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ROAD MY BODY GOES

TO ALL who long to know what life really is on a South Sea island, this book will come like a fresh breeze across a lagoon. It is the honest, vivid account of months spent among an unspoiled people who had never known white men before, written by one who has both the newspaper reporter's passion for facts and the poet's perception of beauty.

30. *July Fourth at Tepuka*

The Fourth of July Came, but it is doubtful whether any but ourselves on the island was aware of it. To our friends and neighbors, it was simply the third day after Sunday, in the nomenclature devised by missionary priests to take the place of the native lunar calendar of pagan times.

The sunlight streamed down through the coconut fronds; the surf hissed and roared on the outer reef; off Rangihoa the waves shimmered in the light, as on any other July day. Women passed to and fro on their way to the well or busied themselves about their household tasks of weaving mats and hats. As I sat at the end of the road on the land of Tupiti, in a gorgeous dawn, watching light squalls move procession-like over the sea, men were fishing from small canoes or chopping copra under the leaning trees. The daughters of Tohitika, on a diagram of squares marked out in the sand, were hopping from square to square and kicking a small stone, in a game which they said was ancient, though a similar one is played in American cities, marked out on sidewalks with chalk. Perhaps it is older than either Polynesia or America. Ngaroro, slim and wild-looking child, with dark waving hair and staring dark eyes, took my hand in her small hard brown one.

"Do you want a wreath of ducks' feathers?"

A little later she came to the house with the wreath, woven of dark and white feathers on a band of stiff pandanus. Before she had finished it, however, Maroma, elfin-like daughter of Varoa, brought a similar wreath, so I had to accept both, giving the children tiny bottles of perfumery in return.

Temae and Ngohe came bringing a knife made from an eel's jawbone, bound upon a wooden handle with a cord of vegetable fiber, and earrings of fragrant fern which Ngohe wore in her ears to be photographed.

Of such little incidents is a day made. Yet, in a land where,

to a cursory view, all days appear the same, each coursing of the sun brings its own element of surprise.

An outcry in the street toward the lagoon reached us in the afternoon as we sat searching the meaning of a chant we had heard the night before. Again the shout: "A ship!"

At first we thought our own overdue *Tiare Tahiti* had been sighted, but the movement was toward the lagoon shore rather than toward the sea.

Riua and Tiare, seizing our hands as we leaped down from our coral platform floor, ran with us to the lagoon, where the crowd was gathering. Tauria pointed to the sky just above the coconut trees that marked the farther border of the lagoon. At first I could see nothing. Then, as he directed my gaze, I could distinguish, faintly, a line of dark smoke above one of the shallow passes across whose mouths the surf sent up white plumes of spray.

We joined the crowd hurrying over the broken coral to the end of the transverse street at Tupiti, by the open sea. All were speculating upon the identity of the steamship, which gradually came near enough to distinguish the superstructure and the upper part of the long dark hull, by which Keneti and I identified her as a liner of the Messageries Maritimes, out of Marseilles by way of Panama to Tahiti and New Caledonia. The ship rapidly drew away, till her smoke was again but a faint smudge on the horizon. She was the sole reminder, on that day, of a world in which July Fourth marks an event in history.

I turned and faced solemnly my Polynesian friends.

"Four score and seven years ago," I informed them somewhat inaccurately, in English, "our forefathers brought forth upon this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition . . ."

"What are you saying in the British language?" inquired Takina.

"It is a chant of the land of my birth," I replied, "in praise of the chiefs who founded the American nation."

But at that moment I felt strangely more closely akin to these brown men and women of that Stone Age land, and these great-eyed, laughing, naked children, than to the passengers and crew of that passing ship or to the feverish ways of the disordered world from which it came. On this ring of coral, fed by sea and shore, living from day to day, in the care of the ancestral spirits, we could forget, as our primitive friends never had known, the myriad ways man finds to slay his ease.

And thus the day dedicated to the Spirit of '76 passed, at Tepuka Maruia, without benefit of firecrackers. Keneti and I, recalling the pig races of celebrations in our youth, chased a startled porker down the street, to the huge amusement of the villagers. We invited Teuri to dinner and opened a tin of plum pudding in honor of the occasion—garnished with "hard sauce" made by beating up granulated sugar with a vegetable fat ordinarily used for cooking. The deputy chief highly approved this curious substitute. Keneti brought forth a centerpiece of artificial flowers that someone had given him the day we left Honolulu. "What kind of flowers are they? On what plant did they grow? . . . Ah" (sniffing) "they have no fragrance . . . *Tsia!*" (touching them) "they are false flowers!" I "improved" them by sprinkling a little perfume on the paper petals, much to the merriment of our guest and the young people, Tupu, Tauria and others, who came in later with the sardine tin ukulele, and played that ridiculous instrument and sang.

Our guests went home; the village settled down; the sea wind blew soothingly; there was a pool of quietness, of rest.

31. *Wind That Overturns the Land*

NOT ONLY our own ship, but the copra schooner as well was overdue. Either or both, we knew, might have been wrecked, for we had no means of obtaining news. We might have to remain indefinitely—in itself no hardship, but disconcerting to other plans.

We could see surf breaking at the far end of the atoll, foam dashing high above the land, nearly five miles away. At our end of the island, a strong current roughened the waves. We realized dimly what it must be like when a hurricane sweeps down and the sea pours into the village—smiting, tearing, grinding away the very soil, down to the bare bones of the island.

"It comes," said Temae, "when the spirits of the sea are angry. I was in middle age when the sea last drowned this land.

"The wind blew from the north. Waves climbed higher and higher on the reef, growing all day, till they spilled over into the lagoon. That was only the beginning.

"We fastened everything down as well as we could—canoes, houses . . . tied them to trees. For ourselves, those who were wise chose trees that were strong and deeply-rooted, and climbed into them when the water covered the land. We cut off the tops, so the wind would not tear the trees away as we clung there. . . .

"You cannot know what that wind was like, until you have felt it. We saw the roofs of houses fly down the streets and through the forest; the walls flew after them. Only my house stood, the true Tuamotuan house, built low and canoe-shaped, woven like a basket, after the fashion of our ancestors. All the new, modern houses, like Kararo's house in which you are living, went down.

"And the sea came . . . tearing away the foundations, dig-

ging out the roots of trees while the wind whipped away their tops. . . ."

"How high did the water rise?"

"In this part of the island, there was no more land. The trees in which we clung were as if growing out of the sea; the waves leaped at the lower branches, and the trunks bent in the wind. All night we stayed in the trees, and in the morning the wind stopped, but there was still sea over the land. Then the wind came from the south.

"We were wet and hungry and cold. You would not think we could have lived through that time. Only the tops of trees showed there had ever been an island—and many of the trees were gone.

"At last, the water flowed back to the sea—but there was nothing left. Houses, stone pigpens, bathing-walls, food-platforms—everything swept away. Only, as I have said, the strong old-fashioned framework of my own house still stood.

"Pigs, chickens, dogs—not a trace of life, except those of us who had clung in the trees. Fifteen were gone. Of most of them we never even found the bodies. . . .

"We were hungry. There was no fishing for days, and our canoes were torn away and broken to pieces. There were still a few young coconuts and pandanus fruit clinging to some of the stronger trees, and shellfish in the lagoon, and we lived on them until the government ship brought food from Tahiti.

"We built our houses again, and new canoes, and the government gave us new pigs and chickens. We planted more coconuts. But for a long time, life was very hard. There was no more copra until the young nuts matured.

"Some of the land itself was destroyed. And what land was left, was changed. . . . Before the storm, we had sand all over the village. Now, look—"

As we well knew, everywhere, even deep in the interior, broken branches of coral, blackened with weather, lie strewn over the land. But this harsh soil was their own; holding to

what the sea had left them, Temae and his stout-hearted kinfolk picked up the tattered strands of their lives and wove them together anew as the women weave the leaves of the coconut and the pandanus. Storm will come again, though it has been thirty years since the last one. But the people of Tepuka have food and shelter for today. There is nothing they can do about it, save to choose stout trees, when the storm comes, in which to cling.

"Why don't they build sea walls?" asked a high-island man, in Honolulu. He had not seen these atolls, only a few feet above the sea; the ruins of stone buildings at Anaa; the old temple sites at exposed places on Tepuka and Tepoto, where every stone has been torn away by furious waves.

"They might build concrete refuge platforms," suggested Schenck, at Vahitahi. But it is extremely doubtful whether even these would stand before the onslaught of a real hurricane, and the bombardment of huge blocks of reef-coral hurled high on the shore in the sea gods' rage.

The wind was from the north. Perhaps a hurricane was blowing up, and would strike us there.

32. *The World Intrudes*

A Huge Spider danced deliberately toward me as I lay, a week later, on the mat in Tiaki's house, resting after a meal of roasted bread and octopus tentacle. As I moved to throw the creature outside, Tiaki stopped me.

"Don't hurt it," she cautioned, "or you will die!"

Gathering the monster carefully in her hand, she laid it on my chest, whence it stalked, with the dignity of a chief, to disappear in the shadows.

"It is a sign that your ship is near," she said.

Outside her door, Temae greeted me as he returned from fishing.

"Our chief is on his way home," he declared. "The sky has been overcast, without rain, three days. It is always so, when Maono nears an island. He will come any day now."

That was the eve of an event we had almost ceased to expect.

The next day was the fourteenth of July, but the anniversary of the storming of the Bastille received only slightly more recognition than that of the birth of the American republic, ten days before. It was observed by formal raising of the French flag before the chief's house, while two of his children drummed furiously on a gasoline tin.

Keneti and I, to add our part to the celebration, sang as much as we could remember of the Marseillaise, which was more than anybody else on the island could do.

People resumed their usual occupations, and the day proceeded like any other Saturday.

"We are lucky," commented Keneti, "to escape a big celebration, with speeches and the obligation to make a gift every time our names are mentioned. That's what would happen at most places in French Oceania."

I was sitting under a tree, seaward, when the news came—tasting the beauty of the scene: the dark red shore, over which the sea spilled lacy-white foam, the sun-washed sand and dark palm-shadows upon it, all this land and sea that had grown, in the past few months, familiar and dear.

"A ship!" the children shrilled in the streets. Teuri ran to the shore, followed by other men, to confirm the report.

I could scarcely credit it at first. But steadily, with white sails curving full, the cutter came nearer, till I could recognize the *Tiare Tahiti*, come for us at last. Men and women scanned eagerly the figures aboard. Where was Maono the chief?

A boat wallowed through the surf, depositing on the reef

a Tahitian sailor and Bob, owner of the *Tiare*. Teuri anxiously questioned them for news.

"Maono and Maehanga are on their way here, aboard the *Vaite*. They were at Makemo before we were; they should be here in a day or two. Stimson and Schenck are at Vahitahi. There's a strike in San Francisco, and there has been no mail at Papeete for two months.

"It took us twenty-three days to get here from Papeete. Tacking north, tacking south; our chart-log zigzags all over the map. But we've brought you a case of terns' eggs from Kauehi."

All who could leave their Saturday afternoon tasks crowded at the crossroads to gaze upon the new arrivals, as we awaited Keneti, for whom Teuri had ordered a smoke signal made and sent boys to summon him from the forest where he sought ruins. As the news spread through the village, we heard further rumblings of that underlying clan rivalry that we had detected vaguely before.

"Maono is in jail," the rumor ran.

We traced it to Kararo and his son Tangihia, whose purpose in starting the canard we could not fathom. They claimed to have a letter containing this statement. In vain we tried to explain that the chief, far from being in jail, was at that moment on a schooner bound for his homeland; that he had been entertained at Makemo as befitted his rank, and in all probability would be with them the next day. Doubt still lingered.

Ah Kui dropped another unexplained bit of information. The *Vaite*, he said, had skipped Tepuka and Tepoto on this trip, doubtless leaving Maono at some midway point to be picked up later. How he knew this, was another mystery.

Temae, however, continued steadfast, pointing still to the rumor in the sky. Tehau and Teroro-tu had called to take leave of us before embarking in a canoe for Tepoto, whither they had been summoned by smoke signal. Their son was

ill there, they said; whether this detail had been communicated by the smoke, or they knew by other means, I never was quite sure. We remarked that the weather was threatening, and that it might not be safe to travel by canoe.

"There will be no storm," Temae reassured them and us. "Those dark clouds," he continued, repeating his earlier prophecy, "are only the sign that Maono is near."

The *Tiare* brought not only news but gifts: a box of scones and a bottle of wine from friends in Papeete. Acting Chief Teuri dined with us in state, remaining afterward, quite without embarrassment, to wash the dishes.

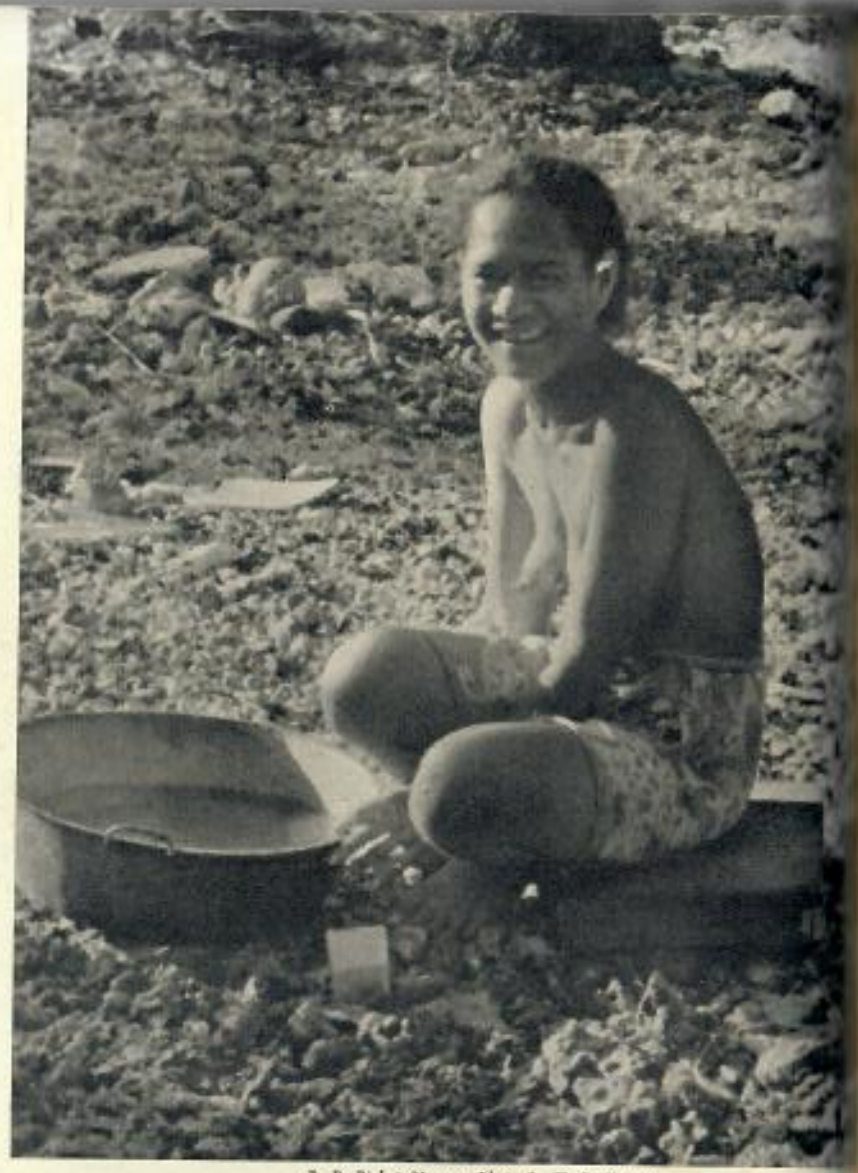
So the feverish world outside descended upon us with word of strikes and lockouts, of prices and exchange—yet, as evening crept gently over the land, the island life surged up; there was singing in the street; Tau, the sailor from the *Tiare Tahiti,* danced the love-dance opposite Fangu on the stony sand.

I slept that night on a mat laid upon dry coconut fronds under two trees on Temae's land. Starlight filtered through the palms; the long drum roll of nearby surf sounded through the night; the coconut midribs and pebbles under the mat were palpable, but, with the inurement of experience, not uncomfortable. It was good to lie thus close to the land, under the friendly stars. A confused murmur came from Tiaki's house, whence could be distinguished the harsh voice of Tangia and the thin cry of new-born Teahio-ariki; from the other side, the ghostly mumbling quaver of Temae, chanting. The slow breeze, the coolness, the freshness of low-island air were infinitely soothing. I awoke, as birds cried seaward and cocks crowed from the thatches, to watch the dull glow brighten the northeast.

We breakfasted royally on eggs of the sooty tern, those birds we had heard overhead on that first starry night at Maké's house. The eggs were fairly large, speckled, with reddish, sweet meat, and of remarkable keeping qualities. They

B. P. Bishop Museum Photo by K. P. Emory

"Temata, daughter of Maru, has made witchcraft."



B. P. Bishop Museum Photo by K. P. Emory

Tinaia, the wife of Toriu, shared with him the mysteries of Tuamotuan medical skill.

were weeks old when we got them, and we ate them for two weeks more; only those spoiled that had been broken in the box.

"How much would it cost," inquired Kararo, "to charter your ship to go to Pukapuka and bring back a shipload of those eggs?"

Despite Temae's interpretation of the weather, rain squalls blew up toward noon of the next day, and questions were raised anew as to the chief's probable arrival. As Bob and I greeted Roki, where she was pulling down young coconuts for her pig, she told us she had had no food since the day before. So he invited her to lunch aboard the cutter, which was beating slowly up and down in the lee of the island.

Squatting in a cold drizzle of rain over corned beef and yams, Roki was so disturbed by the ship's motion that she could not eat, even in the fresh air. Moved by her forlorn appearance, we landed again, whereupon she revived sufficiently to give a striking demonstration of Tuamotuan appetite. At the house, she ate a dozen terns' eggs, a pound tin of corned beef, three sweet potatoes, a large onion, and some warmed-over taro and yams, and drank a tin of pineapple juice, before indicating satiety.

"My stomach," she confided, "is in pain."

"From the food?"

"No, it is sore with grief because you two are going away. There are," she enlightened my ignorance, "three minds: one here, one here, and one here"—pointing to her head, to the region of the solar plexus, and lower in the abdomen.

Keneti, returning from a last excursion with Temae in quest of information about the ancient ceremonies, was besieged with requests for passage aboard the *Tiare Tahiti* to the neighboring island of Tepoto. He was disposed to agree, since the absence of a number of natives would free him from many interruptions in the work he had still to do. Our unexpected longer stay on the island had revealed additional

information which he was eager to complete by conferences with a few trusted informants.

Skipper Bob announced that he could carry twelve, and it took the better part of a day, in conferences with Teuri and others, to sift the applicants down to approximately that number. One Varoa, in particular, insisted that all his family must go. For he was giving up residence on Tepuka, and would make his home at Tepoto. He sat for hours, waiting patiently, until Keneti yielded.

It was decided that I should accompany the party, to fulfill certain missions for Keneti, carry our greetings to friends on the other island, and interpret for Bob, who, though he spoke Tahitian, found difficulty with the rugged Tuamotuan dialect.

As we emerged from the lagoon on the day before sailing, I noticed a slight eruption on the back of the little finger of my left hand. Dabbing it with a drop of iodine, I dismissed it. With acclimation to the island, our early excessive fear of infection had abated; we had had so many small injuries which had healed without complications that, although we still observed the forms of precaution, we had ceased to be deeply concerned. I was to regret that lapse. But there was no thought of it in my mind as I sat that night listening to the singing and looking forward to Tepoto.

33. *Leaping-place of Souls*

The *Tiare Tahiti* boomed briskly over the bright water, passing, just before we reached the red reef of Tepoto, the two canoes that had set out just ahead of us across the turbulent channel.

The narrow decks of the forty-foot cutter were thronged

so thickly that Bob's Tahitian sailors could scarcely move about to work the ship. Bob's "dozen," interpreted to include as many heads of families, with wives, children and livestock, amounted to nearer forty.

Tepoto, known in the ancient chants as "Tepuka of the west," lies, according to the charts, five and a half miles, but in reality some eleven or twelve, west-northwest of Tepuka. It is a smaller land, about a mile in diameter, almost circular in shape, an old atoll, slightly raised, whose lagoon has vanished. The pilot book describes it as bordered with precipitous cliffs. It is, however, a low island, of the same coral formation as Tepuka; the "cliffs" described by an early missionary observer are blocks of coral hurled up on the beach by storms, and uprooted sections of old beach, tilted on end by the same force. Wilkes describes its appearance from the sea, a hundred years ago, as "like a round knoll . . . owing to the trees upon it," which is true today. It is a greener land than its eastern neighbor; more of its native forest is left. It has the same red border, the same inner line of gray old beach, then white sand, and behind that the green bulging dome of the forest.

The wind was with us, and the voyage took only a little more than two hours for the clean-sailing *Tiare*. Even so, most of the children and several of the elders were seasick; several hats went overboard after use as emergency slop-buckets by those who, because of the crowd, could not get near the rail. Varoa, his wife and seven children were among the deck load. Little Maroma laid her pretty face on the deck, her nose against a crate of live chickens, and clasped a pet pig to her childish bosom. Merearíki, wild-haired and savage-looking, sat impassively, her sharp breasts protruding, as Ropati said, "like headlights" through the rent cloth of her worn-out dress.

"Come to Paunu's house," invited Tauhoa, who was one of our passengers, and two boys of the family led us there.

It was a new coconut-leaf structure, airy and clean, with a sleek new coconut-leaf floor mat; near it stood a Tuamotuan house of the older type like that of Temae. Both stood near the sea and facing it, a little to leeward of the main village, as does Paunu's house at Tepuka.

Here was Paunu in his own country—that vigorous, instantly likable man with strong Caucasian features and reddish curling hair. Maupeke his wife greeted us, a withered dark woman who looked like a twin of her sister Maukiri, as she may well have been. So did assorted children and relatives, among them an incredible, fairylike blond little girl with her father's curly hair lightened to rosy gold, and an equally incredible and rather absurd baby, even blonder and redder-haired than she. Three young women were presented as Paunu's daughter Tioma and her cousins Tefakarava and Tepaina.

These sat at a little distance, maintaining an amusing reserve. Tepaina was a slender girl, of somewhat severe but comely countenance; Tefakarava, a chubby golden-brown creature with flowing dark hair framing a round, dimpled face from which great brown eyes looked between lashes of amazing length and thickness. Tioma, a little taller, more slender, bore in more delicate form the finely chiseled features of Roki, with Tauhoa's darker hair tinged with ruddy lights, and a clearer tone of her tawny-olive complexion. The nose, straighter and narrower than those of most of these people, had just a hint of a downward curve at the tip, lending to her features an imperiousness enhanced by her general demeanor of queenly dignity. Tioma combined in unusual harmony the best features of two Polynesian types sometimes labeled, from their resemblances, "Caucasian" and "East Indian." All in all, she was the most beautiful girl we saw in that summer's voyaging.

They led us to a mat near the old-style house, and brought drinking-nuts and a great slab of raw red tuna. As Bob

would have none of the latter, it was for me to uphold the courtesy of our party. With his sheath-knife I cut away the outer crust, upon which clustered innumerable flies, and ate a liberal portion of the clean inner meat, with bits of ripe coconut for seasoning. The social situation thus saved, Tauhoa, who had accompanied us as a sort of personally conducting guide, poured water over my hands—the Tuamotuan style of finger-bowl—and brought more drinking-nuts.

The unconscious poverty—and therefore riches—of these people was continually being brought to mind. Aboard the *Tiare* where Tauhoa accompanied us for dinner, she carefully scraped all the leavings into an empty tin.

"Throw it overside!" suggested Matini.

Tauhoa was shocked.

"I'm taking it home for the children."

The struggle for life on a scanty soil has bred in the Tuamotuan an economy that countenances no waste.

As we sat in the early evening before Paunu's house, the darkness closed down over Tepoto like a kindly hand, smoothing away the weariness of day. Stars burned over the sea; among them the riding lights of the *Tiare Tahiti* glowed faintly where she lay off, out of reach of the reef and the uncharted shoal that stretches a wicked claw for a mile and a half northwest of the island's point.

Talk hinged upon the topic nearest the heart of these islanders at the time, the expected return of Maono. There had been disappointment that he had not been brought by the *Tiare*, the port authorities having refused permission. Tangihia's false rumor of Maono's "imprisonment" had spread by canoe to Tepoto. So we had to relate the true story for each new arrival, of whom there was a steady stream.

Teuru was especially interested in Hawaii: What was the Hawaiian word for this and for that? What food was eaten in Hawaii? What fruits grew there? What was the fashion

of their canoes and paddles? What fishes swam in those waters and what beasts thrived for food upon the land?

There was talk, too, of the weather, that unfailing topic in all lands, but of practical importance in this country of fishermen and canoe voyagers. It is often stated that the Polynesians, inhabiting mainly countries of mild climate, have no word for weather. It is probably true that in most dialects they have no general word for it, but there is an infinite vocabulary of words for specific aspects of weather, as anyone who has heard the chant of the Road of the Winds can testify.

There was singing. I must sing songs of Hawaii, and illustrate, haltingly as I might, the hula. Then I must show off the dances learned at Tepuka. I must even recite those useless numerals.

Time is a matter of relative, rather than absolute, duration. I never saw a clock on Tepoto, and though Ah Kui had one in his store at Tepuka, I never saw anyone consult it; indeed, I am under the impression that its hands always stood at half past two. Years are counted, now, according to the Christian era, but, I suspect, somewhat vaguely. One young woman, on being asked her age, replied, "Nine years." As she was obviously a grown woman, the inquirer pressed her for the source of this information.

"How do you know you are nine years old?"

"The priest told me."

"When did he tell you that?"

"When I was a child."

Similarly, our good friend Roki, on the occasion of her first call to welcome us to Tepuka, remarked that she remembered Keneti from his brief visit there five years earlier.

"But I don't remember you," he admitted.

"Ah, then I was a child, peeking under the thatch of your house, but now I am fourteen years old and"—with simple pride, as indicating maturity—"I have had sweethearts."

As a matter of fact, Roki was at least eighteen.

Mokio the elder told us he was fifteen years old when the first missionaries landed at Tepuka. If this was true, Mokio was at least ten years older than he looked—and it is not usual in the Tuamotu for an elderly person to look younger than his age.

Annoying as this indefiniteness might have been in other circumstances, I found it delightful, a pleasant indication of the atmosphere of a land where time mattered so little as to be practically negligible. In practice, the time of day, if there was any need for it, was determined roughly by the position of sun or stars, the turning of current and tide. I have heard natives say it was "dawn" when not a ray of light was yet visible. Asked how they knew, they replied:

"By the sound of the surf on the reef."

And they were right, these children of sun and sea: within a few minutes the sky had lightened perceptibly even to me.

So I do not know whether we talked early or late, on the mats in front of Paunu's house, under the thickly-sown stars. Paunu, with a hospitality which it would have been churlish to refuse, had invited us to spend the night ashore, and we slept in Polynesian fashion: family and visitors in one long row across the breadth of the house, heads on the pandanus log that served as pillow, a mat thrown over us as coverlet. It is surprising how soundly one can sleep in that rude-appearing manner; after a few months at sea on a sampan and a few more on coral islands, one becomes accustomed to many things.

Inland Tepoto is as beautiful a place as Wilkes imagined it, with fairylike landscapes of open glades, riotous thickets of shrubbery, and tall groves of trees. The site of the former lagoon is a slight depression in the center of the island, covered over with grasses and herbs. The boys showed us there a shallow water hole, beneath a broken shell of old lagoon-bottom: "the navel of the land."

The well of the village, however, is situated more centrally to the habitations, behind the only store, which is also the only wooden building. Kept by a brother-in-law of Teuri, this store is an exception in the Tuamotu. There are no Chinese on Tepoto. It is a pleasant land, and more fruitful than Tepuka, with many swine and fowl. A thick scrub of papaya plants had grown up in the sand at Paunu's doorstep, from seeds cast there as his children ate the fruit. Fish apparently are as plentiful in the offshore waters, though there is no lagoon from which to take shellfish. Remains of great ovens in the sand testified to abundance of turtle.

Paunu and Teuru showed me the site of the principal marae, which, like one we had seen at Tepuka, had been destroyed by the last hurricane. It was a desolate enough spot, surrounded by turtle ovens, a waste of broken beach, with not a stone remaining recognizable. Seeing my interest, my hosts led me on a walk around the island, about an hour's tramp. One merry-faced, plump, square-headed lad ran off into the bush and came back with a young white tern which roosted contentedly on his head as he continued the walk. Toward one end of the island we came upon a marae in a fair state of preservation, many of its upright slabs still standing.

"The names of these stones," explained Paunu, "have been kept with us, although the marae has not been used for many years."

It was a strange feeling, to stand in the bright wind-washed sunlight among these ancient stones, which had seen so many sacrificial slaughterings of turtle and of fish, and heard so many ancestral chants. It was not difficult to imagine Paunu himself, or Teuru, clad in pandanus mat, feathers in ears and hair, sprinkling ceremonial sea water over the sacrifice, and holding a bunch of twisted leaves to catch the blood.

Paunu's house was crowded the second night, when gusts of rain drove inside many relatives who had been sleeping

out of doors. Nearly all were wakeful; there was some singing, and much arguing about the proper phrasing of one of the songs for Maono: whether it should be "you two," as sung, or the singular number. This dispute went on for a long time, despite the fact that everybody knew Maono had been accompanied by Maehanga.

I gave little heed to the hubbub. The infected finger with which I had rashly started from Tepuka had become painful. Tetama, wife of Takina, and Panitaka, wife of Varoa, had proposed the first day, almost to the point of insistence, to open it with a rusty needle. Panitaka was far from pleased when I demurred, but Tetama forgave me, as being the victim of ignorance, and pressed her nose to mine affectionately by way of expressing sympathy for my affliction.

By this second night, however, I was suffering grievously. Shattered with chills, I rolled in a blanket from the ship and waited for the night to end. Tioma, with the kindness that characterized all of Paunu's family, observing my distress, drew my head upon her shoulder.

"Rest your head here. Do not break your neck upon the wooden pillow."

Tefakarava, at my right, nestled close to warm away the chill.

An elder woman hushed the chatter: "Keep quiet; the white men want to sleep."

She was heeded for a time, and I drifted into an uneasy slumber that deepened with the warmth of the blanket and the kindly care of my charming hostesses. The old lady's words, however, gave rise to a "witty" saying that was repeated many times during the remainder of our stay in the islands. It was chubby, long-lashed, demure-looking Tefakarava who took it up, she with that marvelous name: That Which Causes to Shine. Again and again we were to hear her say, softly, those libelous words: "Keep quiet, white men, the natives want to sleep."

My hand was badly swollen the next day, and I almost had to use force to prevent Panitaka, Tetama and others from operating on it. I put them off with the plea that Keneti was a great surgeon who would perform wonders of white men's magic upon it when I returned to Tepuka.

Good old Tehau received me cordially when we called on him to receive coconuts for the day and to confirm news of the recovery of his son, whose illness had called Tehau and Teroro-tu to Tepoto. Had I known earlier the relation—adoptive though it was—that he was to bear, I would have cultivated him more thoroughly from the first, for he proved, as did Teroro-tu, among the most intelligent and charming of our neighbors. There is, one may say, a greater merit in affection for an adopted child than for a natural one: the children of one's flesh are a gift of the seasons and the gods, whereas the children of the spirit are taken from deliberate choice. Paunu, too, was like a father: I loved him when I first set eyes on that square-hewn mighty man, one of the wisest and kindliest men I have known. I am persuaded that Paunu had, if he chose to exercise it, great spiritual power; in another age he would have been, I doubt not, a mighty chief.

The wind had been adverse, the sky unsettled, for two days; Bob again postponed our departure until afternoon. Wretched as I was, I walked out to see a little more of the island, for it was a joyful place, green and lovely with sun or rain slanting through its luxuriant fronds. Returning, I found Pahoa and his brother skinning a large cat which, they explained, had been killed by a dog.

"What are you going to do with it? Stuff it?"

"No, we're going to cook and eat it."

As they explained further, they would not have thought of killing the cat for food, but since the animal was already dead, it would be a shame to waste it. There spoke again the thrifty nature of the Tuamotuan. I thought of the care with which Kararo hoarded our discarded tins; Tauhoa's salvage

of the luncheon scraps for the children, the gathering of every bit of unused coconut meat or table leavings for pigs and fowl. In a land where one lives mainly by what one can wrest from a not always kindly sea, one learns not to throw any food away.

Tehau and Teroro-tu waded out in the shallows on the reef to bid me an affectionate farewell. Though I scarcely realized it then, it was to be my last sight of them, for they were remaining on Tepoto to bring over the canoe in which they had come. Paunu and several members of his family, however—including the gentle Tioma and Tefakarava—accompanied us, with twenty or thirty others, all crowded together on the forty-foot cutter.

It was a dismal all-day passage, wind and current against us, tossing the *Tiare Tahiti* till she shipped great slashes of green water over her reeling deck. Rain fell intermittently out of a putty-colored sky. Removing my wet shirt, I stowed it in one of the bunks below and returned on deck, where the rain trickled down my bare skin as it did down that of Paunu, the drops sparkling in his slightly grizzled small stiff curls. Tauhoa, wrapped unavailingly in Bob's raincoat, gave up and lay in the slosh of water on the deck. Tioma, kneeling aft, laid her head in her father's lap and moaned. Tefakarava's round olive face grew greener and greener as the *Tiare*, bucking and heeling over, tacked this way and that, beating slowly to windward, in the cold slow rain. I found myself considering that it might have been more comfortable, if also more hazardous, in Tehau's canoe.

Evening was near when we arrived at the "harbor" of Rangihoa, where a crowd had gathered to meet us. It was a long evening, too, in Maké's house.

Hiti, temporary husband of Maké, was insistent that I repeat the impromptu dance I had created at that earlier gathering in Maukiri's house. In my feverish and weakened condition, I was in no mood to do so, even had I been able to re-

call any of the improvised steps. I refused none too graciously, to my later regret, for it seems to me now that it would have been but little to do for these friends who had been so kind and in whose lives there was so little of distraction or entertainment.

I fell into a troubled sleep, to dream of Hiti as a black giant trampling upon my wounded hand.

34. I Walk Too Near a Grave

The Old Men Said it was because I had walked too near a grave. They went so far as to intimate that in doing so I had approached uncomfortably near my own—but that is violating chronological sequence.

That sequence, let us say, carries back to an early-May morning in Papeete, and to Schenck, warning me against the Dangerous Islands—or, for that matter, all islands.

Schenck knew considerable about islands. He had lived, as I had, in Hawaii, before he settled in Tahiti. He had been shipwrecked from a canoe in a flooded river in Fiji; he had been paddled many miles down that river, shaking so severely with fever that he scarcely knew whether the boat was rocking; he showed terrifying scars that were his souvenirs of coral cuts and infected scratches. He told uncomfortable tales of poisoned wounds that refused to heal for months, and of the ministrations of unskillful surgeons who cut in the wrong place and aggravated the trouble.

"There is the nohu fish," he said. "It buries itself in the sand and sticks up a spine, like a periscope. Step on it, as you are likely enough to do, for you can't see it, and in a few minutes your whole leg turns black; if you have a chromium steel constitution and a lot of luck, you live.

"No tropical country was made for the white man. There is leprosy; there is syphilis; there is elephantiasis. True enough, they didn't have leprosy or syphilis until the whites and the Chinese brought it to them; but both diseases are worse in these countries. There are native infections for which we have no names. You will go among people covered with open sores; the flies will swarm from them and settle on you or on your food.

"Have you ever tried landing on the reef of a low island? There are no harbors. You land in a whaleboat. The boatmen aim it at a shallow groove in the reef. They wait for a wave and ride in on it. It's a fifty-fifty break. If the conditions at the moment are just right and the boatmen's judgment is good, you land safely with no more than a wetting. If not, the boat turns over and pins you against the coral. In that case, the survivors give you as fine a funeral as they can manage. Or, if you happen to be thrown clear, you are a mass of coral cuts, almost sure to become infected, and you wish you'd been killed quickly in the first place."

I felt weaker and weaker as he went on. Sitting down on the curbstone in front of Sam Russell's office, I mopped cold perspiration from my face. What had I let myself in for?

And now, nearly three months later, I had seen several of the Dangerous Islands, and had encountered little of those things. To be sure, the boat had upset in landing at Meetia and I had been rolled on the black and jagged rocks of that inhospitable shore, but the cuts had healed within a week. Again, Tupu had miscalculated the speed of his canoe in boarding a schooner off Rangihoa, and had capsized it, hurling me into the sea, with the result that as I came up, the overturning outrigger had bumped me smartly on the nose; but the sharks didn't get me, and the nose wasn't broken. There had been plenty of flies, and a few mosquitoes, but I had seen nothing worse in the way of disease among the people of Tepuka and Tepoto than a kind of boil, an incon-

venient but not dangerous skin eruption, and *tangè*, which speckles the skin with round white spots somewhat as does psoriasis, but apparently does no further damage. It was just as well that the authorities hadn't let us land at leprosy-rotten Reao, where Schenck's dismal predictions were somewhat justified. We were just as well pleased to escape Reao; it is, though interesting, an unattractive place.

I had begun to think that the Dangerous Islands—with the exception of Reao—were a more healthful environment than many more civilized places.

And then, it seems, I walked too near a grave!

It started with that tiny eruption, like a heat blister, on the back of the little finger of my left hand. We never could trace the source of it to any known injury. Perhaps a sliver from a mat; one of the small thorns that arm the edges of pandanus leaves; these are but random guesses. Perhaps some decaying sea growth in the partly enclosed warm water of the lagoon, where we swam, generated a poison. Now my whole body was afire with it.

On my return from Tepoto, Keneti and I opened the infected area with a sterilized pair of scissors and treated it with such medicines as we had. Next day the entire hand was swollen as far as the wrist, and the finger itself was larger than a thumb.

Keneti was plainly worried.

"We're not getting anywhere with this. If the *Vaite* were here I'd send you back to Papeete aboard her. I'd be afraid to risk you on the *Tiare Tahiti;* we couldn't treat the wound properly, and it would be hard to keep sea water out of it. All the natives say sea water is bad for these things."

But the *Vaite* was far away. There was no available contact with civilization; no communication. Even had there been a ship available, I might have reached hospitals and physicians too late. We must depend on our own meager resources, and those of the natives.

The natives! There was a thought.

"We're just groping around in the dark, trying to treat this infection with civilized remedies," Keneti concluded. "Our treatment not only isn't curing it; it seems to be making it worse.

"It's a native infection. The natives undoubtedly know a lot more about it than we do, and if it were my own hand, I'd have them treat it with their own medicines. They've had hundreds of years of experience with the few native diseases there are. Likely enough this kind of infection isn't known to civilized doctors at all."

"What do you do for this illness?" I asked Tauria, who was in the house at the time.

"A tobacco poultice," was his suggestion.

I had chewed tobacco just once. My mind flashed back from that coral island to the grassy violet-starred bank of a little river in Wisconsin; my father nodding in an afternoon nap over his fishing-pole; the sample plug of Battle-Ax that had been tossed on the doorstep, brought furtively from my pocket. I hadn't repeated that experiment. However, if I didn't chew now, Tauria would, for he was eager to try the remedy. So I reduced to pulp a sufficient quantity of the acrid Tahitian "twist" and bound it upon the injury.

The tobacco didn't make it worse, but it didn't improve it, either.

"Tauria is only a young man," Keneti reflected. "If I were you, I would consult Paunu. He is a tahunga; he probably knows just what to do in cases like this."

Paunu displayed professional interest.

"It is an *uruaitu,*" he diagnosed, using a word long vanished from the language of daily speech, "a ghost-head."

"A ghost-head," he repeated. "Who has had cause to work sorcery upon you?"

"As far as I know, I have done nobody any wrong."

"Temata has cast a spell on you," suggested Roki, who

did not like the daughter of Maru. I recalled the grievance that young woman cherished against me, proceeding from that fateful joke of weeks ago.

It was unfortunate that my blunder had been directed toward Temata, who was of a peculiarly sensitive and proud disposition. Others of my friends might have overlooked or forgiven such a slight, having compassion for my ignorance. But Temata had already a rather difficult time of it at Tepuka. Of alien birth though of Tepuka ancestry, with a smattering of foreign ways derived from residence at Fakahina and in Tahiti, and deficient thereby in the fundamental art of a Tepuka woman: the making of hats and mats–she had developed a deep-seated inferiority complex and a correspondingly active defense mechanism which caused her to be stigmatized by the native sons and daughters of her ancestral island as "*teoteo*," which might be translated "uppity" or "big-feeling."

Paunu turned to Temae, grandfather or great-uncle of the suspect: "Has Temata worked witchcraft against Pari?"

"Nonsense!" scoffed Temae. "Temata does not know witchcraft."

"What then could be the cause?" I queried.

"You must have committed some sacrilege without knowing of it, and a spirit has entered your finger. Perhaps you have walked too near a grave."

"Perhaps so," I agreed. I did not tell them of the time when, having heard that the spirits of the ancestors arise on moonlight nights and walk along the road that passes the tiny cemetery, I had gone there and sat on the stone wall of the House of the Dead for the time it takes to smoke a pandanus-leaf cigarette, and no spirit had appeared.

"Will you invoke the spirits for me?" I asked Paunu.

"I will do so if it becomes clearly necessary," he promised. "But first let us see what can be done with medicines. My

daughters will go to the forest and pluck herbs. We may be able to cure this illness by natural means."

Roki and Tauhoa talked of island medicine as they gathered the young leaf buds of the karauri and the flower buds of the piupiu and crushed these things upon a stone. Roki chewed a bit of the green leaf of a young coconut tree, spat it upon the mixture, and bound the poultice upon the finger with a strip of cloth torn from a clean pareu, relating meanwhile their previous cures.

"The first time Pini the son of Maono went to Fakahina, he came home very ill. He could not eat. We made medicine and in one day he was well."

It appeared, however, that the medical skill of Paunu's daughters was not equal to my case. Next day the pain and swelling had reached the shoulder; the arm was paralyzed and I shivered with fever. Keneti was visibly alarmed.

"Paunu," I insisted, "you will have to make magic."

Now Paunu, although a sorcerer of sorts, is also a prominent member of the church of the Sacred Heart, and he was clearly reluctant to traffic with the ancestral spirits by means of the ancient magic, except as a last resort. These things, he would have explained if I had persisted, were things of Satan. Still, if it became necessary to fight demon with demon, he assured me he would do so.

"Go first," he counseled, "to Toriu. He and his wife Tinaia, daughter of Temae, know the *rakau nati*. You have seen this medicine used. Did not Noere the Younger break his leg when he fell over a canoe? The leg was treated with that medicine, and now Noere walks about and plays marbles with the other boys in the street. Go to Toriu and Tinaia, and try that medicine. If it fails, I will invoke the gods."

Toriu and Tinaia gravely inspected the infection.

"There can be no doubt," they agreed, "that the *rakau nati* is needed. We will come tonight and treat your illness."

Just after dark they came, Toriu bearing a half coconut

shell filled with a reddish, thick liquid, shot with pale gleams of gold.

"The root and bark of the karauri and of the horahora," Toriu explained, when asked, but there may have been other and secret ingredients, for the concoction had a strange, muddy consistency and a thick, earthy smell. The horahora, however, is a plant of known virtues: in Hawaii, where it is called noni, it is used even in this day of modern surgery to reduce fractures and sprains.

Tinaia washed the whole hand carefully, and applied the red medicine with a white feather. Red and white are colors pleasing to the gods; to use a black feather would have been gross malpractice, by island standards.

Toriu cut the ends off a bud coconut, a little larger than those the children use for juggling, and placed the truncated nut under my arm to block the circulation and check the spread of the infection.

"Hold it there all night," he ordered. "It will keep the evil spirit from climbing farther up your body."

They remained long in the house that night, turning over the pages of back-number magazines, and marveling at pictures of strange things in the white men's country. Among those pictures were scenes of hospital operating-rooms, in a play then popular in America, where white-robed surgeons wearing inhuman-looking masks wielded sterilized instruments over sufferers like myself.

"White medicine men," I explained. "The masks are to keep away the evil spirits that cause illness, which in the white men's language are called 'bacteria.' "

Toriu understood. He understood the white robes, too, from his viewpoint, and approved. He and the white medicine men had a good deal in common; though they would give different reasons for it.

The pain dulled; whether from the effect of Toriu's medi-

cine, which was cool and soothing with a curious drawing sensation, or merely from nerve fatigue, I do not know. I must have been still somewhat feverish, perhaps delirious. I lay quietly on the mat and closed my eyes.

"Will he recover?" asked Keneti.

"It is hard to say," Toriu replied cautiously. "A native can recover from the ghost-head; a white man—we do not know. We have never before treated a white man. They are not accustomed to our diseases, as we are not accustomed to theirs. We die of colds, which to the white men are a slight thing. They sneeze and cough, as do we, but they wipe their noses with handkerchiefs and go about their work. As for us, our lungs fill and we die."

"If you had come to us sooner," said Tinaia, "it would have been better. The evil spirit had already reached the armpit before we began treatment. It is under the left shoulder; it is near the heart. If the evil spirit reaches the heart, there is no hope."

Paunu, who had been listening, got up, with a strange expression on his face, and went out into the haunted night.

In the languor that crept over me as the pain subsided, I lay listening to their talk with an odd detachment, as if they were speaking of someone else. Looking back upon it now, it seems strange that I was not terrified. We were utterly isolated. It had taken the *Tiare Tahiti* three weeks to reach us, and it might take as long to get back to any port where there were physicians of our own race. The natives said it would be fatal to travel, in my condition. There was no way of calling help. Only the herbs and incantations of these islanders, and what sturdiness of constitution I might have, stood between me and a miserable death. Yet, strangely, I felt no fear, but only a mild curiosity and a sense of peace. It was good, I reflected dreamily, to lie on these cool mats, with these kind people watching over me.

By one of those curious twists of psychology which magnify trivial occasions in memory, the date July 24th has stood out in my mind since on the night of that date a boy of ten years or so, in his bed in a Wisconsin village, reflected sadly that the summer vacation was half gone and he hadn't done many of the things he wanted to do. That boy, playing at "savage" in backyards and pastures and woodlots, would have derived a curious compensation if he could have looked ahead and seen himself on July 24th of a much later year in his house of leaves on a coral island, even though disabled and in pain. Part of the celebrated "lure" of far and primitive places no doubt is a response to the boy in man; in such surroundings, among childlike peoples, he regains the play-world of his childhood. Where the pursuits at which he played as a boy are the serious vocations of adults, he finds a satisfaction of some instinct as old as the childhood of his own race.

However this may be, on that day, the second of Toriu and Tinaia's treatment, the infected hand felt slightly better, and the general symptoms less pronounced. Old Temae, who had seen many such cases in his long life, predicted that it would be far advanced toward recovery in a few more days.

"This illness is well known," he explained. "It occurs oftener on the sole of the foot, but it may attack any part of the body. On the foot, it often develops from a stone bruise."

Day by day Toriu and Tinaia came and washed the hand, and painted each day a smaller area with the medicine, which left a stain like dried blood.

"We are forcing the evil spirit down into the spot where it entered," Toriu explained.

Whatever the merits of that theory, the results justified the practice. Soreness and swelling receded as the treatment continued. By the third day, the infection had been localized. It rose—true to its name—from the base of the finger

in the semblance of a ghostly skull, a high hard dome of pain.

"It is time for the poultice," declared Toriu with some satisfaction. He prepared it as Roki and Tauhoa had done, from the same herbs, and bound it with a strip of red cloth.

"Do not burn the dressings, or throw them away carelessly," Tinaia warned. "Put them in this coconut shell, and I will dispose of them fittingly. It is not well to anger the gods further."

She meant that she would bury them in the ground or throw them into the sea; the practice differs in different countries and with individual medicine-makers.

The poultice was cool and soothing.

"On Monday, in the middle of the day, the swelling will break," Tinaia predicted. "Keep it covered until then, and don't let anyone see it."

Visitors came and squatted beside me, and caressed the other hand: Maukiri and her daughters, urging me to come to their home to stay, that they might comfort me; Temae, who himself knows sorcery; Ngohe, mumbling words of sympathy; Tukua the chief's daughter; Roki and Tioma, fragrant with scented coconut oil; Tauhoa, always practical and helpful, rolling up a bundle of my clothes to wash. Teuri, a frightened expression on his long, serious face, crossed himself with pious precaution before passing the doorway of this house into which "Satan" seemed to have entered.

The child Riua sat at my feet, in silent sympathy. Teuringa-iti came with her sweetheart Maono the son of Maono, bringing a great basket of drinking-nuts. Paniroro, who had returned on the *Tiare* with us from Tepoto, talked of the lands she had visited. Paniroro was a traveled woman; she had been to Fakahina, that port which draws so many of the young people from the two islands, and to farther Fakarava, capital of the Tuamotu.

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"This," as she pointed out to Tinaia an advertisement in one of our magazines, "is a coloring for the lips, and this for the cheeks. I have seen a white woman, the wife of the administrator, use them so"—indicating in pantomime the application of rouge and lipstick. "The white women's faces are pale, and they paint their lips and faces, for they have not the natural color of the human skin, as we have."

She had a child with her—a pretty little curly-haired girl —who, she said, was half American, a quarter Chinese and a quarter Tuamotuan; and showed us pictures of the child's parents, whom Bob recognized as friends of his in one of the more westerly islands.

"It was Tiki, the first man, who brought illness and death into the world," said Paunu, who followed my progress closely. "Tiki made Ahuone, the first woman, out of a heap of sand, and their daughter was Hina. When Hina was grown, she was very beautiful, and Tiki made her his second wife. But Ahuone found it out, and Hina was ashamed and fled to the moon. Then Tiki, in his grief, gave himself death, and since his time all men must die."

"But, Paunu, was there no way of undoing the curse of death?"

"Alas! there was none. Maui tried to win back eternal life for man. He wrestled with Tiki at the bottom of the sea, and tried to take out his own internal organs and exchange them for those of Tiki. If he could do that, he thought, he could conquer death, for Tiki's organs were still immortal; Tiki had created death only by an act of will. But Maui's brothers followed him and interrupted him with ill-timed questions, so that he failed.

"So mankind was still troubled with decay and death. But Tama saved man many troubles."

"Who was Tama?"

"He was the son of Tané, lord of the sky. Our ancestors

prayed to him to cure wounds, to heal the bites of eels and sharks, and bruises from falling out of trees. He was called the God Who Makes to Live.

"You understand, of course, that all these things are but heathen tales, and things of Satan."

"Yes," I replied, "but it seems to me rather significant that this Tuamotuan savior was called Tama, which means the Son, and that he was the son of Tané, the creator of all things good and beautiful . . . and that the name of Tané means Man. For the Christian scriptures, as you know, speak of the Savior as the Son of Man, who is the Light, the Way and the Life."

"It may be so. It is a deep study. But it is true that our ancestors believed Tama healed the sick. When people are very ill, as you have been, their spirits sometimes leave their bodies and wander into the Great Darkness. It was Tama, our fathers believed, who led such spirits back into the bodies, and the sick people then recovered."

"Did they always recover?"

"Sometimes the spirit refused to go back into the body. Then the body died, but the spirit lived, and Tama led it to the spirit-world. If the spirit ate the fruit offered by demons in the Darkness, Tama was powerless to save. The demons, in great boats, chased such souls and threw them into a frightful place; the same, no doubt, as the hell of which the priests have told us."

"If the spirits of the dead are teachers, as I have heard, why then do the people fear them?"

"They do not fear that kind of spirit. But a man has more than one spirit within him. One spirit remains in the body when it is buried, and that is the one that is feared. Such spirits come out of the graves at night, hold parties, and even go fishing. It is very dangerous to meet them."

There was more of this. And day by day the visitors came.

The elders sat on the floor and chanted. My adopted grandmother Teuringa was the liveliest of the lot, grunting and moving her stiff limbs in an ancient dance as if recalling long-past amorous encounters of her youth. Tinaia, holding her pet pig in her lap, joined in the rousing chants.

So the days passed, in a hut woven of palm leaves and thatched with the leaves of the pandanus, floored with pebbles; under treatment by a mixture of herb doctor and pagan magician, a thousand miles from a hospital, but surrounded by kind and loving friends, who sorrowed at my discomfort and grieved for my imminent departure.

Practically the whole village called. Only Temata the daughter of Maru did not come near.

"It is proof," charged Roki, "that she has caused this illness by witchcraft."

"Tell her," I suggested, "that I myself am a sorcerer and that I will make Hawaiian magic, which is stronger than the magic of Tepuka, to bring trouble upon her worse than mine."

Tukua, Temata's cousin, who was sitting in the doorway, appeared startled.

"Temata has made no magic," she protested. "Temata doesn't know witchcraft."

That evening Tukua returned, bringing Temata, who seemed ill at ease. Other visitors watched her narrowly as she entered and squatted near my mat. Temata looked around at them defiantly, then turned to me, saying defiantly: "It serves you right!"

Monday came, and my nurse Tinaia remarked with satisfaction the fulfillment of her prediction. The infected spot, when she unwrapped it, resembled nothing so much as a miniature volcano in eruption. The next treatment, she indicated, was a poultice of soap—red soap, by which she meant the harsh yellow laundry soap that comes in long bars in the schooners from Tahiti. Keneti exhibited a cake of a widely

advertised American brand which is much redder, with a strong antiseptic odor. Tinaia was visibly pleased.

"It smells of the spirit-world," she commented with delight, as she observed its redness and sniffed its medicinal aroma. Surely the gods would now be favorable. She shaved off thin flakes of it and laid them gently on the infected area.

By this time I was feeling much better and had begun to stir around the house and even to walk out into the street. Temata passed, on her way to the well. I had been waiting for this occasion to try a little experiment.

Pouring a few drops of alcohol on a ball of cotton, I touched a match to it and stood in the doorway, tossing the burning cotton up and down on the palm of my well hand, and chanting what I could remember of a Hawaiian prayer which in ancient times was chanted, with proper accompanying ceremonies, to bring retribution upon one guilty of black sorcery.

"The fire burns,
fire of the dense darkness . . .
Fire is in the heavens,
decay, maggots, corruption,
death is in the heavens!
O Kane, o Lono, o Ku,
breathe death upon the sorcerer
and upon him who procured the token of death. . . ."

The divergent dialects of the Polynesian language have enough words in common to enable a Tuamotuan to grasp something of the import of such an invocation. Temata was alarmed. She ran toward me, scooping up sand, as she ran, to throw upon the flame.

I chanted on, waving the burning cotton out of reach.

Hurling another handful of sand, she walked away, more

uneasy, I knew, than she was willing to admit. The sorcery of Hawaii is famous throughout the Polynesian countries.

"Will she die today?" asked Roki, in awe.

"She will not die," I reassured her. "I have not made the spell complete. I only wanted to frighten her, because in my illness she mocked me. If I had taken a lock of her hair and burned it with the magic fire that does not burn my hand, then she might indeed die."

"She deserves to," said Roki severely. "She is a woman without kindness."

Next day Toriu bent a long yellow-white fiber of coconut husk into a noose and twisted it gently but firmly deep down in the infected place; then, with a sudden sharp movement, drew it out, removing the "core" of the infection.

"In three days you will be well," he promised.

He continued to apply the soap dressing for a day or two; then announced that it was time for the final medicine. This was a fine charcoal, made by burning coconut shells in a fire of husks. He dusted this dry dressing carefully into and over the wound.

"Let this powder remain. Don't bandage the finger with a cloth."

The following day he came for the final treatment. His little son played on the floor with his pet pig as Toriu dressed the wound.

"A fine boy," I said, making conversation. "What is his name?"

"His name is Rino. I have a daughter, too," he added, "a grown-up daughter, fourteen years old."

"I have met your daughter Temaru. She is very beautiful."

I refrained from adding that she also had many lice.

"Do you want her?" inquired Toriu hospitably. "If so, I will send her to you tonight."

"You are indeed kind," I answered. "But I am still weak

from my illness, and the boat cannot be held any longer. Now that I am well, we must sail at once."

A week later, at Vahitahi, two natives led me to a small house at the farther side of the village.

"This is the house of Hinao. He is very ill."

There lay Schenck who had warned me three months before—now propped up in a vast bed, against a pile of pillows, his emaciated features, uncut hair and drooping mustache suggesting a ghost come back from the Great Darkness. Beside him lay a cane, with which it was his custom, when needing attention at night, to batter on the sheet of corrugated iron that closed in one side of his house, to summon the other white visitor on the island, Ua, to his aid.

"Have you any quinine?" he inquired. "There's none on the island. I'm having a recurrence of that fever I caught in Fiji."

Quinine was brought from the cutter. Hinao, as they called Schenck there, had lost twenty-six pounds and had been unable to retain solid food for two weeks, but in three days more he was able to ride in the handcart which is used to transport copra to the landing and corpses to the cemetery. We put him aboard the copra schooner for Papeete, in care of the bishop of French Oceania, who was returning there from Mangareva.

"Never eat fish cooked," the bishop was saying as the sailors dragged the whaleboat off the reef.

His Grace had been a resident priest at our own island of Tepuka Maruia, and had been so long in the service that he had acquired a native palate.

"Never cook fish. Never put salt on it, or lime juice or lemon juice. Eat it fresh from the sea, as the good God made it. Only then can you appreciate the subtle distinctions between the flavors of the various fishes that He, in His wisdom, has provided."

"That may be all right for the bishop," said Hinao, in English, which the bishop does not understand. "But what I want right now is a good T-bone steak."

A month later, in Papeete, Maru á Maru, brother of Temata, led me to his house in the little lane that runs back inland behind the Chinese coffee-shop opposite the shipyard at Fareute.

"This is Tetua, my wife. She is ill. Her hand is very sore."

I looked at Tetua's hand. The little finger of the left hand was swollen and inflamed, rising in the ghost-skull shape I knew so well.

"*E uruaitu!*" I exclaimed.

"Ah, you know the *uruaitu?*"

"I have suffered from it, and have been cured by the medicine of the land."

But I did not tell them that I had invoked a Hawaiian spell against Temata in far-away Tepuka.

When the *Islander*, a month late, chugged into port, one of the first to greet me was Ernest, the cook, exhibiting a bandaged hand. I examined the injury. Again the skull of the ghost—was there no end to this *uruaitu* business?

"You'd better have that attended to," we all advised him.

Ernest went to the hospital and came back minus the bone from the last joint of that finger. Perhaps he had been at sea with it too long. It is probable, too, that the white medicine men do not know the *rakau nati*. It is certain that they do not know Tuamotuan magic.

And so ended that particular venture with Death in the Dangerous Islands. Hinao thinks it was the native medicine that saved me. But I saw the gleam in Paunu's eyes the night that Tinaia said, "If the evil spirit reaches the heart. . . ." And I am sure that Paunu, at the risk of his Christian soul, performed the anciently prescribed incantations for my recovery. No doubt he interceded with Tama, the Polynesian Son of Man, the God Who Makes to Live. And I like to think that even now, nights when the moon hangs low and melon colored over the sea toward Tepoto, Paunu the tahunga, looking out of his thatched doorway, intones the chant that is chanted for an absent friend.

35. *The Islands Know Many Farewells*

It Was our last day at Tepuka Maruia.

"You may go now," said Tinaia. "The charcoal will protect the wound from salt water until it closes."

She and her husband had saved me much suffering and probably my life. How should this service be rewarded? It was given freely, out of friendship and hospitality, but here, too, applied the Polynesian principle of free exchange of gifts.

An empty cigarette tin and a bottle of perfume seemed an inadequate fee, though Tinaia received them with gratitude. When I added thirty francs and told Toriu to buy the material for a new dress for Tinaia the next time the *Vaite* came into port, they were as pleased as a surgeon of our own country with five hundred dollars.

Kararo loitered about the house as Keneti and I packed up to leave, in quest of tins and anything else he could acquire, not only by gift but by purchase, for Kararo, by island standards, was a wealthy man, and there was little on the island to buy.

"For how much will you sell me your good garment?" pointing to my stout jacket, "and your black trousers?" indicating my blue dungarees.

"I need them myself. Besides, they won't fit you, Kararo."

He tried them on, and agreed sadly that this was so. Article after article he "bid" for, but there was almost nothing I could let him have.

I didn't want to disappoint even Kararo. I wished I'd had a trunkful of things to sell him, for his acquisitive nature craved to buy. Finally his glance fell upon my diving-glasses, which I was about to throw away, the connecting link that held them together having been broken while in the possession of Temata, who had thereupon returned them to me, saying they were "no good."

"How much?" Kararo demanded.

I quoted a price of about seventy-five cents.

Kararo snapped them up without waiting to bargain. It was all they had been worth when new, but they were worth more than that, even as they were, to Kararo, who could tinker them into shape and use them for years of fishing.

Maono-iti, Tauria and others carried our remaining goods to the reef, and the sailors ferried it aboard, not without losing some of it. Through the clear water, the shining top of a coffee tin gleamed from the far bottom—to be retrieved, perhaps, after our departure, for its value as a container, by some of the powerful divers of the island.

"I'm going with you," announced Tupu. "Ropati has hired me to dive for the anchor."

In these coral seas, an anchor often becomes wedged in the living rocks so firmly that it cannot be drawn up. In that case, a diver is sent down to observe and report on its position and the ship is then maneuvered so as to make it possible to dislodge it. Or sometimes the diver goes down and works on it direct. The Tuamotuans are famous divers, and Tupu, who could stay down an incredibly long time and was never seasick, had been chosen for this work aboard the *Tiare*.

In the mid-afternoon, supper was being prepared on the coral between the houses of Paunu and of Tuata. Squatting on a coconut, around the smoking fire, I relished for the last

time the tender raw fish, with bits of papaya and ripe coconut. Tauhoa brought a drinking-nut. Roki, a slab of fish in one hand and a piece of ripe coconut in the other, sat beside me. It was as much as I could have wished, to have my last meal in Tepuka under the trees with our friends about me and the smoke of burning coconut husks in my nostrils.

In the late afternoon we sat seaward on the sand. Paunu's daughters and Tefakarava sang a sad little song of farewell:

> "The southeast wind now leans upon the land;
> the east wind blows and you are lost to me:
> your body swallowed in the night-dark sea.
> We shall not see each other any more:
> so swift your sailing!
> Your body is pierced with cold—
> and I remain on the shore, the place of love!"

We danced in the moonlight on the pebbled ground as we had done in our first evenings on the island. Tiring soon, for I was still weak from my illness, I fell asleep with my head in Tefakarava's hospitable lap. When the crowd dispersed, Keneti and I remained guests of Paunu's family, for the house in which we had been living, dismantled of our belongings, had been returned to its owner.

The four girls disappeared in the direction of the bathing enclosure, and came back wearing pareu tucked around the waist and folded short as worn by boys. So clad, they danced in the moonlight—a lovely sight, the tawny bodies above the barbaric flowered cloth, their oiled hair catching red gleams under the moon, their red-swathed hips weaving in the island dance.

Tiring at last, the members of the family laid themselves in a row upon the mats, as did we. I awoke in the night when rain pattered in upon my face through the open doorway, and saw Tauhoa running out to rescue the clothes she had washed in the afternoon and laid on the coral to dry. The

squall passed; I went outside and looked my last at a Tepuka night. The moon was still bright, lighting up the wide expanse of beach, and inking dark shadows where the dwellings were and beneath the palms. A morning star glowed greenly against the pale gold light.

Waking again at early day, I discovered that the pillow which in the darkness I had taken for a wooden plank was in reality a broad flat slab of coral stone.

There was no breakfast at Paunu's house, for it was Sunday. As I have remarked, there is little breakfast any morning of the week, for the day's food serves for the day, and there is seldom much left over with which to start the next day; and since under the Christian dispensation there is no fishing on Sunday, that day more resembles a fast than a feast occasion.

"You must not sail," said Paunu, that pagan sorcerer and pillar of the white priests' church, "until after the prayer service. It is well to pay one's respects to God before going on a voyage."

Keneti accompanied our hosts to the Sacred Heart; I was excused on the ground that it was not seemly to appear in a house of worship clad in shorts, my other clothes having gone aboard the ship. I lay on the mat in Paunu's house, looking up at the neatly woven roof and reflecting with a tinge of sadness that I should never see that house again.

The service ended, Keneti and I solemnly took leave of the two hundred villagers, who were ranged in rows on the curbstones near the church. We passed down the line, clasping the hand of each in turn. Here were the men and women who had been our friends and neighbors, our guides and instructors, in those months of island life. It came to me with a sudden pang that I was pressing for the last time those brown hands that had been held out to us full of kindness.

"It is a great pity," they mourned, "that you are going away."

They would miss us, this speech conveyed; but it meant also that they were sorry for us that we must leave Tepuka. The Tepukans have a good deal of civic pride.

The keen narrow eyes of Temata á Maru looked at me doubtfully out of her sullen brown face. In the preparations for departure I had forgotten her. I recalled, with dismay, the power of suggestion, which has caused many a Polynesian to fall ill and die of no good reason save that he has been told someone is practicing sorcery against him. I must not leave with anything like that on my conscience.

"Temata," I reassured her, "I have undone the spell that I wove. No harm will come to you through me. Go free—and may life be to you in the gods!"

When the general leave-taking ceremony was completed, we sat on the sand a while with Paunu's people and a few relatives and friends. The young women sang again the sad little farewell song.

The children of whom we had become fond clustered around the fringes of the gathering. Little Atera crept up and pressed my sound hand. Riua shyly offered me a tin can filled with small round brown nuts.

"The seeds of the *karauri*," she said. "Plant them in your own country. The fragrance will remind you of Tepuka Maruia."

One must go, sometime. We walked, hand in hand with our friends, over the sand and the tilted gray slabs of ancient beach, to the water's edge. The gracious sunlight of the coral seas lay about us, warming the shallow pools that lay in the crevices of the reef. Temae's short grizzled beard rasped us gently as he kissed us on both cheeks. The oldest man on the island; even should we return a few years hence, he was thinking, he would not be there. Maono-iti, the chief's son, took leave of us in the ancient manner; Tauria, our adopted

brother, kissed us for himself, and for Tehau and Teroro-tu who were still absent on Tepoto. Paunu laid his stubbled cheek to ours.

"Go," said Paunu. "I have prayed for your safe voyage."

To what gods he had prayed, he did not state.

We could see Paunu's people waving to us for a long time from the sand before their house, as the cutter gathered headway in the bright late morning. The last human thing we could distinguish was Roki—a tall, lonely figure, waving something bright—a pareu, no doubt. . . . The *Tiare Tahiti* sped around a corner of the land; I recognized the foot of the street at Tupiti, where we had spent so many pleasant, reflective morning hours. A squall drove us below, and when we returned on deck the island that had been our home was out of sight behind the shimmering curve of sea.

And so we left Tepuka Maruia, for new lands under the horizon. Those last days on that ring of coral were full of pain, but made radiant by the kindness and hospitality of our friends. Ah, Tepuka! I shall remember you golden with sunlight and silver with the moon; I shall remember the sanded streets etched in bold patterns with the shadows of your palms; and your red reef glistening in the dawn of many mornings. The taste of cool drinking-nuts will be in my mouth and the smell of your fires of coconut husk in my nostrils, and the coconut oil on the glossy hair of your daughters as they dance barefooted on the pebbled sand.

IV

New Lands Under the Horizon

36. *"Aita Fanau"*

The Cutter Bowled, tilting, over a tumbled sea. All day we lay on the cabin roof, watching the waves go by and singing the plaintive chants of the island we had left.

"We're ten miles from Fangatau but on the wrong side of it," reported Bob, taking sights. "We'll have to tack back and heave to in the night."

As the ship's clock struck four bells, I unrolled myself from my mat in the bunk below and went out on deck to glimpse, in the cloudy moonlight, the low dark line of Fangatau.

The island, as the light grew, appeared, from the sea, much like the one whence we had just come, though without the prominent landmark of its coral church. Teana, the main village, is inland, on the inner rim or lagoon side of the atoll. But here was the same curving shore, the same reddish reef and tilted blocks of solidified rubble, the broad sand and the green and tawny forest beyond. A road ran down between the palms to a rude stone jetty, scarcely distinguishable from the reef around it. A few fishermen with tall spears were the only sign of life.

"Plenty boat been b-r-r-o-oke to pieces on that reef," observed Matini, the navigator.

A canoe, stabilized by a rude outrigger, came alongside, and its occupant, a fine, jolly Tuamotuan with a face like that of an American Indian, came aboard. He kissed Keneti on both cheeks, and pressed my hand warmly, with an irresistible smile. This was Fariua, former chief of Fangatau and one of the most learned men, in respect to the ancient wisdom, in all the Tuamotu. As we landed in his canoe, we were greeted

by his wife Reva, a tall woman in black, bearing lingering traces of a beauty that must have been, in her youth, a sight to take away one's breath.

Fariua loaded our luggage into a wheelbarrow—a sign already of the superior "civilization" of Fangatau, for in the land that had been our home the past three months, no wheel had ever turned—and trundled down a smooth road, elevated a few feet above the surrounding country, between very tall coconut trees whose loosened ripe nuts now and then spun downward in the brisk wind.

The village, even with the arrival of a ship to arouse it, had a deserted look. Along its well-sanded street, wooden and stone houses, in various states of disrepair, suggested the former wealth of Fangatau when it was prosperous with copra and pearls. Copra it still has, and no doubt pearls are still in its lagoon, but the prices of both copra and shell have declined, and Fangatau is left with these melancholy souvenirs of a deceptive prosperity and with acquired tastes which have partly displaced the old primitive ones and yet are becoming more difficult to meet.

The houses, almost without exception ugly and topped with corrugated iron roofs which are a source of discomfort under the sun and a murderous menace in time of storm, still had acquired, here and there, a certain mellowness as if the island, so much older than they, had begun to absorb them, molding them to its ways as it molds us who sojourn in those lands and sleep beneath their stars. Large cubical stone tanks, for rainwater, stood in the ample grassy yards between the houses and the lagoon.

The interiors, as one could see through their open doors, were bare and bleak-looking, with a few mats on the wooden floors, here and there a chair, and iron beds. Nearly every house had a bed, but there, too, I never saw a native sleep on one. These pieces of furniture were for ornament and ostentation; even the wealthy Fariua and Reva preferred their mats.

Scarcely anyone was in the street or visible in the doorways. Those we did see were a listless unhealthy-looking lot. After the exuberance of gay youth at Tepuka, we were struck by the scarcity of young people and children in Fangatau.

The road runs from the sea to the lagoon, turns and runs at an angle along the lagoon passage toward the sea again. Fariua led us under an archway inscribed "*Vive la France*" and another lettered in Tuamotuan, "Hail to you, the maker of chiefs!" erected, he said, in preparation for the visit of the governor who, after all, had not arrived.

A little way beyond these arches stood Fariua's house, a square wooden structure with the inevitable red iron roof, and a porch built high from the ground on stakes. Flowers grew in front of it, in beds bordered with bottles—and one oleander bush. Behind the house, looking toward a shallow pass from the sea into the lagoon, was an old house platform, on which grew two decrepit papaya trees; a cook-house with thatched roof stood near the beach, and two fat black pigs waddled amiably at their tethers.

Fariua brought out the two chairs of his household for the visitors. Perched on them, as they stood on the high veranda, we felt absurdly up in the air, and were much more comfortable when we moved down to the mats with our host and hostess. Those were the first chairs on which we had sat in more than a quarter of a year.

Our hosts opened for us the sweet drinking-nuts of Fangatau, which are famed throughout the Tuamotu for their pungency, delicate flavor and high carbonation. Crack the shell of one of these coconuts, leaving only a thin layer of young meat between the inner juice and the air, and the pressure from within will swell out the exposed meat in a white

bubble until it bursts and the liquor spurts out in a fine stream.

Sitting on that veranda, we felt the quiet of Fangatau—the brooding quiet of these depopulated islands, imparting a feeling that something, someone, has just left. Cocks crowed, but fewer than we had heard in the ruder, healthier islands; there was little going back and forth in the streets; no merry shouting and laughter of children; no singing of the young people. The dominant sounds were the rush of wind in the tall palms and the incessant trampling of the surf.

Temiro, father of Reva, was squatting by his cooking-fire on a ruined stone terrace as we passed on our way to the Chinese store for bread—for Fangatau, like most of the Tuamotu, boasts French bread, baked by a Chinese, which sells, or did then, at one franc a loaf. A wild, bearded figure like some Old Testament prophet stared down at us from the battered platform; his hair, though gray, still thick; his eyes piercing. He was dressed in the tatters of a pair of dungarees cut down to make shorts, and an old shirt—both very dirty.

The old man, with delight, broke into a loud chant as Keneti clambered up the crumbling wall to grasp his hand:

"Tané is lord of the sky;
hail Tané!
He is the sacred feast,
the conch shell sounding the call;
he is the regalia of the priest,
he is the maker of kings.
Let the rainbow flash forth across the sky!
Hail!"

A few children clustered about with embarrassed smiles. This was Temiro, last survivor of a pagan priesthood.

A little farther down the road was the site of the ancient sacred place, Papa-te-rangi, in its time the most famous marae in all the Tuamotu. A few of the great stone backrests still

stood; ancient sacred trees spread flowered branches over the deserted high place. Time was—and Temiro remembers—when it was swept clean, and the stones loomed aloft; the ten god-boxes stood neatly in even rows, repositories of ancestral relics, and the warriors ate the turtle in the presence of the spirits of their fathers from remote generations.

The land of Fangatau is kinder to the feet than that of many islands whose soil has been torn away by hurricanes and strewn with coral fragments from the ravaged reefs. We walked on a loose sandy ground, in which grew young grass and ferns. The landscape was cut across by great elongated pits, like enormous furrows.

"In ancient times," Fariua explained, "our people grew taro in those trenches. For in those times the island had more people, and fewer coconuts, and no boats came bringing foreign food."

One of my friends who has spent some time in the islands is of the opinion that they were dug to lead flood-water out of the villages in time of storm; for all I know they may have served both purposes, but at some remote islands—at Pukarua and Reao—it is certain, they are still taro fields.

As I walked back through the empty-feeling street of Teana, a tall figure in a faded sun-helmet approached me with long strides. Burton-Poole, the English botanist, greeted me cheerily.

"I've just landed from the *Denise*," he said. "Yesterday we were at Tepuka."

And thus we had, at last, the news of Chief Maono's return and details of his experiences, if but at secondhand. The chief had been so awed by the relative complexity of Papeete that he never strayed from the one street that led from his quarters with some Tuamotuan people to the courthouse. Arriving off Tahiti, the first high island he had seen, he looked long, as a ship's officer later told us, upon the hollows between the buttressed mountains, and inquired who had dug

all those great holes in the land, and why. Our friends in Papeete, to whom Keneti had written, watched over him. He went to court, and as it appeared, was himself subject to no accusations but merely gave testimony. Far from being fined or imprisoned, as his countrymen had feared, he received witness fees and a transportation allowance, which probably represented more money than Maono had ever seen all at one time.

His return trip, aboard the *Vaite,* had been in the nature of a triumphal progress. From island to island, he was honored with great feasts. Ah Kui, however, had been right; the *Vaite* was not calling at Papeete on that trip, and left the chief at Raroia, to become a Tuamotuan Odysseus wandering among strange lands in quest of a way home. There the *Denise* had found him and returned him to his beloved island.

Burton-Poole described the reception we had so often seen and heard rehearsed: the march of the phalanx of singers to the landing place and thence to Maono's house; the antics of Tangihia as leader; the speeches and the rejoicing. Regretful that we could not have seen Maono again, we thus shared, from afar, the joy of his safe return.

Here at Teana, however, I could but contrast the deathly atmosphere of the place with the healthy liveliness of Tepuka. A young girl barely looked up from the dust in which she was drawing a crude picture of the church, as I passed. Another, lying on the ruined terrace of Temiro's lair, turned to look with large mournful eyes. A child was crying in one house; I met one man on the road. The only other sign of life was the fat sleek cat that slept on Fariua's porch.

On the other side of the house, however, Reva was washing clothes on the old stone platform in the backyard; squatting before a washpan, she was beating the garments smartly with a stick. Fariua leaned against a papaya tree, watching. Seeing me return, he sat with me while we drank fresh coconuts.

"The true name of Fangatau," he said, "is Marupua. This land was famous throughout the Tuamotu as the home of the sacred learning.

"Tureikura, elder brother of Tané who raised the sky, was the first great Keeper of Wisdom. He lived in the World of Darkness where the spirits dwell. He passed his learning on to Taimorohua. When Taimorohua died, the true learning died with him, except what had been taught to the wise men of this island.

"The chiefs and wise men of all the countries made ready their canoes and sailed in search of the lost wisdom. They sailed from island to island, and when they came to Fangatau, they found it at Papa-te-rangi. Mahinui, a priest of that marae, had preserved it. From him it has descended, through many generations, to Temiro and to my teacher Kamake, who is dead, and thence to Reva and me.

"This wisdom is very sacred, and by our old custom it was handed down only to our sons or to some pupil chosen for it. Reva and I have no children. So I carried this wisdom a long time in my bowels, and I was troubled, for it seemed that when we died the wisdom would die with us.

"Ua, the white man whom you know at Arué, and Keneti, from Hawaii, came to me and asked me to give them the ancient wisdom. At first I would not, for Kamake had told me not to divulge it to strangers.

"But the spirit of Kamake came to me in a dream, and told me to tell Ua and Keneti all that I knew. I was glad of this, for I could see that the new time was upon us, when the young people no longer are worthy to receive the old knowledge, and if it is to be saved, it must be through learned white men, such as Keneti and Ua, who love the natives and have true respect for wisdom, as the young people of our own race no longer have.

"So now I give them freely all that I know, and so do Reva

and Temiro, as much as he can remember, for the old man is no longer clear always in his mind."

Later, Fariua and Reva chanted for us the Chant of the Lost Learning, which, they said, had been the song that the chiefs intoned in the long search. It was a repetitious recital of the names of the islands and of their chiefs, but as our hosts sang it, it was deeply stirring, with its vigorous refrain.

Evening settled silently over the village, and people straggled out into the streets—old people, for the most part, and few, but they filled the bare front room of Fariua's house. A woman addressed as Teuru chanted with Reva that noble dirge of Tuamotuan poetry, the lament of Huauri for her son:

> "The son is a wanderer, fated to voyaging,
> and I an aged woman, muttering in my grief. . . ."

much as I had heard Temae chant it in our house at Tepuka, but in more thrilling style. These were the premier living chanteuses of the Tuamotu. In some of the better-known compositions, the crowd joined, intoning impressively the ancient syllables of a vanishing lore.

I sat on the floor near them, overcome with drowsiness, but eager to hear; propped against a hard pillow, I alternately slept and roused. I saw Fariua, as the chanting proceeded, get up and turn to the wall a lithographed representation of Christ that hung there—from no spirit of irreverence, to be sure, but quite the contrary; Fariua did not think it proper that the Savior should look upon this revival of heathen things, and would save Our Lord that embarrassment. The picture, with the curious obstinacy sometimes exhibited by inanimate things, refused to stay turned, but swung back repeatedly to face the chanting assembly. Fariua, looking somewhat startled, carefully took it down and stowed it safely away. Outside, the torches of fishermen flared smokily over the dark lagoon.

They chanted then of Maui, who snared the sun that his mother might have the longer day to cook her food; how Maui fished up islands from the depths with a pearl-shell hook; how he struggled for the secret of eternal life, and lost. As the hour grew late, there were deeper, more secret and sacred chants, of the Root or Source, the Supreme One whose name, they say, was not to be spoken in ancient times save by the priests of the highest rank: a majestic, somber creation chant—how the Source slept from time without beginning, on his face upon the Wide Road of Space at the center of the Great Darkness; how he awoke and, turning his face upward, chanted and, chanting, by an effort of will created the universe and placed subordinate gods in command of its several spheres; how, chanting, he returned to the uttermost regions of Havaiki for all time.

Atea, they sang, was lord of the sky, but he proved an unworthy guardian. Not only did he neglect to maintain and improve his domain, but he preyed upon the people for his food. The supreme god had laid a tabu upon himself not to return to the world he had created, so he put into the mind of Tané the idea of killing Atea. Atea, hearing of this, sought to intercept and kill Tané. A chase ensued, up and down the young world; Tané was hampered by the narrowness between earth and sky, which in those days hung low, but he escaped by the furrow in which the sun moves, and took refuge above.

Tané then took the offensive. He battered at the sky from above with stones; Tangaroa burned it with fire; they tore a hole through the sky and Tané leaped down to earth and pushed the sky up that he might have room to move about. There was a great combat; Atea was hurled headlong, as Lucifer, from heaven, and slain; and his parents chanted the sad and lovely lament whence these lines:

> "Sleep ye together on the storm wind from the east . . .
> The fragrance has departed."

So Tané became lord of the sky, and called the spirits to his aid. From every corner of the universe they came: the long, the short, the large, the small, the straight spirits and the humpbacked ones; standing on one another's shoulders, they raised the sky farther, to where it stands today, and swept and garnished it that the gods might dwell there forever. He-Who-Causes-to-be-Born raised the earth from the waters, to be the home of man.

The victorious Tané descended to the presence of the Root. Tané thought, because he had received from the Root the sacred crimson girdle, that he was equal to him in power. To teach him otherwise, the supreme god set him a test: to pursue and overtake, within one lunar month, the Vanishing Island, upon the terrace of whose temple lay the sacred crimson wreath in which resided the supreme magic power. Tané set out in pursuit of the island, but the Source hid it in mist, the chill mist of Havaiki. After one circuit of the moon had passed, he recalled Tané and, blowing away the mist with his breath, revealed where he had hidden the island; then chanted a solemn chant of his own majesty, closing with the tremendous image:

"I lean upon the winds, that they may blow."

Temiro came next day, and stayed all afternoon. A savage figure, he sat on the floor, his fierce old eyes flashing as he recalled bits of prayers from his training for a heathen priesthood. Temiro was a grown man, as age is counted in the Tuamotu, when the missionaries came, and he must have taken part in the services on the marae. He has seen the old life fade and vanish, and his people wither away. In his old age, near the century mark, he remembers, fitfully, and flares into life with fragments of stirring old chants, but he seldom continues them consecutively.

"The old man is confused," they say. A relic out of a shattered age, he sits on his ruined stonework and awaits the end.

We were up in time the next morning to attend church in the glaring white, boxlike edifice with red iron roof which bears above its door the date 1872, and to watch a beautiful though cold sunrise over the lagoon. Fariua made coffee over an open fire of husks, and fried fresh native pork—well done but unsalted, and with a smoky taste; nevertheless quite acceptable food when laid between the halves of a loaf of bread.

Fangatau in the morning has a melancholy beauty: sunlight streaming through palm fronds against mellow stone and plaster and dull red iron; the dust of the road untroubled; far off drowsy crowing of cocks, the ceaseless wind in the trees, the ceaseless surf on the reef. Human voices sound now and then—once a burst of unaccustomed talk and laughter that faintly recalled happier lands—but for the most part, the impression of Fangatau that remains with me is one of silence and desertion.

It could be as bright a land as Tepuka or Tepoto. It has better soil and less broken coral distributed over it. Papayas and banana plants grow, if not luxuriantly, in the dooryards, and there are flowers—Reva even had a rosebush. The coconut trees are taller and bear more and sweeter nuts. With its comparative fertility and its landlocked lagoon full of fish and shellfish, this must have been a populous and healthful place before the blight of foreign luxury and foreign disease fell devastatingly upon it.

From the extent of the abandoned taro trenches and other indications, we estimated that there might have been at one time a thousand people on Fangatau. Scarcely a hundred remain, and they are dying away. The reason?

"*Aita fanau*," said Fariua. "There are no births."

It is the story of many an island in the Tuamotu. Foreign clothes, foreign food, foreign houses, and worst of all, foreign disease—and, too, the decay of the old culture—have

worn away the race that once was vigorous enough to wrest a living from these unpromising rings of coral rock, or to voyage many days and nights over uncharted seas.

Fariua loaded our baggage into a handcart and he and Reva walked with us to the landing. A dangerous surf was breaking as we embarked in the whaleboat of the schooner *Denise* and transferred at sea to the *Tiare Tahiti's* smaller one, which Bob would not risk that day upon the reef. We sat on bags of copra, piled high in the stout boat. A line of men stood at either side awaiting the moment to shove off. They shoved as a sea crashed in; the boat floated a little way, then grounded. This process was repeated twice. The fourth effort floated us off on a big wave, but the next wave washed us back, nearly overturning the boat on the reef, which would have been the finish for some of us—but by frantic poling and rowing, they got us off. It seemed to me that they made it by a very narrow margin.

Fariua walked a long way down the beach to wave to us; we saw him standing there until he became indistinguishable against the sand and trees. Keneti and I, wrapped in blankets, lay on the cabin roof, chanting, knowing it was unlikely that we should see our friends at Fangataú again.

"The son is a wanderer," we chanted;
"Voyaging afar, a migratory bird,
he goes to the Night, the last abode of rest."

37. Land of the Sewn Ships

The Green Isle of Akiaki was silent and deserted as we approached in a spacious August morning and sailed along its lee. It is a handsome island, small and round like a button, a

circumstance which may have impelled early voyagers to give it the name of Thrum Cap which it still bears on some charts. A village of coconut-leaf huts stood near the landing, but no people came forth in answer to our shouts. Akiaki is not permanently inhabited, but is an outlying dependency of Vahitahi, whose people go there at some seasons to prepare and load copra.

Late in the afternoon we were off Vahitahi, island of the great lagoon. In the fading light, we could barely make out, with glasses, the burly form of Ua on the beach.

In the morning, surf still piled thunderously over the reef.

"I won't risk my boat and your lives in that," said Bob.

A dugout canoe came out in response to our signals—manned by my namesake Mokio and two other Vahitahi men. Both the shore and the *Tiare Tahiti* went out of sight as the tiny craft, bearing Keneti and me with the natives, dipped between great waves. Water poured over the low sides constantly, faster, it seemed, than it could be thrown back by the boy who bailed with amazing speed. Once, as a particularly heavy wave struck the canoe a staggering blow and the water sloshed about our knees, Mokio turned to me quickly between paddle strokes.

"Can you swim?" he inquired.

He and his companions, however, by brilliant seamanship and hard paddling at critical moments, put us on the reef right side up, though drenched to the waist.

Ua, large and dynamic, met us at the landing and walked with us down the single street to our lodging in the house of Vatoa, the island's most prominent Mormon. Vatoa's house was a large, square, two-story structure, the most pretentious dwelling in the village—with a garden: papaya, breadfruit, bananas, figs, though none bearing abundantly. From a crazy veranda one ducked under a low doorway—or bumped one's head on it—to ascend a precarious stairway to the upper room

where a high, unevenly stuffed and uncomfortable bed is provided for guests.

Vahitahi is a long atoll with a beautiful enclosed lagoon, dotted, like that of Tepuka, with white heaps of shells. One side is bare reef, the other heavily wooded; the trees are tall and prolific. The street and grounds are not as tidy as those of other Tuamotu islands I had seen; they were littered with old coconuts and fallen fronds, but there was little coral on the ground, and a broad sandy beach behind the reef.

The village is on the seaward side, near the landing, and there are smooth bare places worn in the reef, great grooves where boats have been dragged up out of reach of the waves. For Vahitahi is an ancient land of voyagers; there the old Tuamotuan seagoing vessels linger still in use; it is the land of the sewn ships.

Under sheds in different parts of the village, I saw two of these remarkable craft: shaped like a whaleboat, larger, and built of hewn slabs of wood sewn together with coconut fiber. They had sockets for mast and sail, and a distinctive steering gear, with a tiller mounted on a pivot. The largest I saw was not over thirty feet long, not a large ship in which to go to sea—though our own *Tiare Tabiti* was only about forty—but sturdy and apparently seaworthy for their size.

"We go in them," said Mokio, "to Akiaki and to Nukutavake, to get copra."

"In the old times," added Tupuhoe, the stout young chief, "they were two and three times as long, and men sailed in them to all the islands of the sea."

"They were narrower than these," explained Keneti, who had studied the accounts of early explorers and had models of the ancient ships in the museum. "They were bound together in pairs for stability, like the great double dugout canoes of Hawaii. These have been built over and widened out to imitate the white men's whaleboats; and the outriggers

have been taken off. They are much less safe that way, but still the natives make long trips in them."

In these islands where suitable trees do not grow large enough to make dugout canoes, they were built up thus from small pieces.

Probably most of the Pacific was explored with such ships. With paddle and sail they voyaged from island to island, discovering new lands, refinding forgotten ones. The stars and the prevailing winds, the currents and the tides, were their charts; they chanted as they reefed and clewed the mat sails or bent their backs to the deep-sea paddle. War fleets, too, swooped upon far islands, and the earth ovens smoked with the cooking of the slain. The people of Vahitahi, unlike those of more isolated Tepuka, were cannibals in pre-missionary times—and the young men and women still have good teeth.

The houses of Vahitahi are quite the ugliest I saw in the Tuamotu: high, square, tasteless structures of wood, lacking the mellowness of those of Fangatau. Some dignity, however, attaches to the weather-stained stones of the priest's house and of the church, over whose door is crowded the lettering of its name: *Ana Peata*—Saint Anne.

The village street, though less busy than those of Tepuka, lacked the deserted look of Fangatau. Perhaps I was becoming accustomed to the more "civilized" islands—or a meeting with some pleasant young people gave me a more cheerful impression. At the house of Raupaki—an appallingly boxlike structure on a high foundation much too large for it, giving it a curiously foreshortened appearance—there was laughter and song. A neat, smiling girl, with a pleasant face and sound teeth, sat in the doorway, playing a guitar with the same monotonous drone that I recalled from other islands in those seas. She introduced herself as Ngapehu, and her companion as Tetápahi; a real beauty when she smiled, though her face in repose had a trace of sullenness that sometimes appears in the features of the mild-tempered, kindly Polynesian. Several

young men lounged about the place, sitting on the broken enclosing wall or on the wooden floor.

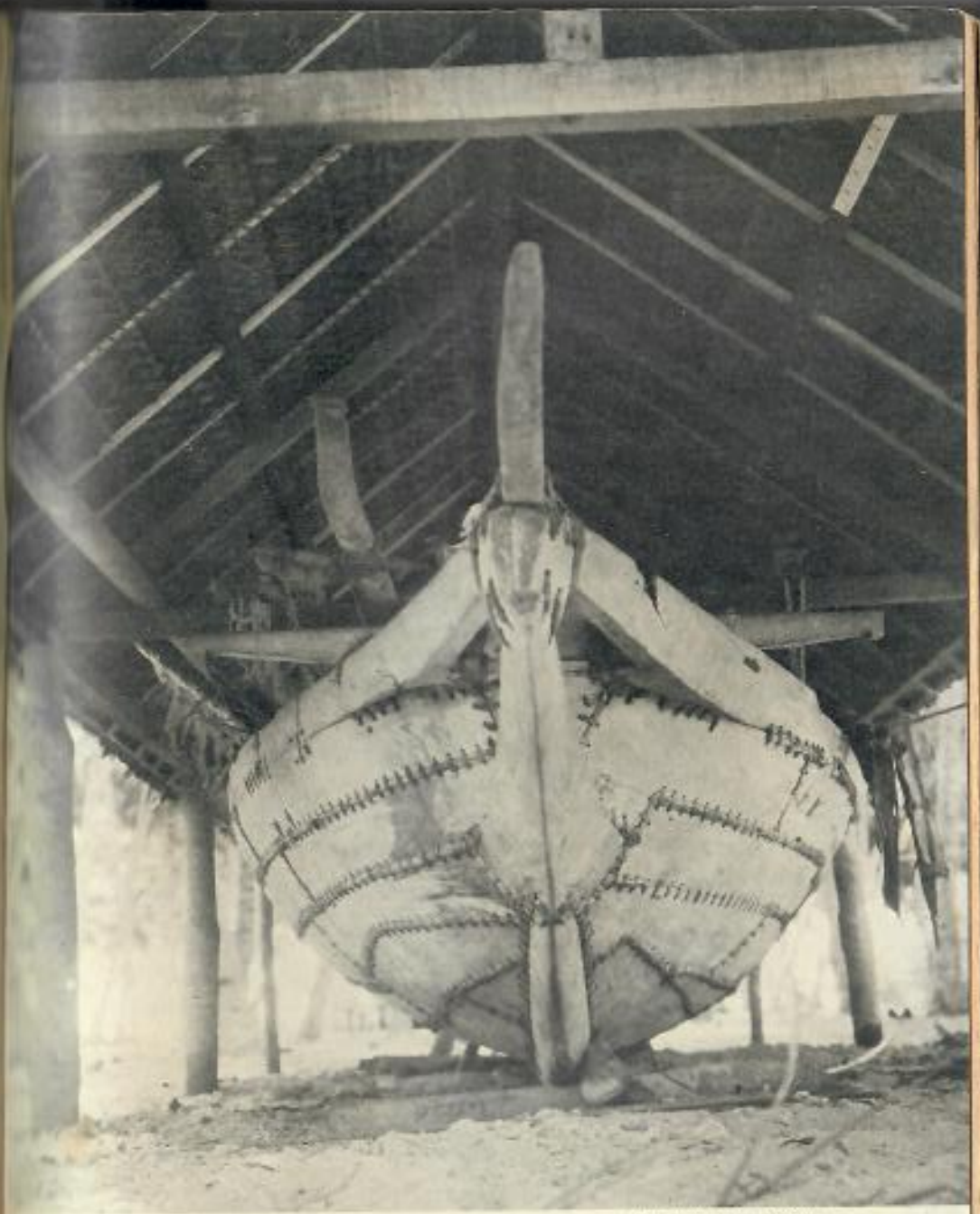
The house within was bare and uncomfortable in appearance. A coconut-leaf or pandanus-leaf house would not have seemed so, few as its furnishings might be. There is something desolate and depressing about nearly all the natives' borrowings from the white man's material culture. Clothing is ill cut and gaudy, and transforms the often superbly modeled native forms into grotesque caricatures; foreign food is likely to be ill cooked, and its use upsets the time-grooved balance of native life so that its effects are seen in decaying teeth, spotted complexions and more serious ailments. Native things, however crude, seldom offend the eye; but native adaptations of foreign things too often hideously symbolize the tragedy of native life where it has come in close contact with the white man's "civilization."

The dwellings of Vahitahi in general seemed less tidy than the coconut huts of the less "advanced" islands, partly because of their foreign construction and state of disrepair; partly by reason of the accumulation of possessions that had resulted from Vahitahi's comparative wealth and which, in default of other storage accommodations, were piled on the floor.

The occupants were singing a song that seemed somehow familiar. I listened closely.

"Ena kona ré no mo, no mo,
ena kona ré no mo!"

Memory flashed back to the days when I had first heard that song: a small boy, walking in the street of a Middle Western village, passing the saloon which I had been told was the abode of wickedness; glancing fearfully in at the open door whence sounded the bump of heavy glasses beating time on the bar, and the jolly strains of "Ain't Gonna Rain No More."



B. P. Bishop Museum Photo

Two of the ancient Tuamotuan ships, built of slabs of *tou* wood sewn together with coconut or pandanus fiber, are still in use at Vahitahi, for voyages to islands far out of sight of the home port. This specimen, Tevaoroa ia Raka, is 23½ feet long. It is said much larger ones were built in pre-discovery times.

B. P. Bishop Museum Photo by K. P. Emory

Great trenches scar the landscape of many Tuamotu islands. At Reao and Pukarua they are still taro fields. Thus, even on the hard coral of the atolls, man bends the stubborn substance of nature to his needs.

As a guest, I must oblige with "Show Me the Way to Go Home," which no doubt has thereby been added to the Vahitahi repertory.

"But I like native songs better," I told them.

They sang several, among them the farewell songs that are numerous in these islands that know so many farewells. The haunting airs, admirably adapted to the three-chord technique of Tuamotuan guitars, sang themselves unforgettably into my mind.

Polynesian songs suffer greatly in translation. They are likely to seem flat and prosaic. There is a charm in the native syllables, themselves, that vanishes in the alien English; an aroma too delicate to persist in our harsher tongue. There is, too, something in Polynesian voices that clothes the baldest text with island magic; some subtle quality of enunciation, of pitch, of vocal timbre, that calls up all the associations of island life. Once in a San Francisco lunchroom, I fell to wondering about the waitress; she was as white as I, but there was something in her movements that recalled the sway of palms, the curve of surf on tropic beaches. It was only a suspicion, but when she spoke, in faultless English as she did, I knew. It was a Hawaiian voice, in that city of the chill mists, a voice out of Polynesia, mellow with the accents of an easeful race.

So now I never hum to myself the melody of a Vahitahi song but it brings the feel of the salt breeze over the coral land, the smell of coconut oil on ruddy-dark hair, and the island voices blending with the deep steady thud of guitars in a dark tenderness, full of the casualness and content, the easy joy and sudden sadness, of the South Sea. And the soft syllables mean, to us who have known them in their home, something in their own sound that vanishes when their approximate overt significance is set forth.

The visitor must dance, too, despite his protests of ignorance. Guitar-beat throbbed into the blood; feet that had

stirred the pebbles of Tepuka so many evenings could not remain quiet here.

"I give you a new name," said Tetápahi, as I left after singing many Hawaiian songs, "a name of the land. We shall call you Tangi—the Singer."

All this was repeated more elaborately in the evening at the chief's house—a stone house with a high platform of concrete which served on occasion as judge's bench, but normally as the bed of the chief and his family.

The ten girls and dozen or more young men who gathered there were better dressed than we, who had brought only dungarees and Hawaiian palaka-jackets off the ship. The young men were smart in white trousers and shirts, the girls in print dresses and—such was the sophistication of this place—shoes! I noted, however, that as the evening advanced they were glad to remove these latter badges of civilization. Over all hung a pervasive incense-like scent that at first I could not identify; an Oriental fragrance as of the sandalwood for which the Hawaiians perished long ago. Not until in Ua's house I chanced upon a can of the talcum powder that is used universally on the island—a well-known American brand intended for babies—did I recognize the scent that mingled with that of coconut oil and tournefortia flowers.

Our acquaintances of the morning were there, but the belle of this gathering was a tiny, dark-faced lass who answered to the name of Pikura, or Precious Perfume.

Next day the elders chanted in Ua's house; similarly to what we had heard on other islands, but in a more normal voice and with nearer approach to melody. I recognized, again, the moving lament:

> "The child is a wanderer:
> ranging remote lands,
> he will not know the hour of his mother's death!"

The savage ancient poetry, the aged voices, sounded oddly out of place in the comparatively civilized setting of Ua's liv-

ing room. They should have been in a leaf hut, at midnight, by dim light of burning copra or a crude wick in a bottle of coconut oil.

Tetápahi was pounding pandanus fruit between stones to extract the inner kernel. All over the village the sound of similar pounding throbbed in the sea breeze—an echo of the far time when these were a "pandanus people," before the coconut had taken the place of the screwpine as the foundation of low-island economy.

The girl held out a few of these kernels in the palm of her hand. They were about the size of pine nuts and somewhat like them in taste. With starch scraped from the fruit, and sometimes the fruit itself baked whole in the earth oven, they were once an important food on many a low island.

Our Mormon hostess had guests, the second day, from a copra schooner, and most of the population gathered there in the evening. The pious Vatoa, however, revealed unaccountable scruples when Tetápahi and Ngapehu, resplendent in red gowns, proposed dancing. They danced, nevertheless, not in Vatoa's house, but in the small quarters of Charlie, the Reao boy-of-all-work in Vatoa's household. They took time out, there, for us to repeat over and over the Hawaiian "King's Serenade," that they might learn it for future occasions.

The hour latened. Vatoa came bulging in to end the party. We walked out into the empty, darkened street. Two young men of the village hailed us, to ask for a light.

"No good, this place," one of them remarked. "We have no sweethearts. The Chinese take all the girls."

There are five Chinese in Vahitahi, an unusual number for an island of that size. The eldest, a blind man, has practically all the natives in his debt, and levies an assessment every time they sell a load of copra. Being the capitalists of the place, and controlling the supply of dresses, hair ornaments, earrings and scented talcum, it is not surprising that these mer-

chants have, as rumored, the pick of the young womanhood of the land.

Ngapehu, however, walked with us seaward, and sat with us on the cool sand, facing the breeze that blew from the sea, rustling the tall palms. We talked, and then grew quiet, melting into the spell of the night. Vahitahi, I learned, has retained more of the ancient life than appears on the surface. At certain seasons, its men and women gird themselves with dance-garments of green coconut leaves that stand out stiffly like ballet skirts, and perform the ancient food rites, the exorcising of demons, and the ancestor ceremonies. There is a certain Moko who must be lured out of the forest and shut up in a coconut shell, which is then buried in the sand. Tupuhoe and others of his generation, men in late youth or early middle life, still are skilled in the spear-drill of the elder time; and, as I knew from hearing Ruea and her friends, the old folk of Vahitahi know the sacred literature of the past.

Ngapehu grew silent. Her hair, fragrant with scented coconut oil, blew across our faces as she sat between us. She was asleep. We aroused her and took her to her home at Tupuhoe's house.

Next morning the surf was still battering the reef on which a landing-boat from the *Moana* had been crushed the day before. Men and women took leave of us as we entered the landing-boat: "Life to you, Keneti; life to you, Tangi." Precious Perfume, with her possessions rolled up in a pareu, begged to be taken along. An earnest discussion between us and her brother was necessary before she could be dissuaded.

Here Keneti and I, who had been companions in good and ill fortune these months, must part, he to sail east to Tatakoto, I to return to Tahiti lest the *Islander* sail north without me. I climbed aboard the *Tiare;* Keneti, waving his tall Tepuka hat from the *Moana's* whaleboat, lightened the parting with a reminiscence of one of our favorite jokes—an imitation of old Kararo's long-drawn, nasal "Nhhhhhhhhhh!"

The *Moana* lifted white flowing sails and moved swiftly eastward; the *Tiare*, with a fair wind for Tahiti, gathered headway in the opposite direction.

38. *The "Tiare Tahiti"*

The Land of the Long Lagoon slid out of sight beneath the rounded skin of the Pacific. We were at sea again, a tiny moving sliver of wood and canvas between the vast blue concentric domes of ocean and sky.

The *Tiare Tahiti* was a forty-foot cutter, such as are used throughout the Tuamotu for voyaging from island to island, where they have largely replaced the old native craft. Loaded far beyond the possible limits of a nonexistent Plimsoll line, with native passengers, their mats and pigs and belongings, and often stuffed with copra in every conceivable stowage place, they are perhaps the most frequent craft in those waters. Father Paul at Vahitahi had built his own ship of this type, and went voyaging with a native crew far out of sight of land, but always found his way safely to port.

The *Tiare Tahiti* had seen her copra-carrying days; Bob, her owner, had traded for a few years among the islands, until, like other foreign skippers, he found the competition of the Chinese and the restrictions of the colonial laws too burdensome.

Bob had led a fairly adventurous life. Running away to sea from an academy in the American East, he had shipped for far and strange ports, up and down European, African and Asiatic coasts. But with an inarticulateness somewhat unusual in a sailor, he had little to communicate of these experiences save fragmentary reminiscences of amorous encounters in Algiers, Yokohama or Amsterdam. He was the type of Carl

Sandburg's United States marine "with a girl on his knee for a memory in ports circling the earth and he said: Tell me how to say three things and I always get by—gimme a plate of ham and eggs—how much?—and—do you love me, kid?"

Reaching Tahiti in his wanderings, he had invested his savings, taking advantage of favorable exchange, in the cutter, and after two years of island trading, had sailed her to Hawaii by way of the Marquesas and returned. Now she was under charter to the Bishop Museum as a transfer ship for members of the expedition, and we were bound for Papeete to pick up that royal Polynesian scholar Te Rangi Hiroa, known as widely by that chiefly Maori name as by his English one of Dr. Peter Buck, who was to join Keneti at Tatakoto.

Tall and slim and blond, with a sailor's easy rolling gait and a slow down-east speech, Bob might have been of the breed of those New England whalers who swarmed the Pacific a century ago. The South Seas had softened his eastern ways, but not the frosty gleam of his blue eyes as, cap set at a jaunty angle over his yellow hair, he stood at the wheel of the Flower of Tahiti, gazing out calculatingly at the foam-dappled sea and up at the curving canvas overhead.

Matini, the official captain, was an island man by birth, and a veteran of those seas. Born in Rurutu in the Austral Islands, of mixed Polynesian and American ancestry, he was of the best type of inter-island shipmaster. An unerring navigator, and a man looked upon as with the standing of a chief, there could have been no better choice for the captain of French citizenship required by law. If he had a fault, it was over-caution, a healthy one in those waters. In his younger days he had lost a schooner on a reef, and the experience had made him one of the wariest skippers in French Oceania.

"I've seen every island in the Paumotu and never been ashore at any," he would say.

Among those justly termed Dangerous Islands, he would take no chances with his ship for any lure of shore. All the

two weeks the *Tiare Tahiti* had lain off Tepuka and Tepoto, Matini had not set foot off the deck of the cutter, and I suspect that he never slept through one of the watches stood by the Tahitian sailors without getting up from time to time to check the position of the ship with reference to currents and wind.

Tau was a smallish, dark-brown Tahitian, quiet and willing, but handicapped by an apparently chronic dysentery—an ailment not uncommon in his native island.

"If he'd take care of himself and not drink ashore, he could be cured," grumbled Matini with the profound contempt for inefficiency that was characteristic of this somewhat unusual island captain.

Tehio was a fat, broad-faced, smiling, cinnamon-brown sailor, whom Matini cursed for laziness and suspected of sleeping at the wheel. He was a poorer seaman, but more entertaining company than the taciturn Tau. Tehio was also the cook, and with a pan of rice and the milk of ripe coconuts, of which a supply was carried in the tiny galley forward, he could turn out a dish as tasty as any chef in much more ambitious surroundings.

"When we sailed from Hawaii to Tahiti, all the galley we had was an oil tin in a box of sand," Bob recalled.

Now he had a stove, fueled with dry sticks cut on the islands visited. Every day as Matini took his eleven o'clock sight, Tehio would peel long, white, firm Tahitian yams and boil them in a huge pot. At islands where we could trade oil tins for provisions, we had chicken; while the terns' eggs lasted, Tehio baked the most delicious pancakes I had ever tasted; at sea we alternated between curried corned beef and curried tinned salmon.

There was no room for furniture aboard the cutter, and we squatted native fashion on the floor of the cabin, or leaned forward from the edges of the bunks, as Tehio set the food on the hatch-cover over the auxiliary engine. All ate together,

with the exception of the man at the wheel, though Matini grumbled that this free and easy mingling was bad for discipline.

Tupu, the new member of the crew, was admittedly of little use at sea. Keneti and I had long since awarded Tupu the distinction of being the stupidest native of Tepuka. But Tupu deserved more credit for good intention than any of us were inclined to give him. His unfailing good humor and his untiring readiness to use his mighty physical strength to help others should have gone far to make up for his slowness of wit and his untidy appearance. Looking back, I regret that I was not kinder to Tupu; for the brutish-looking half-savage was, I am convinced, sincerely fond of me. Even after I cast aside, at Tepuka, the name he had given me, and made him return the pocket-knife he had borrowed—with its nail-file blade broken off from trying to file fishhooks—he remained faithfully devoted. Long after I returned to my own country I discovered, in one of my notebooks, a pathetic appeal written in poorly spelled Tahitian in his laborious, uneven hand:

"Life be to you, my friend Pari-tané! I, Tupu, the son of Tahukanui, greet you. This is my thought: give me a shirt for our voyage to Tahiti."

Poor Tupu! I did not see the note till long afterward, and he went to sea in the clothes in which he stood: a faded pareu, a ragged singlet, a raggeder pair of dungarees cut off at the knees, and the shreds of one of my old handkerchiefs bound around his head. He suffered with cold at sea, but he never complained—and he never answered even a reprimand without a smile.

At mid-morning of the second day we sighted Nengo-nengo—"one beeg island," as Matini had nominated it, and big indeed from a mariner's viewpoint, but consisting of only a few scattered islets between which the surf crashed on a long expanse of reef. It was a bleak and lonely looking land—miles of bare coral, and a few low trees on the farther side.

The charm of Tahiti is in the "districts," away from the colonial capital. There the sun-drenched days idle easefully into nights of song, and time seems a remote and artificial thing of little reality between the timeless sea and sky.

The visitors at Tepuka occupied one of the finest houses in the village. . . . The children soon began to doubt that the white men would eat them.

B. P. Bishop Museum Photo by K. P. Emory

Wearing the ancient ceremonial dress of coconut leaves, the men and women of Vahitahi still dance the sacred figures in the food ceremony, and lure the demon Moko into a coconut shell to be buried in the sand.

We hove to in its lee, and sent Tupu and Tau ashore with spears. We could see them picking their way over the reef, now and then darting the pronged poles into a pool or crevice of the red shelf on which the waves curled.

Two hours later they returned with a big bucketful of fish: bright cerulean blue ones, brown speckled ones, and puffy ones with spikes all over them.

"At this island all fish are good to eat; there are no poisonous ones," Matini explained. Tau had even gathered a heap of conical shellfish, which Tehio served up in coconut sauce next day.

So, with fresh fish providing a welcome relief from a diet out of tins, we slid along steadily before the wind and sea, all day under the sun, all night under the southern stars. We were making fast time. The cutter was almost sailing herself; there was little to do aboard; Bob and I lay on the deckhouse, sunning our light-greedy hides.

The fifth day we passed Meetia, rosy and unreal in the early light. Tupu gazed at it with open mouth. It was the first high land he had seen.

He exclaimed in amazement: "It is a very tall land!"

"Wait till you see Tahiti; that is much taller," replied Tehio, with a grin.

Tehio was in high spirits as we neared Tahiti, chanting a rapid erotic dance-chant at the wheel while the sharp peaks of Tautira notched the horizon.

Matini muttered, with traditional sea captain disapproval, as Bob rallied Tehio on his anticipation of a sailor's delights ashore among the flower-crowned charmers of Papeete:

"A captain should never be familiar with the crew. Keep them at a distance. That's the only way to handle them."

Matini, being half native himself, doubtless felt the necessity of asserting his white blood. To me, conditioned by long residence in Hawaii, and to Bob, with similar acceptance of the natives, derived from living in Tahiti, the drawing of ra-

cial or class lines on so small a ship seemed a silly convention.

The changing-hued sculptured mountain of Meetia remained in sight till dusk, a dream-island painted on the vast blue and white canvas of an ocean day. Ahead, the golden haze hung over the weather-sharpened peaks of Little Tahiti —tantalizingly near as the wind fell, toward night, becalming us with little more than fifty miles to go.

After the months away, we were impatient for Tahiti, each according to his interest: for Tau and Tehio, the rum and women of the port; for Bob and Matini, reunion with their wholesome brown wives; for Tupu, his first experience of civilization; for me, baths, cold beer, a change from tinned corned beef and tinned pale salmon; more important, mail— and, if the schedule had not entirely broken down, the *Islander*, already past due in Papeete from the islands south, to take me home.

Yet I have known few more pleasant days at sea than aboard the *Tiare Tahiti*—idle days in sun and salt wind, skimming that quiet sea; days whose easy monotony was broken only by sight of a whale off the starboard bow, or a bit of wreckage from the reef-shattered *Ville de Papeete* floating by.

All the next morning we crept nearer, catching little puffs of wind that drove us briefly forward, only to slacken and leave the sails flapping disconsolately against the mast. Tahiti, as we coasted along its reef-fringed shores, looked not unlike my own islands of Hawaii, with its patches of iron-red soil, its misty mountains and green lowlands, and deep stream-sculptured valleys, a bright and fragrant land under the tropic sun.

Matini, solid and gently grave beneath his low-crowned hat with the band of brown Rurutu seeds and white small shells, steered through a passage scarcely wider than the ship, between submerged reefs that made a thin line of white foam. We coasted along the garden-like shore, catching quick

glimpses of native fishermen, cyclists wheeling along the Arué road, a white woman in a red bathing suit sliding down from a bay horse in a mass of flowers.

To us, fresh from three months and more in the outlying islands, Papeete seemed a metropolis. The white hull and superstructure of a French cruiser, the long dark bulk of a Messageries Maritimes liner, the tall green of a Union Mail ship loomed amid the masts of copra schooners and foreign yachts in the quiet harbor.

At that time, this arrival seemed to mark a period. I had turned back. Here was civilization again; the real South Seas —the enchanted ocean of low red-rimmed coral islands and simple, kindly fisherfolk—was behind me; my face was set toward home.