank. While we passed by, half dead ourselves, searching for water, overhead across the cloudless blue passed swarms of parrots. As my comrade and I staggered along we heard the dismal mutterings of those birds as they sped away overhead and faded away leaving a greater loneliness after they disappeared, tiny specks on the Southern skyline. To the south-west of us rose some hills, and at nightfall we came across a pool of water at the bottom of a deep gully. It was hot-fevered stuff, but we knelt side by side and drank it as on the scorched blue gums the carrion crows wept, and yet, with that same hope that springs eternally in the human breast, sharpened up their beaks with the forlorn hope that we might yet die and our rotting carcasses supply them with food. By the swamp we slept that night, and once more at daybreak started off. Over us on the eucalyptus trees the carrion crows had slept and over our heads they croaked and flapped lazily along, following us, and often they would stay by the trackless track to feed on the dead birds in the mulga-scrub, birds that had fallen from their perch during the night, dead through the want of water. For miles and miles the bush lay around us, nothing but a leafless, waterless drought-stricken ocean, and often as the migrating birds passed over, some would half fall from the blazing sky and settle on the tree-tops to die, just the same as swallows do far out at sea as the stragglers fly to

the rigging of the lonely ship, and fall dead on the deck during the night through hunger.

My comrade was English, and was a splendid friend ; he was three or four years older than I, and when we sat down together and shared out the food we had in our swag, we would almost quarrel because he would deny himself and give me the largest share. He was uneducated, but that did not matter. God had amply repaid him in the making for all that his education might lack when he was a man, and twelve months after, when I read in a newspaper that I had been drowned at sea on the schooner *Alice* that was lost with all hands, I felt terribly upset. I had given him one of my "Very good" discharges so that he could secure a berth ; he got the berth, and my name being on his discharge he had to sail under my name, and died bearing my name. Many beautiful things were said of me when my old acquaintances also read the account, and thought it was I who was drowned ; but when the truth came out, and I appeared and was once more known to be living in common flesh, I became commonplace, and the beautiful things that only survive in the memory for those who are dead, faded and my sins once more awoke and peeped through my good reputation like the slit-mouths of those frogs that protrude among the pure white lilies of a crystal lake. But I must return to that tramp across those drought-stricken plains.

I think it was three weeks before we reached civilisation again, though we were not more than two hundred miles from Warrego. I sprained my

ankle while crossing a gully, and found it a terrible job to get along, but Ned Shipley, my comrade, made me lean on his shoulder as he staggered along with the swag, which was nearly empty. We had thrown all the blankets away and kept just one small rug to wrap our little remaining food in. Several times I gave in and told him to go on and take care of himself, but he was not made that way and simply lifted me up and dragged me along. Just when we were both nearly roasted up to dried skin and bone and despairing, we came across a deep cleft in a gully, and in its shaded glooms we found dozens of juicy prickly pears growing on the huge boughs. I lay at full length on my back utterly exhausted as Ned knocked the prickles off the rind with his boots and placed the crimson fruit in my parched mouth. That night was the first night that we really slept soundly, and when we awoke the sun had already fired the eastern sky with blood-red streaks. As we lay on our backs under the tall dried-up blood-wood trees, we saw the flocks of cockatoos and migrating spoonbills pass in hurrying fleets across the sky. All was hushed on the slopes around us, excepting for the chanting noise of the locusts and the surviving tree-frogs. I remember well that particular morning; the long sleep had considerably refreshed us both, and my comrade even started to sing and I to dream of home and England. I lay by his side and I seemed to realise with a deeper intensity all that had happened. And as the scent of the parched sea-scrub blew in whiffs

around my nostrils, and my chum stood up and gazed dreamily across the plains with his hand arched over his sky-blue eyes, I felt the atmosphere of wild romance come over me. Notwithstanding all the misery of that tramp and my helplessness, the spirit of adventure seemed to thrill me with a strange happiness. Even now after all the years I can still see the rolling plains around us, our homeless camp under the blood-wood trees, and the big bird that fluttered just overhead, with crimson underwings and one of its legs hanging down as though it was broken, as it gave a lonely wail and passed away. On we tramped that day and towards nightfall, by the side of a dried-up creek, we both stood and gazed on one of the saddest sights of loneliness and helplessness that I ever saw or may ever see again. There by a dead stunted palm on the desert lay the skeleton of a horse; the bones were bleached white and so was the relic of humanity beside it, and as we both gazed on that sad sight, we instinctively drew closer to each other.

The last lone ride I live it again,
Lost, alone on the drought-swept plain,
The grey-green gone from the scattered scrub ;
The frogs stink, dead in the dry creek mud ;
Away in the sky on southward flight,
Far specking the waste of blinding light,
The parrots are curling their glittering wings,
Soft-croaking their dismal mutterings ;
By the small hot sun in fleets they pass
Where the wide sky flames like molten glass,
On crawls the horse o'er the trackless track,
The rider scorched on its blistered back !

A castaway on wide, waveless seas.
Miles, miles away rise gaunt gum-trees,
Like derelicts old, with sailless mast,
Cast on the rocks by the drought's hot blast
The sun dies down—on the dim skyline
Faint-twinkles once like a goblet of wine
Held over that dead world's hazy rim,
And the lost man's eyes far gaze aswim
As the tide of dark rolls over him !
There's hope ! for a tiny cloud doth rise,
Toils slowly across the noiseless skies,
Creeps down to a speck on the other side,
To leave him alone on the desert wide ;
'Tis night—overhead the bright stars creep.
He lies with his one friend down to sleep :—
And the months and the years have since rolled by,
And the horse and the master still there lie ;
Where those sad eyes of hope peered thro'
The green shoot peeped—a bush flower blew,
For we found them there, yes, side by side—
Two skeletons white—just as they died.
Our hearts were heavy as on we went,
For his thin bone arm was softly bent—
Curled round the neck of his big comrade
There, telling us how two friends had laid
Their tired heads under the drought-swept sky.
And still out there the white bones lie.¹

It was a long time before the first influence left on our minds by that sight passed away. As darkness crept over the cloudless skies and the bright Australian stars flashed out, we lay together behind some large boulders and dead scrubwood as nervous as two children, and often my heart leapt as the jewel-like eyes of the big lizards darted up the dead

¹ Reproduced from the author's *Bush Songs and Oversea Voices*.

scrub and grass twigs by our heads, as they slipped and squeaked and scampered away. We were only about three or four hundred yards from that spot, and as night wore on and moonrise burst out over the trackless plains, the wind-blown shadows seemed to move to and fro by the steeps and gullies, as though the ghosts of dead men crept from their unknown graves and wailed while the hot night wind cried through the leafless gum clumps. I almost feared to see my tired-out chum's face in repose, as he lay by me fast asleep, with his mouth open, breathing out God's sad music of humanity as with each breath his chest heaved up and down, while the moonbeams on his unshaved thin face sea-sawed with his snores.

It was with intense relief that, when still staggering along three days after, we stumbled across a track and following it for some miles came to a homestead, and almost fell down by the verandah as we knocked at the door. The old Irishwoman almost wept over us and ran about with her pots muttering and saying, "Sure and begorra the poor bhoys have suffered." The dear soul kept pushing broths from her stockpot down our throats with a long wooden spoon till at last I had to beg of her to desist, otherwise I am sure I should have brought the whole gift up again. Her husband was also very kind to us and they gave up their own bed for us to sleep in that night. In two days we were almost fit again. I had devoted all my spare time to bathing my ankle and the swelling soon went

down, and when Riley rode off, bound in his shaky old bush cart for a place called Indrapilly, he took us with him, for though we were welcome to stay there at his homestead, we had had quite enough of the bush and both of us longed to get to the town again. Here I will end this short narrative of my experience with that true comrade of mine in the Australian bush and the lonely tramp across solitudes where many men in times gone by have gone and passed away for ever; for often the traveller comes across bleached bones in those wastes, and sometimes lonely graves, with the name cut in the bark of a tree just by or on some roughly extemporised cross.

In the never-never land they sleep,
 Where the parrots o'er them fly,
 Winged-flowers across some sombre steep
 And monumental sky.
 Fenced by stretched skylines far around
 Where thro' the bushman creeps,
 Finds some lone long-forgotten mound
 Upon the nameless steeps;
 Ay, by its cross may dreaming stand
 Then, swag upon his back,
 Fade far across the scrub and sand
 Out on the lonely track.

For two or three months my chum and I stuck together and secured employment on the farm stations near Toowoomba and then tramped on again. With several pounds saved up we eventually arrived at Port Bowen and from there went by boat to Brisbane, and then I bade him good-bye, for

he secured a berth on a ship bound for New Zealand and the next I heard of him was from a newspaper report that he was drowned, as I have previously told you. I stayed for about two months in Brisbane and made an attempt to get into the theatre orchestra again, but could not manage it; I secured several concert engagements, however, as I was then an expert violinist and could play by heart several of Spohr's concertos and the tricky variations of Paganini's "Carnaval de Venice."

About this time the rumours of great gold finds were being discussed, believed and doubted in all of the Australian cities, and I got hold of a newspaper article which had evidently been written by some imaginative journalist. Had the account of the discoveries and immense fortunes that were picked up day by day been believed by the author of that story he would have been a terrible ass to have sat there writing articles for a provincial paper, wasting valuable time when fortunes were awaiting men who cared to take the trouble to get them by strolling through the bush north of Perth. Anyway I believed a good deal that he wrote, and got the gold fever, which was raving pretty strongly all over, like an echo of "the roaring fifties," when gold was first discovered by Hargraves. The exiled convicts of those days in Sydney threw their shovels and crowbars down on to the Government land allotted to them, went across country, made fortunes and returned to Sydney and Melbourne prosperous men, elevated from the convicts' chains

to the peaks of fame, their pedigrees forgotten, the past swallowed up for ever. Their late enemies became their firmest friends, as it was, is now and ever shall be, world without end, to those who have plenty of gold ; and so by one stroke of fortune men from the condemned cell who had grinned through prison bars attained to velvet comfort and applause, became notable officials, ay, and rose to be judges on the Bench, and so by the irony of fate often got their own back ! But I must not digress and go so far back, as that time is now history and all happened long before I emigrated from my sleep in eternity into the realms of time to creep across the " Never-never land " on my futile search for gold to help me to keep comfortable and warm.

XXVIII

Off to the Gold Fields—The Great Rush—Digging for Gold—
Various Characters—I find an Old Pair of Boots and am
thankful

I WILL now tell you of my own experiences in that gold rush. I left Brisbane by boat and landed at Perth, West Australia, and found myself one of a wild crew of some hundreds bound for the newly discovered Eldorado. I had little money with me and so, with many fellows who were likewise in desperate financial circumstances, we went as far as we could by train and then tramped the remainder, bound for Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie. By Jove, they were a mixed lot those gold seekers, the children of Israel crossing the desert were nowhere in it. Some were old men, pushing wheelbarrows with their future homesteads in them, others rode bicycles, and the remainder, big unshaved men, scoundrels and angels side by side, all with swags on their backs, tramped along across those desert lands each surrounded by a small ring of flies, as our eyes blinked and we moved along in the blinding sun, ever onward, pulled by the magnet that draws the hearts of men towards desolation and gives extraordinary energy to weary blistering feet as it pulls them onward to fame and fortune or, very often, to a grave in the desert. For as we tramped along sweating, and cursing our swollen feet, we

often discovered off the track the whitening bones of horses and camels and their long-dead riders as the remains lay stretched, half hidden in the mulga-scrub, the bush grass sprouting through the white ribs; men who had died in delirium, tearing their parched throats with maddened thirst under the blinding sun of those parched lands. Sometimes we discovered a tiny rough cross where the comrades had hurriedly buried the delicate youth who could not battle with the bush hardships, taken his last scribbled letter with them, and passed away; sometimes those letters were posted months, even years, afterwards in the cities, and often never posted at all, not intentionally but the trusted ones would lose them or die themselves.

One of my companions on that tramp was an old man with yellow teeth. I did not seek his company but he sought mine and fastened himself on me like some old man of the sea, borrowed my food, my tobacco, my matches, and water, which was terribly scarce. I do not think that old fellow had had a bath for many years; deep in the forest of his shaggy beard cracked the dirt and dry tobacco juice of other days, and often as an extra strong gust of wind blew the lower part back that hung over his chest, I saw his neck all marked like a zebra where the perspiration had rolled the dirt from his head downwards, and so you can imagine that I was not delighted to find that he had become so attached to me, all through my being, as he said, "the dead spit of his son who had died in a Melbourne lunatic

asylum." I was a bit soft-hearted and did not like to snub the old chap, and so I kept to the windward side of him and tramped along. I called him "dad" and made out that I was listening eagerly to all the yarns he told me. I do not remember much of what he said, as I was too much occupied with my own thoughts. I think he had been a bit of a bushranger in his time, for his conversation turned mostly that way as we camped and sat all together round the tent fire till the billy boiled and we ate food which would have made me sick under normal conditions, but when you are young and have tramped across twenty miles of red rock and stones on half-a-pint of swamp water and four ounces of stale bread, putrid tinned meat is a real godsend, and even that we borrowed from the men who were wealthy men compared to us. Men of all classes they were; some had aristocratic-looking noses, and refined faces under their scrubby short beards; some had pug noses and looked fierce and spoke with an underbred twang, while others spoke like polished university men, and many of them were too, as they sat with hungry eyes in the moonlight dreaming of the past and hoping about the future and the prizes Chance might give in the great school of Adversity wherein men learn so much.

It rained one night and never stopped for twenty-four hours. I awoke with many others soaked to the skin and shivering. The wind at night blew quite cold. Those who were fortunate enough to have tents stayed in them, and some of them were

so crowded that feet and legs protruded in circles around them as the rain beat down the whole day. I managed to get my head and one shoulder into one of those shelters. When the rain ceased and we all packed up and moved on again I got a shivering fit on me and was nearly dead by the time I reached Kalgoorlie. An Irishman and his wife took me in and gave me a room over their shop near the end of Hannan Street; I lay in bed a week before I was well enough to walk out to get my fortune of gold as quickly as possible and clear off to Perth and go home to England.

For miles men were pegging out their claims and prospecting the country; the claim was usually named after some peculiarity of the spot where it was situated or through something peculiar about the man who owned it. The next claim to where I with others dug a hole twenty feet deep for no purpose whatever, excepting to make it soppy with our perspiration, was called "Apples' Claim." The miner who owned it was always taking oaths and saying "As sure as God made little apples." And so it got its name. My old man of the sea's claim was called "The Great Unwashed Neck Reef." Some had poetical titles named after the anxious girl in some far-off land who waited the return of her lover with the great fortune, which generally arrived with a thousand kisses in a long letter and an earnest request for her to make a collection, send out the amount for a fare home by steerage passage, and a postscript imploring for no delay as death might end the suspense.

On my claim worked three others, a Scotch fellow named Burns, and "Smith" and "Birth Mark." Smith and Burns were quiet plodding men, who breathed heavily with hope as they shovelled away. "Birth Mark" (which was only a nickname) was a kind of Don Quixote and swashbuckler mixture, and as he turned the windlass over our heads and drew the buckets of earth up as we toiled in the shaft below, he would talk to us for hours without stopping, telling us of his grand pedigree, how he was of Norman blood and the soul of honour; so honourable was he that he was only a poor man through scorning to be a party to a dishonourable action. It was wonderful to hear of the great opportunities that had come his way and how he had let them all go by through his conscience dwelling upon some tiny point bearing on the question as to whether it would be right and proper for him to take the fortune offered, or to toil as a poor man. He would blow his chest out and gaze upon us as though we were much beneath him. I put up with his vulgarity because he had lent me the ten shillings for my "Claim" licence and taken my violin as security.

He would sit by the camp fire by night and tell us all the details of his home life in England. He had left his wife in the old country and seemed terribly spiteful about it. "Middy," he would say to me, "she was a real bitch, my wife was. What would you have done with a wife that wanted all the say and never got up till twelve o'clock in the day,

and when you complained over the late breakfast struck you over the head with her boots?" I pitied him and told him so, and so did all the miners as he gabbled on, though we all envied that English woman comfortably tucked up in bed till midday in old cold England. A lot of the fellows looked shocked at such laziness and it would have done your hearts good to have seen the tremendous indignation on the faces of those miners when he told us that he crept home rather suddenly one day and caught the young lodger on the top attic examining the blue birth-mark under his wife's knee. He told us of his rage and of his wife's indignation over his rage, till the whole camp roared with laughter and from that night he was known as "Birth Mark" and was so thick-skinned and thick-headed that he answered to the rude sallies and that nickname with pride, firmly believing that they all sympathised with him over that story. I got to like him somewhat, for his mighty swagger was intensely amusing and harmless enough. He camped with me for a long time, helped us in digging the shafts, and also in the dry blowing, as we prospected for surface gold in the bush for miles around.

Many men struck rich on the Great Boulder, but no luck came our way. Day after day we toiled and I think we must have dug hundreds of shafts. I often fancied myself sailing home to England as a saloon passenger a millionaire!—and thrilled at the thought of my family's delight as I pensioned each one off for life; but I soon had not boots to my feet

and we sold the claims that we valued the week before at two thousand pounds for one pound each to new chums greener than ourselves, and in the end had to live on tick, and then Birth Mark suddenly one night disappeared taking with him my razor and all that he could lay his hands on, which included the little gold we had given him to mind. We never saw him again; he would have suffered from ill health for a long time if we had come across him, but he was of Norman blood and had too much respect for his aristocratic skin to expose it to our plebeian wrath.

I do not think we should have had such bad luck if we had worked completely on our own and not listened to the advice of men who knew everything and kept pegging out claims according to the rules of theory and found nothing, while often the new chum came on the "fields" and struck gold almost the first day. We got excited and went farther up country prospecting, camped out and endured all the hardships that follow the life of the unsuccessful gold seeker whose capital consists of his enthusiasm, his greenness and the one suit of shabby clothes that he lives and sleeps in.

Often out on those lonely tracks my comrades and I passed deserted shafts and heaps of empty meat tins with the weeds already covering up the remains of recent mushroom civilisation and the blasted hopes of mining men. We too drifted into the hopeless stage, built a tent by the deserted camps and rested before we started off back to the

towns again. One of the men, an old sailor, who had left a ship at Perth and had come up country, thinking to make his fortune and surprise his Polly Beck of London Town by arriving home a wealthy man, had a gun with him, was an excellent shot, and early in the morning he would shoot the green parrots that fluttered and stirred the grass on the hills by thousands. On these birds some of them lived. My friend Smith and I gave up gold seeking utterly and sat down and slept in the sun by day and strolled over the bush to break the monotony. The country struck me as very desolate-looking, but it was considerably relieved by the beautiful everlasting bush flowers that grew on the hills, with all the colours of the rainbow sparkling in them. In those parts also grew the lovely green Kurrajong trees, and the sombre blue and white gums. At night, we heard the melancholy note of the mopoke in the bush and wailing things that I never caught sight of.

I well remember the tramp back to Kalgoorlie with my friend Smith by my side. He too was despondent, for we had both dreamed of making vast fortunes, and smacked each other on the back as we chuckled over our prodigal return to England as wealthy men. I was delighted before nightfall of that day as we tramped back to leave the gold fields for ever, for I found a pair of old boots by a deserted shaft, and they fitted me just a treat, and the comfort to my bleeding, blistered feet that had been prodded with nails that stuck through my old ones made me feel quite happy.

XXIX

Playing the Violin to the Gold Miners—My Friend the Late Missionary—The Great Concert in Coolgardie, under the Direction of "Carl Rosa De Bonne"—Farewell

I STILL had my violin when we arrived back in Kalgoorlie, and after a deal of trouble I got some strings and started playing to the miners, for Smith and I were desperate for money and decent clothes. In an old shanty place on the skirts of the town I played the violin and a sailor played the banjo as Smith took his hat round collecting and in two hours we had more money in our pockets than we could have earned on the gold fields in twelve months. My accompanist, the sailor, was a splendid vamer, and I played all those melodies which I knew would touch the hearts of those miners ; old English songs, sea songs, and finished up with the "Ah che La Morte" from *Il Trovatore*. They were delighted as we finished each selection. Smith's face beamed with satisfaction and so did mine, as he repeatedly came up to me, while I played on, and emptied the coins into my pocket ; the sailor played away as though he was going mad with delight, nudged me in the ribs and kept whispering into my ear "Shares, mate, mind you shares."

From far and near they came to hear the grand concert. Some sang solos, and we accompanied,

others called for dance music. Hard by was a drinking saloon, and I can still see those rough-bearded men with their eyes shining with delight as "All went merry as a marriage bell" and they drank deeper and became from "Half-seas over to dead drunk over."

And then a strange thing happened. A tall, stooping, broad-shouldered man came towards us, and gazed steadily in my face for a moment. I too gazed at him. We had met before! For the moment I could not think who he was, and then in a flash, just as he was turning his face aside as though to let the past go by, I remembered. It was the "Reverend" whom I had seen in the South Seas, the very man whom Hornecastle had chaffed when he visited our shanty by the beach in Samoa. Staying my violin-playing for a moment, I lifted the bow and saluted him to let him know quickly that I remembered him, notwithstanding that he was growing a beard and was dressed in a red-striped shirt and shabby miner's pants. "Well, I'm blessed, Middleton," he said, as he at once came forward and took hold of my hand. "What on earth brought you this way?"

"Gold hunting like the rest of them," I answered, and then I turned and said, "What about you? What are you this way for?"

"Never mind that," he answered quickly, and I also quickly saw that his business and retirement from the missionary profession was nothing whatever to do with me, and minded my tongue. He

turned out to be a splendid friend to me, and in his rôle of gold seeker and common miner he was a man every inch of him. He had heard of the gold finds in West Australia out there in the Islands and had taken the first opportunity to clear out. He was quite frank with me about everything and told me that he had done well, much better work and pay than the old missionary humbugging tour, he said to me as he told me how he had bought a claim for a few shillings from a young fellow and it turned out rich and he eventually sold it for three thousand pounds.

I introduced Smith to him and he took rooms for us and paid all of our expenses, notwithstanding the fact that I told him we had made more money than we ever dreamed of making out of our extemporised concerts. I will not tell you that converted missionary's name, because he is now in England, and it's almost a dead certainty that he will read my book, and it's not because I think he will do so that I say here that he turned out one of the best of men, and often by his conversation revealed to me that he saw through the mockery of his previous profession and the hypocrisy of many of those who followed it. He would sit rubbing his sprouting chin and tell me many of his opinions of those who had been his comrades as he sat by me in the evenings at the hotel rooms where we both stayed.

Eventually we went to Coolgardie together and stayed for some days, and he got a concert up for my special benefit, and I was billed all over

THE GREAT CONCERT IN COOLGARDIE 301

the place as "Signor Marrionette, the celebrated violinist." He hired the hall, and made all the arrangements. Indeed, he cracked me up in such a manner that long before the concert night came off I was as nervous as a kitten over it all, and spent the whole day practising the fiddle so that my performance would not put my great reputation to shame, but nevertheless I framed my programme to suit my audience and put down Paganini's "Carnaval de Venice" and the Adagio of his "Concerto in D." and light operatic selections. I discovered that he had a fine tenor voice and we rehearsed "Good-bye, Sweetheart, Good-bye" and one or two other songs which I have now forgotten the names of, and when the concert came off and he sang as I played the *obbligato*, he brought the house down, and gave the audience as an encore a rollicking drinking song. The young women that he had got hold of to sing and make up our programme were so fascinated with him that they looked like embracing and kissing him. After the concert we both went off to their home, for they were sisters, and spent the whole night, very nearly, singing, playing and feasting. They were Melbourne people and their father kept a general goods store; he was a genial-looking old chap and seemed hugely delighted to be honoured with our company, and thinking that I was of Italian origin he kept praising Italy and the Italians up to the skies, saying, "Where are better musicians than those Italians?" and many other like things, till at last I was obliged to confess that

my Italian name was an assumed one, and then he ceased drinking health to the "land of song" and started off expressing his real feelings and finished up by cursing the whole Italian race, saying they were the dirtiest set of mongrels that ever sniffed the sunlight.

My comrade the missionary often winked at me, and we were both intensely amused, and when at daybreak we carried the old chap into his bedroom and placed him on the bed, he kept lifting his head up as I took his boots off and called me a "dirshy Ishalon," meaning a dirty Italian. His pretty daughters were very much upset about the old man's behaviour, but the missionary and I soon put them at their ease, and when the old man was up sober again, and once more the personification of assumed politeness, we were all the best of friends and the girls blushed to their ears, screamed with laughter, and hid their faces in their hands, and the old man and his thin wizened wife opened their eyes and mouth wide with delight and fright mixed up, not knowing what next we might say, as we told them of our adventures on the South Sea Islands!

I have often thought of those girls since, and I am quite certain they have not forgotten the young violinist Signor Marrionette, or the handsome debonair missionary Carl Rosa de Bonne, for that was his *nom de plume* which appeared in big letters on the bills that announced the great concert in Coolgardie years ago.

Now my early travels and adventures are drawing

to their close, for we left the gold fields and the new friends we had made very soon after the episode of which I have just told you. I had plenty of spare cash which I had saved through my violin-playing, and so I went off in companionship with the missionary, who had made himself a general favourite with many of the miners and authorities of the fast-growing city. The old storekeeper drove us in his cart up to where the train started, and the girls looked terribly crestfallen as we waved our hands and they waved sadly back, as we passed away from them for ever. Arriving in Perth we stayed at St George's Terrace.

Here I will end my boyhood days, for the down of my upper lip had stiffened and sprouted to a virgin moustache and I was getting homesick and weary of hunting for fortunes. After several days' stay in Perth my friend the missionary and I went round to Sydney, and from there he took a passage for England and I shipped before the mast on a sailing ship bound for South America.

So ends this narrative of my boyhood wanderings, wherein I have tried to describe to you some of those experiences that stand out vividly in my memory of all that happened in my travels in distant lands. I had thought to tell you more than I have done, but many things must remain buried with the secrets of my heart, for a while at least, since those who are intimately connected with them still live. I would not wish to write in my humble autobiography of things which they may not care

304 SAILOR AND BEACHCOMBER

to be revealed to the eyes of the world. And so, dear reader, whoever you are, and whatever you may think of me, I wish you good luck and farewell.

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I've travelled strange lands far and wide,
I dived 'mong mirror'd moons
In waters where the catamarans glide
By palms and reef-lagoons ;
I gazed in a dusky maiden's eyes
By a wild man's tiny tent,
Then packed my swag, as the black crow flies
To another land I went.

I lay all night on the homeless plain,
To the skies I prayed in bed
For life's wild romance, but prayed in vain,
As the stars crept overhead.
But often in the lone bush night
Bright eyes came, leaned o'er me,
Then glimmering in the pale moonlight
Ran back into the sea.

And in those waters o'er and o'er
I've dived in vain, then cried
For misery on some lone shore
With no one by my side.
And so for years I wandered, friend,
Sought love and wealth, alack !
Roamed distant lands, and in the end
Brought this one sad song back.

18



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