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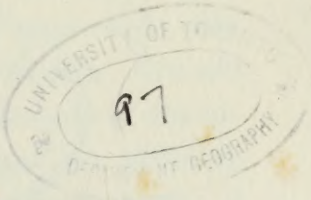
SHORE IN GRAÇIOSA BAY.

# TWO YEARS WITH THE NATIVES IN THE WESTERN PACIFIC

BY

DR. FELIX SPEISER

WITH 40 ILLUSTRATIONS FROM PHOTOGRAPHS AND A MAP

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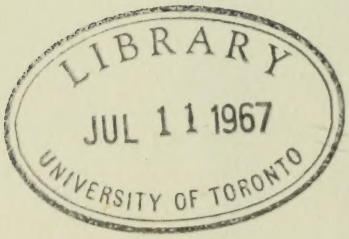

# PREFACE

THIS book is a collection of sketches written on lonely evenings during my voyage; some of them have been published in daily papers, and were so kindly received by the public as to encourage me to issue them in book form. In order to retain the freshness of first impressions, the original form has been but slightly changed, and only so much ethnological detail has been added as will help to an understanding of native life. The book does not pretend to give a scientific description of the people of the New Hebrides; that will appear later; it is meant simply to transmit some of the indelible impressions the traveller was privileged to receive,—impressions both stern and sweet. The author will be amply repaid if he succeeds in giving the reader some slight idea of the charm and the terrors of the islands. He will be proud if his words can convey a vision of the incomparable beauty and peacefulness of the glittering lagoon, and of the sublimity of the virgin forest; if the reader can divine the charm of the native when gay and friendly, and his ferocity when gloomy and hostile. I have set down some of the joys and some

of the hardships of an explorer's life; and I received so many kindnesses from all the white colonists I met, that one great object of my writing is to show my gratitude for their friendly help.

First of all, I would mention His Britannic Majesty's Resident, Mr. Morton King, who followed my studies with the most sympathetic interest, was my most hospitable host, and, I may venture to say, my friend. I would name Mr. Colonna, Résident de France, Judge Alexander in Port Vila, and Captain Harrowell; in Santo, Rev. Father Bochu, the Messrs. Thomas, Mr. Fysh, Mr. Clapcott; in Malo, Mr. M. Wells and Mr. Jacquier; in Vao, Rev. Father Jamond; in Malekula, Rev. F. Paton, Rev. Jaffrays, Mr. Bird and Mr. Fleming; in Ambrym, Rev. Dr. J. J. Bowie, Mr. Stevens, Mr. Decent; in Pentecoste, Mr. Filmer; in Aoba, Mr. Albert and Rev. Grunling; in Tanna, Rev. Macmillan and Dr. Nicholson; in Venua Lava, Mr. Choyer; in Nitendi, Mr. Matthews. I am also indebted to the Anglican missionaries, especially Rev. H. N. Drummond, and to Captain Sinker of the steam yacht *Southern Cross*, to the supercargo and captains of the steamers of Burns, Philp & Company. There are many more who assisted me in various ways, often at the expense of their own comfort and interest, and not the least of the impressions I took home with me is, that nowhere can one find wider hospitality or friendlier helpfulness

than in these islands. This has helped me to forget so many things that do not impress the traveller favourably.

If this book should come under the notice of any of these kind friends, the author would be proud to think that they remember him as pleasantly as he will recall all the friendship he received during his stay in the New Hebrides.

BASLE, *April* 1913.

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# TWO YEARS WITH THE NATIVES IN THE WESTERN PACIFIC

## INTRODUCTION

Late in the sixteenth century the Spaniards made several voyages in search of a continent in the southern part of the great Pacific Ocean. Alvara Mendana de Neyra, starting in 1568 from the west coast of South America and following about the sixth degree southern latitude, found the Solomon Islands, which he took for parts of the desired continent. In 1595 he undertook another voyage, keeping a more southerly course, and discovered the Queen Charlotte Islands; the largest of these, Nitendi, he called Santa Cruz, and gave the fitting name of Graciosa Bay to the lovely cove in which he anchored. He tried to found a colony here, but failed. Mendana died in Santa Cruz, and his lieutenant, Pedro Vernandez de Quiros, led the expedition home. In Europe, Quiros succeeded in interesting the Spanish king, Philip III., in the idea of another voyage, so that in 1603 he was able to set sail from Spain with three ships. Again he reached the Santa Cruz Islands, and sailing southward from there he landed in 1606 on a larger island,

which he took for the desired Australian continent and called Tierra Australis del Espiritu Santo; the large bay he named San Iago and San Felipe, and his anchorage Vera Cruz. He stayed here some months and founded the city of New Jerusalem at the mouth of the river Jordan in the curve of the bay. Quiros claims to have made a few sailing trips thence, southward along the east coast of the island; if he had pushed on far enough these cruises might easily have convinced him of the island-nature of the country. Perhaps he was aware of the truth; certainly the lovely descriptions he gave King Philip of the beauties of the new territory are so exaggerated that one may be pardoned for thinking him quite capable of dignifying an island by the name of continent.

The inevitable quarrels with the natives, and diseases and mutinies among his crew, forced him to abandon the colony and return home. His lieutenant, Luis Vaez de Torres, separated from him, discovered an passed the Torres Straits, a feat of excellent seamanship. Quiros returned to America. His high-flown descriptions of his discovery did not help him much, for the king simply ignored him, and his reports were buried in the archives. Quiros died in poverty and bitterness, and the only traces of his travels are the names Espiritu Santo, Bay San Iago and San Felipe, and Jordan, in use to this day.

No more explorers came to the islands till 1767, when a Frenchman, Carteret, touched at Santa Cruz, and 1768, when Bougainville landed in the northern

WOMEN FROM THE REEF ISLANDS IN CARLISLE BAY, NITENDI.

New Hebrides, leaving his name to the treacherous channel between Malekula and Santo.

But all these travellers were thrown into the shade by the immortal discoverer, James Cook, who, in the New Hebrides, as everywhere else, combined into solid scientific material all that his predecessors had left in a state of patchwork. Cook's first voyage made possible the observation of the transit of Venus from one of the islands of the Pacific. His second cruise, in search of the Australian continent, led him, coming from Tongoa, to the New Hebrides, of which he first sighted Maevo.

Assisted by two brilliant scientists, Reinhold and George Forster, Cook investigated the archipelago with admirable exactitude, determined the position of the larger islands, made scientific collections of all sorts, and gave us the first reliable descriptions of the country and its people, so that the material he gathered is of the greatest value even at the present day. The group had formerly been known as the "Great Cyclades"; Cook gave it its present name of "New Hebrides."

Incited by Cook's surprising results the French Government sent La Pérouse to the islands, but he was shipwrecked in 1788 on Vanikoro, the southernmost of the Santa Cruz group; remains of this wreck were found on Vanikoro a few years ago. In 1789 Bligh sighted the Banks Islands, and in 1793 d'Entrecastaux, sent by Louis XVI. to the rescue of La Pérouse, saw the islands of Santa Cruz. Since that time traffic with the islands became more fre-

quent; among many travellers we may mention the French captain, Dumont d'Urville, and the Englishmen, Belcher and Erskine, who, as well as Markham, have all left interesting accounts.

But with Markham we enter that sad period which few islands of the Pacific escaped, in which the scum of the white race carried on their bloodstained trade in whaling products and sandalwood. They terrorized the natives shamelessly, and when these, naturally enough, often resorted to cruel modes of defence, they retaliated with deeds still more frightful, and the bad reputation they themselves made for the natives served them as a welcome excuse for a system of extermination. The horrors of slave-trade were added to piracy, so that in a few decades the native race of the New Hebrides and Banks Islands was so weakened that in many places to-day its preservation seems hopeless.

Thus, for the financial advantage of the worst of whites, and from indolence and short-sighted national rivalry, a race was sacrificed which in every respect would be worth preserving, and it is a shameful fact that even to-day such atrocities are not impossible and very little is done to save the islanders from destruction.

The only factor opposing these conditions was the Mission, which obtained a foothold in the islands under Bishop John Williams. He was killed in 1839 by the natives of Erromanga, but the Protestant missionaries, especially the Presbyterians, would not be repulsed, and slowly advanced northward, in spite

of many losses. To-day the Presbyterian mission occupies all the New Hebrides, with the exception of Pentecote, Aoba and Maevo. To the north lies the field of the Anglican mission, extending up to the Solomon Islands.

In 1848 Roman Catholic missionaries settled in Aneityum, but soon gave up the station ; in 1887 they returned and spread all over the archipelago, with the exception of the southern islands and the Banks group.

Of late years several representatives of free Protestant sects have come out, but, as a rule, these settle only where they can combine a profitable trade with their mission work.

Owing to energetic agitation on the part of the Anglican and Presbyterian Churches, especially of Bishop Patteson and the Rev. J. G. Paton, men-of-war were ordered to the islands on police duty, so as to watch the labour-trade. They could not suppress kidnapping entirely, and the transportation of the natives to Queensland continued until within the last ten years, when it was suppressed by the Australian Government, so that to-day the natives are at least not taken away from their own islands, except those recruited by the French for New Caledonia.

Unhappily, England and France could not agree as to who should annex the New Hebrides. Violent agitation in both camps resulted in neither power being willing to leave the islands to the other, as numerical superiority on the French side was counterbalanced by the absolute economical dependence of the colonists upon Australia. England put the

group under the jurisdiction of the "Western Pacific," with a high commissioner; France retorted by the so-called purchase of all useful land by the "Société Française des Nouvelles Hébrides," a private company, which spent great sums on the islands in a short time. Several propositions of exchange failed to suit either of the powers, but both feared the interference of a third, and conditions in the islands called urgently for a government; so, in 1887, a dual control was established, each power furnishing a warship and a naval commissioner, who were to unite in keeping order. This was the beginning of the present Condominium, which was signed in 1906 and proclaimed in 1908 in Port Vila; quite a unique form of government and at the same time a most interesting experiment in international administration.

The Condominium puts every Englishman or Frenchman under the laws of his own nation, as represented by its officials; so that these two nationalities live as they would in any colony of their own, while all others have to take their choice between these two.

Besides the national laws, the Condominium has a few ordinances to regulate the intercourse between the two nations, the sale of liquor and arms to natives, recruiting and treatment of labourers, etc. As the highest instance in the islands and as a supreme tribunal, an international court of six members has been appointed: two Spanish, two Dutch, one English and one French. Thus the higher officials of the Condominium are:

One English and one French resident commissioner,
One Spanish president of the Court,
One English and one French judge,
One Dutch registrar,
One Spanish prosecuting attorney,
One Dutch native advocate,
One English and one French police commissioner.

The Santa Cruz Islands were annexed by England in 1898 and belong to the jurisdiction of the Solomon Islands.

## Geography

The New Hebrides lie between 165° and 170° east longitude, and reach from 13° to 20° south latitude. The Santa Cruz Islands lie 116° east and 11° south.

The New Hebrides and Banks Islands consist of thirteen larger islands and a great number of islets and rocks, covering an area of about 15,900 km. The largest island is Espiritu Santo, about 107 × 57 km., with 4900 km. surface. They are divided into the Torres group, the Banks Islands, the Central and the Southern New Hebrides. The Banks and Torres Islands and the Southern New Hebrides are composed of a number of isolated, scattered islands, while the Central group forms a chain, which divides at Epi into an eastern and a western branch, and encloses a stretch of sea, hemming it in on all sides except the north. On the coast of this inland sea, especially on the western islands, large coral formations have grown, changing what was originally narrow mountain chains,

running north and south, to larger islands. Indeed, most of them seem to consist of a volcanic nucleus, on which lie great coral banks, often 200 m. high; these usually drop in five steep steps to the sea, and then merge into the living coral-reef in the water. Most of the islands, therefore, appear as typical table-islands, out of which, in the largest ones, rise the rounded tops of the volcanic stones. They are all very mountainous; the highest point is Santo Peak, 1500 m. high.

The tides cause very nasty tide-rips in the narrow channels between the islands of the Central group; but inside, the sea is fairly good, and the reefs offer plenty of anchorage for small craft. Much less safe are the open archipelagoes of the Banks and Torres Islands and of the Southern New Hebrides, where the swell of the open ocean is unbroken by any land and harbours are scarce.

There are three active volcanoes on the New Hebrides—the mighty double crater on Ambrym, the steep cone of Lopevi, and the volcano of Tanna. There is a half-extinct volcano on Venua Lava, and many other islands show distinct traces of former volcanic activity, such as Meralava and Ureparapara, one side of which has broken down, so that now there is a smooth bay where once the lava boiled.

Rivers are found only on the larger islands, where there are volcanic rocks. In the coral rocks the rain-water oozes rapidly away, so that fresh-water springs are not frequently found, in spite of very considerable rainfall.

## Climate

The climate is not hot and very equable. The average temperature in Efate in 1910 was 24·335° C.; the hottest month was February, with an average of 27·295°, the coolest, July with 11·9° C. The lowest absolute temperature was 11·9° C. in August, and the highest 35·6° C. in March. The average yearly variation, therefore, was 5·48°, and the absolute difference 23·7°.

The rainfall is very heavy. In December the maximum, 564 mm., was reached, and in June the minimum, 22 mm. The total rainfall was 3·012 mm., giving a daily average of 8·3 mm.

These figures, taken from a table in the *Neo-Hebridais*, show that the year is divided into a cool, dry season and a hot, damp one. From May to October one enjoys agreeable summer days, bright and cool, with a predominant south-east trade-wind, that rises and falls with the sun and creates a fairly salubrious climate. From November to April the atmosphere is heavy and damp, and one squall follows another. Often there is no wind, or the wind changes quickly and comes in heavy gusts from the north-west. This season is the time for cyclones, which occur at least once a year; happily, their centre rarely touches the islands, as they lie somewhat out of the regular cyclone track.

A similar climate, with but slightly higher temperature, prevails on the Santa Cruz Islands.

## Flora and Fauna

The vegetation of the New Hebrides is luxurious enough to make all later visitors share Quiros' amazement. The possibilities for the planter are nearly inexhaustible, and the greatest difficulty is that of keeping the plantations from the constant encroachments of the forest. Yet the flora is poorer in forms than that of Asiatic regions, and in the southern islands it is said to be much like that of New Caledonia.

As a rule, thick forest covers the islands; only rarely we find areas covered with reed-grass. On Erromanga these are more frequent.

In the Santa Cruz Islands the flora seems richer than in the New Hebrides.

Still more simple than the flora is the fauna. Of mammals there are only the pig, dog, a flying-fox and the rat, of which the first two have probably been imported by the natives. There are but few birds, reptiles and amphibies, but the few species there are are very prolific, so that we find swarms of lizards and snakes, the latter all harmless Boidæ, but occasionally of considerable size.

Crocodiles are found only in the Santa Cruz Islands, and do not grow so large there as in the Solomon Islands.

Animal life in the sea is very rich; turtles and many kinds of fish and Cetaceæ are plentiful.

NATIVE TARO FIELD ON MAEVO.

## Native Population

The natives belong to the Melanesian race, which is a collective name for the dark-skinned, curly-haired, bearded inhabitants of the Pacific. The Melanesians are quite distinct from the Australians, and still more so from the lank-haired, light-skinned Polynesians of the eastern islands. Probably a mixture of Polynesians and Melanesians are the Micronesians, who are light-skinned but curly-haired, and of whom we find representatives in the New Hebrides. The island-nature of the archipelago is very favourable to race-mixture; and as we know that on some islands there were several settlements of Polynesians, it is not surprising to find a very complex mingling of races, which it is not an easy task to disentangle. It would seem, however, that we have before us remnants of four races: a short, dark, curly-haired and perhaps original race, a few varieties of the tall Melanesian race, arrived in the islands in several migrations, an old Polynesian element as a relic of its former migrations eastward, and a present Polynesian element from the east.

Every traveller will notice that the lightest population is in the south and north-east of the New Hebrides, while the darkest is in the north-west, and the ethnological difference corresponds to this division.

In the Banks Islands we find, probably owing to recent immigration, more Polynesian blood than in the northern New Hebrides; in the Santa Cruz group the process of mixing seems to be just going on.

The number of natives in the New Hebrides and Banks Islands amounted, according to the approximate census of the British Resident Commissioner in 1910, to 65,000. At a conservative estimate we may say that before the coming of the whites, that is, a generation ago, it was ten times that, *i.e.* 650,000. For to judge from present conditions, the accounts of old men and the many ruined villages, it is evident that the race must have decreased enormously.

### Language

The languages belong to the Melanesian and Polynesian classes. They are split up into numerous dialects, so widely different that natives of different districts can hardly, if at all, understand each other. It is evident that owing to the seclusion of the villages caused by the general insecurity of former days, and the lack of any literature, the language developed differently in every village.

On some islands things are so bad that one may easily walk in one day through several districts, in each of which is spoken a language quite unintelligible to the neighbours; there are even adjoining villages whose natives have to learn each other's language; this makes them fairly clever linguists. Where, by migrations, conditions have become too complicated, the most important of the dialects has been adopted as a kind of "lingua franca."

Under these circumstances I at once gave up the idea of learning a native language, as I never stopped anywhere more than a few weeks; and as the

missionaries have done good work in the cause of philology, my services were not needed. I was, therefore, dependent on interpreters in "biche la mar," a language which contains hardly more than fifty words, and which is spoken on the plantations, but is quite useless for discussing any abstract subject. In nearly every village there is some man who can speak biche la mar.

## Colonization

As we have seen, colonization in the New Hebrides was begun by the whalers, who had several stations in the southern islands. They had, however, little intercourse with the natives, and their influence may be considered fairly harmless.

More dangerous were the sandalwood traders, who worked chiefly in Erromanga. They were not satisfied with buying the valuable wood from the natives, but tried to get directly at the rich supplies inland. Naturally, they came into conflict with the natives, and fierce wars arose, in which the whites fought with all the weapons unscrupulous cruelty can wield. As a result, the population of Erromanga has decreased from between 5000 and 10,000 to 800.

Happily, the northern islands were not so rich in sandalwood, so that contact with the whites came later, through the coprah-makers. Coprah is dried cocoa-nut, which is used in manufacturing soap, and the great wealth of cocoa-nut palms attracted coprah-makers as early as the 'Seventies of the last century. They were nearly all ruined adventurers, either

escaped from the Nouméa penitentiary or otherwise the scum of the white race. Such individuals would settle near a good anchorage close to some large village, build a straw hut, and barter coprah for European goods and liquor. They made a very fair profit, but were constantly quarrelling with the natives, whom they enraged by all sorts of brutalities. The frequent murders of such traders were excusable, to say the least, and many later ones were acts of justifiable revenge. The traders were kept in contact with civilization through small sailing-vessels, which brought them new goods and bought their coprah. This easy money-making attracted more whites, so that along the coasts of the more peaceable islands numerous Europeans settled, and at present there are so many of these stations that the coprah-trade is no longer very profitable.

Naturally, many of these settlers started plantations, and thus grew up the plantation centres of Mele, Port Havannah, Port Sandwich, Epi and the Segond Channel. Many plantations were created by the "Société Française des Nouvelles Hébrides," but owing to bad management these have never yet brought any returns.

Thus, to the alcohol peril was added another danger to the natives,—work on the plantations. They were kidnapped, overworked, ill-fed; it was slavery in its worst shape, and the treatment of the hands is best illustrated by the mortality which, in some places, reached 44 per cent. per annum. In those days natives were plentiful and labour easy to

MAN FROM NITENDI WORKING THE LOOM.

get, and nobody worried about the future; so the ruin of the race began, and to-day their number hardly suffices for the needs of the planters.

Then the slave-trade to Queensland, Fiji, even South America began, so that the population, relatively small from the first, decreased alarmingly, all the more so as they were decimated by dysentery, measles, tuberculosis and other diseases.

Against all these harmful influences the missions, unsupported as they were by any authority, could only fight by protests in the civilized countries; these proved effectual at last, so that the missions deserve great credit for having preserved the native race. Yet it cannot be said that they have restored its vitality, except in Tanna. It seems as if the system of imbibing the native with so much European culture, and yet separating him from the whites and regulated labour, had been noxious to the race, for nearly everywhere the Christianized natives die out just as fast as the heathen population.

About ten years after the French, the English began planting, and to-day nearly all arable land along the coast is cultivated. The English suffer much less from lack of labour, which is doubtless owing to their more humane and just treatment of the hands. In the first place, they usually come from better stock than the French, and, secondly, they are strictly controlled by the Government, whereas the French Government does not even attempt to enforce its own laws.

There is now some question of importing Indian

coolies; the great expense this would entail would be a just punishment for the short-sighted cruelty with which the most valuable product of the islands—their population—has been destroyed. Only by compelling each native to work for a definite period could a sufficient amount of labour be produced to-day; but such a system, while extremely beneficial to the race as a whole, stands but a poor chance of being introduced.

The products of the islands are coprah, coffee, corn, cocoa and, of late years, cotton. The chief item, however, is coprah, for the islands seem specially suited for the growing of cocoa-nut palms. Rubber does not seem to thrive.

In spite of the great number of officials, the Government does not make itself much felt outside the larger settlements, at least on the French side. There are not yet magistrates on each island, so that the Government hears only so much about the crimes committed on the islands as the planters care to tell, and naturally they do not tell too much. The British Government is represented by two inspectors, who frequently visit all the British plantations and look into labour conditions; the activity of the French authorities is restricted to occasional visits from the Resident.

Thus the natives have no means of complaining about the whites, while they have to submit to any punishment they may get on the accusation of a colonist. This would be a very one-sided affair; happily, the missionaries represent the interests of the

natives, and the power of the Government does not reach far inland. There the natives are quite independent, so that only a few hours away from the coast cannibalism still flourishes. Formerly, expeditions from the men-of-war frightened the natives; to-day they know that resistance is easy. It is, therefore, not the merit of the Government or the planters if the islands are fairly pacified, but only of the missions, which work mostly through native teachers. Still, the missions have had one bad effect: they have undermined the old native authorities and thus created general anarchy to complete the destruction begun by European civilization.

In the Santa Cruz Islands there is only one plantation, worked by boys from the Solomon Islands, as the Santa Cruz natives are not yet used to regular work. But to-day they frequently recruit for the plantations on the Solomons, and there come into contact with civilization. There the labour conditions are strictly watched by the British Government; still, boys returning from there have sometimes imported diseases, generally tuberculosis, which have reduced the population by half.

### Commerce

Communications with Sydney, the commercial centre of the Western Pacific, are established by means of a French and an English line of steamers. A few small steamers and schooners ply at irregular intervals between Nouméa and the New Hebrides.

The English steamers fly the flag of Burns, Philp

& Company, the great Australian firm which trades with numerous island groups of the South Seas. Their steamers touch the Lord Howe and Norfolk Islands, stop for a few days at Vila, then call in a four weeks' cruise at nearly all the plantations in the islands. They carry the mail and ply a profitable trade with the planters; they also do errands for the colonists in Sydney, procuring anything from a needle to a horse or a house. Being practically without serious competitors they can set any price they please on commodities, so that they are a power in the islands and control the trade of the group; all the more so as many planters are dependent on them for large loans. To me, Burns, Philp & Company were extremely useful, as on board their ships I could always find money, provisions and articles for barter, send my collections to Vila, and occasionaly travel from one island to another.

The French line is run by the Messageries Maritimes, on quite a different plan: it is merely for mail-service and does not do any trading. Its handsome steamer travels in three weeks from Sydney to Nouméa and Port Vila, visits about three plantations and leaves the islands after one week. This line offers the shortest and most comfortable connection with Sydney, taking eight days for the trip, while the English steamers take eleven.

The port of entrance to the group is Port Vila, chosen for its proximity to New Caledonia and Sydney; it is a good harbour, though somewhat narrow.

# CHAPTER I

## NOUMÉA AND PORT VILA

On April 26, 1910, I arrived at Nouméa by the large and very old mail-steamer of the Messageries Maritimes, plying between Marseilles and Nouméa, which I had boarded at Sydney.

Nouméa impresses one very unfavourably. A time of rapid development has been followed by a period of stagnation, increased by the suppression of the penitentiary, the principal source of income to the town. The latter has never grown to the size originally planned and laid out, and its desolate squares and decayed houses are a depressing sight. Two or three steamers and a few sailing-vessels are all the craft the harbour contains; a few customs officers and discharged convicts loaf on the pier, where some natives from the Loyalty Islands sleep or shout.

Parallel streets lead from the harbour to the hills that fence the town to the landward. Under roofs of corrugated sheet-iron run the sidewalks, along dark stores displaying unappetizing food, curios and cheap millinery. At each corner is a dismal sailors' bar, smelling of absinthe. Then we come to an empty, decayed square, where a crippled, noseless "Gallia" stands on a fountain; some half-drunk coachmen

lounge dreaming on antediluvian cabs, and a few old convicts sprawl on benches.

Along the hillside are the houses of the high officials and the better class of people. There is a club, where fat officials gather to play cards and drink absinthe and champagne; they go to the barber's, roll cigarettes, drink some more absinthe and go to bed early, after having visited a music-hall, in which monstrous dancing-girls from Sydney display their charms and moving-picture shows present blood-curdling dramas. Then there is the Governor's residence, the town hall, etc., and the only event in this quiet city of officials is the arrival of the mail-steamer, when all the "beau-monde" gathers on the pier to welcome the few passengers, whether known or unknown.

In Nouméa itself there is no industry, and the great export of minerals does not touch the town. Once, Nouméa was meant to form a base of naval operations, and strongly fortified. But after a few years this idea was abandoned, after having cost large sums, and now the fortifications are left to decay and the heavy, modern guns to rust.

In spite of a prohibition, one may climb up to the forts, and be rewarded by a beautiful view of the island, which does not impress one as tropical. The rounded hills are covered with shrubs, and only in the valleys are there a few trees; we are surprised by the strong colouring of the distant mountains, shining purple through the violet atmosphere.

Seaward, we see the white line of the breakers,

indicating the great barrier-reef which surrounds the isle with an almost impenetrable belt; a few channels only lead from the shore to the open ocean.

On the 1st of May the *Pacific* arrived at Nouméa, and her departure for Vila, next day, ended a most tiresome stay.

It was a sad, rainy day when we left. Impatiently the passengers waited till the freight was loaded,—houses, iron, horses, cases of tins, etc. Of course we were six hours late, and all the whites were angry, while the few natives did not care, but found a dry corner, rolled themselves up in their blankets and dozed. When we finally left, heavy squalls were rushing over the sea; in the darkness a fog came on, so that we had soon to come to anchor. But next morning we had passed the Loyalty Islands and were rolling in the heavy swell the south-east trade raises on the endless surface of the Pacific.

Next day, through the light mist of a summer morning, the forms of islands appeared, flat, bluish-grey lines, crowned with rounded hills. Slowly finer points appeared, the ridge of mountains showed details and we could recognize the tops of the giant banyan trees, towering above the forest as a cathedral does over the houses of a city. We saw the surf, breaking in the coral cliffs of flat shores, found the entrance to the wide bay, noticed the palms with elegantly curved trunks bending over the beach, and unexpectedly entered the lagoon, that shone in the bright sun like a glittering sapphire.

We had passed the flat cliffs, covered only with

iron-wood trees, and now the water was bordered by high coral plateaux, from which a luxuriant forest fell down in heavy cascades, in a thickness almost alarming, like the eruption of a volcano, when one cloud pushes the other before it and new ones are ever behind. It seemed as if each tree were trying to strangle the others in a fight for life, while the weakest, deprived of their ground, clung frantically to the shore and would soon be pushed far out over the smooth, shining sea. There the last dense crowns formed the beautiful fringe of the green carpet stretched soft and thick over the earth.

Only here and there the shore was free, showing the coral strand as a line of white that separated the blue of the sea from the green of the forest and intensified every colour in the landscape. It was a vision of the most magnificent luxuriance, so different from the view which the barren shores of eastern New Caledonia offer.

The bay became narrower and we approached the port proper. Small islands appeared, between which we had glimpses of cool bays across glassy, deep-green water, and before us lay a broken line of light-coloured houses along the beach, while on the plateau behind we could see the big court-house and some villas.

A little distance off-shore we dropped anchor, and were soon surrounded by boats, from which the inhabitants came on board. A kind planter brought me and my belongings ashore, and I took up my quarters in the only hotel in Port Vila, the so-called "blood-house," thus named because of its history.

A CANNIBAL BEFORE HIS PRIMITIVE HUT ON TANNA.

Vila is merely the administration centre, and consists of nothing but a few stores and the houses of the Condominium officials. There is little life, and only the arrival of the ships brings some excitement, so that the stranger feels bored and lonely, especially as the "blood-house" does not offer many comforts and the society there is not of the choicest.

I immediately went to present my letters of introduction to the French Resident. The offices of the British Residence were still on the small island of Iariki, which I could not reach without a boat. The French Residence is a long, flat, unattractive building; the lawn around the house was fairly well kept, but perfectly bare, in accordance with the French idea of salubrity, except for a few straggling bushes near by. Fowls and horses promenaded about. But the view is one of the most charming to be found in the islands. Just opposite is the entrance to the bay, and the two points frame the sea most effectively, numerous smaller capes deepening the perspective. Along their silhouettes the eye glides into far spaces, to dive beyond the horizon into infinity. Iariki is just in front, and we can see the well-kept park around the British Residence, with its mixture of art and wilderness; near by is the smooth sea shining in all colours. While the shores are of a yellowish green, the sea is of every shade of blue, and the green of the depths is saturated with that brilliant turquoise tint which is enough to put one into a light and happy humour. This being my first sight of a tropical landscape, my delight was great, and made

up for any disappointment human inefficiency had occasioned.

The French Resident, Mr. C., received me most kindly, and did me the honour of inviting me to be his guest. I had planned to stay in Vila a few weeks, so as to get acquainted with the country and hire boys; but the Resident seemed to think that I only intended a short visit to the islands, and he proposed to take me with him on a cruise through the archipelago and to deposit me at the Segond Channel, an invitation I could not well refuse. My objection of having no servants was overruled by the Resident's assurance that I could easily find some in Santo. I therefore made my preparations and got my luggage ready.

In the afternoon, Mr. C. lent me his boat to go and pay my respects to Mr. Morton King, the British Resident. The difference between the two residences was striking, but it would be out of place to dwell on it here. It may be caused by the fact that the French Resident is, as a rule, recalled every six months, while the British Resident had been at Vila for more than three years. Mr. King received me most cordially and also offered his hospitality, which, however, I was unable to accept. Later on Mr. King assisted and sheltered me in the most generous manner, so that I shall always remember his help and friendship with sincere gratitude.

I also had the honour of making the acquaintance of the British judge and of most of the Condominium officials.

It was a dull morning when we left Vila on board the French Government yacht. In days gone by she had been an elegant racing-boat, but was now somewhat decayed and none too clean ; however, she had been equipped with a motor, so that we were independent of the wind.

Besides the Resident and myself there were on board the French judge, the police commissioner, and a crew of boys from the Loyalty Islands near New Caledonia. These are excellent sailors and are employed in Vila as French policemen. They are very strong and lively and great fighters, and would be perfect material for a police force were they not such confirmed drunkards. Because of this defect they all had to be dismissed soon afterwards and sent back to their own country, as in Vila, instead of arresting drunken natives, they had generally been drunk themselves and were often fighting in the streets. But on board ship, where they had no opportunity to get drunk, they were very willing and always cheerful and ready for sport of any kind.

We did not travel far that first day, but stopped after a few hours' sail in Port Havannah, north of the Bay of Mele. This port would be one of the best harbours in the group, as it is almost entirely landlocked ; only, the water is so deep that small craft cannot anchor. Yet it would be preferable to Port Vila, as the climate is much better, Vila being one of the hottest, stuffiest and rainiest spots in the group, and its harbour is becoming too small for the increased traffic of the last few years. Port

Vila only became the capital of the islands when the English influence grew stronger, while all the land round Port Havannah belonged to a French company.

We spent the afternoon on shore shooting pigeons. Besides a few ducks, flying-foxes and wild pigs, pigeons are the only game in the islands; but this pigeon-shooting is a peculiar sport and requires a special enthusiasm to afford pleasure for any length of time. The birds are extremely shy and generally sit on the tops of the highest trees where a European can hardly discover them. The natives, however, are very clever in detecting them, but when they try to show you the pigeon it generally flies off and is lost; and if you shoot it, it is hard to find, even for a native. The natives themselves are capable of approaching the birds noiselessly and unseen, because of their colour, so as to shoot them from a short distance. My pigeon-shooting usually consisted in waiting for several hours in the forest, with very unsatisfactory results, so that I soon gave it up.

We were all unsuccessful on this particular day, but it ended most gaily with a dance at the house of a French planter.

We slept on board, rocked softly by the ship, against which the waves plashed in cosy whispering. The sky was bright with stars, but below decks it was dark and stuffy. Now and then a big fish jumped out of the black sea, otherwise it was quiet, dull and gloomy as a dismal dream.

Next day we rose early and went shooting again.

Probably because we had been given the best wishes of an old French lady the result was as unsatisfactory as the evening before. We then resumed our journey in splendid weather, with a stiff breeze, and flying through blue spaces on the bright waves, we rapidly passed several small islands, sighted "Monument Rock," a lonely cliff that rises abruptly out of the sea to a height of 130 m., and arrived late in the afternoon at Maei, our destination.

## CHAPTER II

### MAEI, TONGOA, EPI AND MALEKULA

Maei is a small island whose natives have nearly all disappeared, as is the case on most of its neighbours. There is one small plantation, with the agent of which the Resident had business. After we had passed the narrow inlet through the reef, we landed, to find the agent in a peculiar, half-mad condition. He pretended to suffer from fever, but it was evident that alcohol had a good deal to do with it, too. The man made strange faces, could hardly talk and was quite unable to write; he said the fever had deprived him of the power of using his fingers. He was asked to dinner on board, and as he could not speak French nor the Resident English, negotiations were carried on in biche la mar, a language in which it is impossible to talk about anything but the simplest matters of everyday life. Things got still worse when the agent became more and more intoxicated, in spite of the small quantities of liquor we allowed him. I had to act as interpreter, a most ungrateful task, as the planter soon began to insult the Resident, and I had to translate his remarks and the Resident's answers. At last, funny as the whole affair was in a way, it became very tiresome; happily, matters came to a sudden close by the planter's falling under the

table. He was then taken ashore by his native wife and the police-boys, who enjoyed this duty immensely. We smoked a quiet pipe, looked after the fish-hooks—empty, of course—and slept on deck in the cool night air. Next morning the planter came aboard somewhat sobered and more tractable. He brought with him his wife, and their child whom he wished to adopt. As the native women do not as a rule stay with their masters very long, the children are registered under the formula: "Child of N. N., mother unknown," an expression which sounds somewhat queer to those who do not know the reason for it.

After having finished this business, we weighed anchor and set sail for Tongoa. This is one of the few islands whose native population does not decrease. The Presbyterian missionary there gives the entire credit for this pleasant fact to his exertions, as the natives are all converted. But as in other completely Christianized districts the natives die out rapidly, it is doubtful whether Christianity alone has had this beneficial effect, and we must seek other causes, though they are hard to find.

After a clear night we sailed along the coast of Epi. The bright weather had changed to a dull, rainy day, and the aspect of the landscape was entirely altered. The smiling islands had become sober, lonely, even threatening. When the charm of a country consists so entirely in its colouring, any modification of the atmosphere and light cause such a change in its character that the same view may look either

like Paradise or entirely dull and inhospitable. What had been thus far a pleasure trip, a holiday excursion, turned suddenly into a business journey, and this change in our mood was increased by a slight illness which had attacked the Resident, making the jovial gentleman morose and irritable.

The stay in Epi was rather uninteresting. Owing to the dense French colonization there the natives have nearly all disappeared or become quite degenerate. We spent our time in visits to the different French planters and then sailed for Malekula, anchoring in Port Sandwich.

Port Sandwich is a long, narrow bay in the south of Malekula, and after Port Vila the most frequented harbour of the group, as it is very centrally located and absolutely safe. Many a vessel has found protection there from storm or cyclone. The entrance to the bay is narrow, and at the anchorage we were so completely landlocked that we might have imagined ourselves on an inland lake, so quiet is the water, surrounded on all sides by the dark green forest which falls in heavy waves down from the hills to the silent, gloomy sea.

Immediately after our arrival my companions went pigeon-shooting as usual; but I soon preferred to join the son of the French planter at Port Sandwich in a visit to the neighbouring native village. This was my first sight of the real, genuine aborigines.

No one with any taste for nature will fail to feel the solemnity of the moment when he stands face to face for the first time with primitive man. As the

A DANCING-TABLE ON DANCING-GROUND NEAR FORT SANDWICH, MADE OF CORAL PLATES.

traveller enters the depths of the virgin forest for the first time with sacred awe, he feels that he stands before a still higher revelation of nature when the first dark, naked man suddenly appears. Silently he has crept through the thicket, has parted the branches, and confronts us unexpectedly on a narrow path, shy and silent, while we are struck with surprise. His figure is but slightly relieved against the green of the bushes; he seems part of the silent, luxuriant world around him, a being strange to us, a part of those realms which we are used to imagine as void of feeling and incapable of thought. But a word breaks the spell, intelligence gleams in his face, and what, so far, has seemed a strange being, belonging rather to the lower animals than to human-kind, shows himself a man, and becomes equal to ourselves. Thus the endless, inhospitable jungle, without open spaces or streets, without prairies and sun, that dense tangle of lianas and tree-trunks, shelters men like ourselves. It seems marvellous to think that in those depths, dull, dark and silent as the fathomless ocean, men can live, and we can hardly blame former generations for denying all kinship with these savages and counting them as animals; especially as the native never seems more primitive than when he is roaming the forest, naked but for a bark belt, with a big curly wig and waving plumes, bow and arrow his only weapons. When alarmed, he hides in the foliage, and once swallowed up in the green depths which are his home and his protection, neither eye nor ear can find any trace of him.

But our ideas change when we enter his village home, with its dancing-grounds with the big drums, the sacred stone tables, idols and carved tree-trunks, all in a frame of violently coloured bushes—red, purple, brown and orange. Above us, across a blue sky, a tree with scarlet flowers blows in the breeze, and long stamens fall slowly down and cover the ground with a brilliant carpet. Dogs bark, roosters crow and from a hut a man creeps out—others emerge from the bush and from half-hidden houses which at first we had not noticed. At some distance stand the women and children in timid amazement, and then begins a chattering, or maybe a whispered consultation about the arrival of the stranger. We are in the midst of human life, in a busy little town, where the sun pours through the gaps in the dark forest, and flowers give colour and brightness, and where, after all, life is not so very much less human than in civilization.

Then the forest has lifted its veil, we have entered the sanctuary, and the alarming sensation of nature's hostility is softened. We white men like to talk about our mastery over nature, but is it not rather true that we flee from nature, as its most intense manifestations are oppressive to us? Is not the savage, living so very close to nature, more its master, or at least its friend, than we are? We need space and the sight of sun and sky to feel happy; the night of the forest, the loneliness of the ocean are terrible to us, whilst to the native they are his home and his element.

It is evident that under our first strong impression

of the native's life we overlook much—the filth, the sores, the brutality of social life; but these are really only ripples on an otherwise smooth existence, defects which are not less present in our civilization, but are better concealed.

The next day we followed the coast of Malekula southward. There are immense coral reefs attached to the coast, so that often the line of breakers is one or two miles away from the shore. These reefs are a solid mass of cleft coral stones constantly growing seaward. Their surface is more or less flat, about on a level with the water at low tide, so that it then lies nearly dry, and one can walk on the reefs, jumping over the wide crevices in which the sea roars and gurgles with the rise and fall of the breakers outside. These ever-growing reefs would surround the whole coast were it not for the fresh water that oozes out from the land and prevents the coral from growing at certain points, thus keeping open narrow passages through the reef, or wider stretches along the coast free from rocks. These basins form good anchorages for small craft, as the swell of the open sea cannot cross the reef; only the entrances are often crooked and hard to find.

Our captain brought us safely into a quiet lagoon, where the yacht lay in deep green water, smooth as glass, while beyond the reef the breakers dashed a silver line across the blue ocean.

Of course we immediately went shooting on the reef. I did not have much sport, as I could see nothing worth shooting, but I was much interested in

wading in the warm water to observe the multiform animal life of the reef. There was the "bêche-de-mer," the sea-cucumber, yellow or purplish-black, a shapeless mass lying in pools; this is a delicacy highly valued by the Chinese and therefore a frequent article of exportation. The animals are collected, cut open, dried and shipped. There was the ugly muræna, which goes splashing and winding like a snake between boulders, and threatens the intruder with poisonous looks and snapping jaws. Innumerable bright-coloured fish shot hither and thither in the flat pools, there were worms, sea-stars, octopus, crabs. The wealth of animal life on the reef, where each footstep stirs up a hundred creatures, is incredible, and ever so many more are hidden in the rocks and crevices.

The plants that had taken root in the coral were mostly mangrove bushes with great forked roots.

# CHAPTER III

## THE SEGOND CHANNEL—LIFE ON A PLANTATION

When the tide rose, we returned to the yacht and continued our cruise northward, passed the small islands of Rano, Atchin, Vao and others, crossed the treacherous Bougainville Strait between Malekula and Santo, and came to anchor in the Canal du Segond formed by Santo and Malo. This channel is about eight miles long and three-quarters of a mile wide at its narrowest point. On its shores, which belong to a French company, is a colony of about a hundred and fifty Frenchmen. The Segond Channel would be a good harbour but for very strong currents caused by the tides, which are unfavourable to small boats; its location, too, is not very central. The shores are flat, but rise abruptly at some points to a height of 150 m. There are level lands at the mouth of the Sarrakatta River and on the tablelands.

The Sarrakatta is one of the sights of the New Hebrides, and a pull up the narrow stream affords one of the most impressive views to be had of tropical vegetation. The river cuts straight through the forest, so that the boat moves between two high walls of leafy green. Silently glides the stream, silently broods the forest, only the boat swishes softly, and

sometimes a frightened fish splashes up. Every bend we round shows us new and surprisingly charming views: now we pass a giant tree, which towers up king-like on its iron-hard trunk far above the rest of the forest, trunk and limbs covered with a fine lace-work of tender-leaved lianas; now we sweep along a high bank, under a bower of overhanging branches. The water caresses the tips of the twigs, and through the leaves the sun pours golden into the cool darkness. Again we glide into the light, and tangled shrubbery seams the river bank, from which long green strands of vines trail down and curl in the water like snakes. Knobby roots rise out of the ground; they have caught floating trunks, across which the water pours, lifting and dropping the wet grasses that grow on the rotten stems. Farther up the bushes are entirely covered with vines and creepers, whose large, thick leaves form a scaly coat of mail under which the half-strangled trees seem to fight in vain for air and freedom. In shallow places stiff bamboos sprout, their long yellow leaves trembling nervously in an imperceptible breeze; again we see trees hung with creepers as if wearing torn flags; and once in a while we catch sight of that most charming of tropical trees, the tree-fern, with its lovely star-shaped crown, like a beautiful, dainty work of art in the midst of the uncultivated wilderness. As if in a dream we row back down stream, and like dream-pictures all the various green shapes of the forest sweep by and disappear.

The Resident introduced me to the French

planters, Mr. and Mrs. Ch., and asked them to take me in, which they agreed to do. Having rented an old plantation from the French company, they had had the good fortune to find a regular frame house ready for them.

After I had moved into my quarters the Resident returned to Vila, and I remained on the borders of the wilderness. What followed now was a most unsatisfactory time of waiting, the first of many similar periods. Having no servants, I could undertake nothing independently, and since the planters were all suffering from lack of hands, I could not hire any boys. As the natives around the French plantations at the Canal du Segond are practically exterminated, I saw hardly any; but at least I got a good insight into the life on a plantation, such as it was.

With his land, Mr. Ch. had rented about thirty boys, with whom he was trying to work the completely decayed plantation. Many acres were covered with coffee trees, but owing to the miserable management of the French company, the planters had changed continually and the system of planting just as often. Every manager had abandoned the work of his predecessor and begun planting anew on a different system, so that now there was an immense tract of land planted which had never yet yielded a crop. In a short time such intended plantations are overgrown with bush and reconquered by the wilderness; thus thousands of coffee trees were covered with vines and struggled in vain for light and air. It may seem incredible that in two weeks, on cleared

ground, grass can grow up as tall as a man, and that after six months a cleared plantation can be covered with bushes and shrubs with stems as thick as one's finger. The planter, knowing that this overwhelming fertility and the jealous advances of the forest are his most formidable enemies, directs his most strenuous efforts to keeping clear his plantation, especially while the plants are young and unable to fight down the weeds. Later on, weeding is less urgent, but in the beginning it is the one essential duty, more so than planting. Mr. Ch. had therefore an enormous task before him, and as he could not expect any return from the coffee trees for two or three years, he did as all planters do, and sowed corn, which yields a crop after three months.

His labourers, dark, curly-haired men, clad in rags, were just then occupied in gathering the big ears of corn. Sluggishly they threw the golden ears over their shoulders to the ground, where it was collected by the women and carried to the shed on the beach—a long roof of leaves, without walls. Mr. Ch. urged the men to hurry, as the corn had to be ready for shipment in a few days, the *Pacific*, the French mail-steamer, being due. Produce deteriorates rapidly in the islands owing to the humid climate, so it cannot be stored long, especially where there is no dry storehouse. Therefore, crops can only be gathered just before the arrival of a steamer, making these last days very busy ones everywhere. It is fortunate for the planters that the native labourers are not yet organized and do not insist on an eight-hour

day. As it was, Mr. Ch. had to leave more than half his crop to rot in the fields, a heavy rain having delayed the harvesting.

The humidity at the Segond Channel is exceptionally great. As we stood on the fine coral sand that forms the shores of the channel, our clothes were damp with the rain from the weeds and shrubs which we had passed through while stumbling through the plantation. The steel-grey sea quivers, sleepy and pulpy looking; in front of us, in a grey mist, lies the flat island of Aore, the air smells mouldy, and brown rain-clouds roll over the wall of primeval forest surrounding the clearing on three sides. The atmosphere is heavy, and a fine spray floats in the air and covers everything with moisture. Knives rust in one's pocket, matches refuse to light, tobacco is like a sponge and paper like a rag. It had been like this for three months; no wonder malarial fever raged among the white population. Mr. Ch., after only one year's sojourn here, looked like a very sick man; he was frightfully thin and pale and very nervous; so was his wife, a delicate lady of good French family. She did the hard work of a planter's wife with admirable courage, and, while she had never taken an active part in housekeeping in France, here she was standing all day long behind a smoky kitchen fire, cooking or washing dishes, assisted only by a very incapable and unsophisticated native woman.

On our return to the house, which lies about 200 mètres inland, we found this black lady occupied with the extremely hard and puzzling task of laying the

table. It seemed to give her the greatest trouble, and the deep distrust with which she handled the plates found eloquent expression in queer sighs and mysterious exclamations in her native tongue, in resigned shakes of the head and emphatic smacking of the lips. She was a crooked bush-woman from the north of Malekula, where the people, especially the women, are unusually ugly and savage. A low forehead, small, deep-set eyes, and a snout-like mouth gave her a very animal look; yet she showed human feeling, and nursed a shrieking and howling orphan all day long with the most tender care. Her little head was shaved and two upper teeth broken out as a sign of matrimony, so she certainly was no beauty; but the sight of her clumsy working was a constant source of amusement to us men, very much less so to her mistress, to whom nothing but her sincere zeal and desire to help could make up for her utter inefficiency.

It cannot be denied that the women from those islands, where their social standing is especially low, are not half so intelligent and teachable as those from places where they are more nearly equal to the men; probably because they are subdued and kept in degradation from early youth, and not allowed any initiative or opinions of their own. But physically these women are very efficient and quite equal to the men in field work, or even superior, being more industrious.

The feat of setting the table was accomplished in about an hour, and we sat down to our simple

OLD MAN WITH YOUNG WIFE ON AMBRYN.

meal—tinned meat, yams and bananas. Then the foreman came in. Only a short time ago he was one of the finest warriors in the interior of Malekula, where cannibalism is still an everyday occurrence. He, too, wears his hair short, only, according to the present fashion, he lets the hair on his forehead grow in a roll-shaped bow across the head. He is well built, though rather short, and behaves with natural politeness. His voice is soft, his look gentle and in the doorway his dark figure shines in the lamplight like a bronze statue.

Mr. Ch. tells him that the boys will have to work all night, at the same time promising an encouragement in the shape of a glass of wine to each. The natives' craving for alcohol is often abused by unscrupulous whites. Although the sale of liquor to natives is strictly forbidden by the laws of the Condominium, the French authorities do not even seem to try to enforce this regulation, in fact, they rather impressed me as favouring the sale, thus protecting the interests of a degraded class of whites, to the detriment of a valuable race. As a consequence, there are not a few Frenchmen who make their living by selling spirits to natives, which may be called, without exaggeration, a murderous and criminal traffic.

Others profit indirectly by the alcoholism of the islanders by selling liquor to their hands every Saturday, so as to make them run into debt; they will all spend their entire wages on drink. If, their term of engagement being over, they want to return to their homes, they are told that they are still deep

in debt to their master, and that they will have to pay off by working for some time longer. The poor fellows stay on and on, continue to drink, are never out of debt, and never see their homes again. This practice has developed of late years in consequence of the scarcity of labour, and is nothing but slavery. It might easily be abolished by a slight effort on the part of the Government, but there is hardly any supervision over French plantations outside Port Vila, and in many plantations conditions exist which are an insult to our modern views on humane treatment. On English plantations there is but little brutality, owing to the Government's careful supervision of the planters and the higher social and moral standing of the settlers in general.

My host had some European conscience left, and treated his hands very humanely, but I dare say that in course of time, and pressed by adverse circumstances, even he resorted to means of finding cheap labour which were none too fair. The French by-laws permit the delivery of alcohol to natives in the shape of "medicine," a stipulation which opens the door to every abuse.

The boys were soon on hand, each awaiting his turn eagerly, yet trying to seem *blasé*. Some drank greedily, others tasted the sour wine in little sips like old experts; but all took care to turn their backs to us while drinking, as if from bashfulness. Then they went to work, giggling and happy.

Meanwhile, those on the sick-list were coming up for the planter's inspection. The diseases are mostly

tuberculosis, colds, indigestion, fever and infections, and it is evident that if they receive any medical treatment at all, it is of a primitive and insufficient description. The planters work with fearfully strong plasters, patent medicines and "universal remedies," used internally and externally by turns, so that the patient howls and the spectator shudders, and the results would be most disheartening if kind Nature did not often do the healing in spite of man's efforts to prevent it. Naturally, every planter thinks himself an expert doctor, and is perfectly satisfied with his results.

Mr. Ch. was ill with fever, nevertheless we went down to the work-shed. It was a pitch-dark night, the air was like that in a hothouse, smelling of earth and mould. The surf boomed sullenly on the beach, and heavy squalls flogged the forest. Sometimes a rotten branch snapped, and the sound travelled, dull and heavy, through the night.

From far away we hear the noise of the engine peeling the corn-ears. Two of the natives turn the fly-wheels, and the engine gives them immense pleasure, all the more, the faster it runs. The partners are selected with care, and it is a matter of pride to turn wheels as long and as fast as possible; they encourage each other with wild shrieks and cries. It seemed as if the work had turned to a festival, as if it were a sort of dance, and the couples waited impatiently for their turn to drive the engine. The delight of the boys in the noise of the machinery was very favourable to the progress of the work, and

at midnight a long row of full sacks stood in the shed. We stopped the work and told the boys to go to sleep. But the demon of dancing had taken hold of them, and they kept it up all night, and then went straight to work in the fields when the sun rose. By the third evening everything was ready for the arrival of the *Pacific*, and the boys were deadly tired and lame.

We were just sitting down to dinner one dull, heavy night, when we heard a steamer's long, rough whistle. The *Pacific*. Everyone jumps up in excitement, for the *Pacific* brings a taste of civilization, and her arrival marks the end of a busy week and breaks the monotony of daily life. We run to the shore and light strong lamps at fixed points, to indicate the anchorage, and then we rush back to finish dinner and put on clean clothes. Meanwhile, the boys have been roused, and they arrive, sleepy, stiff and unwilling, aware that a hard night's work is before them, loading the produce into the tenders.

The steamer approaches quickly, enormous and gay in the darkness, then she slowly feels her way into the harbour, the anchor falls, and after a few oscillations the long line of brightly lit portholes lies quiet on the water, only their reflection flickers irregularly on the waves through the night. In all directions we can see the lights of the approaching boats of the planters, who come to announce their shipments and to spend a gay evening on board. There are always some passengers on the steamer, planters from other islands on their way to Vila or

Sydney, and soon carousing is in full swing, until the bar closes.

All next day the steamer stays in the channel, taking on produce from every plantation, and for two days afterward merrymaking is kept up, then the quiet monotony of a tropical planter's life sets in once more.

Sometimes a diversion is caused by a boy rushing up to the house to announce that some "men-bush" are approaching. Going to the veranda, we see some lean figures with big mops of hair coming slowly down the narrow path from the forest, with soft, light steps. Some distance behind follows a crowd of others, who squat down near the last shrubs and examine everything with shy, suspicious eyes, while the leaders approach the house. Nearly all carry old Snider rifles, always loaded and cocked. The leaders stand silent for a while near the veranda, then one of them whispers a few words in broken "biche la mar," describing what he wants to buy—knives, cartridges, powder, tobacco, pipes, matches, calico, beads. "All right," says Mr. Ch., and some of the men bring up primitive baskets of cocoa-nut leaves, filled with coprah or bunches of raw cocoa-nuts. All of them, especially the women, have carried great loads of these things from their villages in the interior on the poorest paths, marching for days.

The baskets are weighed and the desired goods handed to the head-man. Here the whites make a profit of 200–300 per cent., while on the other islands,

where there is more competition, they have to be satisfied with 30 per cent. Each piece is carefully examined by the natives: the pipes, to see if they draw, the matches, whether they strike, etc., while the crowd behind follows every movement with the greatest attention and mysterious whispers, constantly on the watch for any menace to safety. The lengthy bargaining over, the delegation turns away and the whole crowd disappears. In the nearest thicket they sit down and distribute the goods—perhaps a dozen boxes of matches, a few belts, or some yards of calico, two pounds of tobacco, and twenty pipes, a poor return, indeed, for their long journey. Possibly they will spend the night in the neighbourhood, under an overhanging rock, on the bare stone, all crowded round a fire for fear of the spirits of the night.

Sometimes, having worked for another planter, they have a little money. Although every planter keeps his own store, the natives, as a rule, prefer to buy from his neighbour, from vague if not quite unjustified suspicion. They rarely engage for any length of time, except when driven by the desire to buy some valuable object, generally a rifle, without which no native likes to be seen in Santo to-day. In that case several men work together for one, who afterwards indemnifies them for their help in native fashion by giving them pigs or rendering them other services. On the plantations they are suspicious and lazy, but quite harmless as long as they are not provoked. Mr. Ch. had had about thirty men

FRONT OF A CHIEF'S HOUSE ON VENUA LAVA.

working on his plantation for quite some time, and everything had gone well, until one day one of them had fallen into the Sarrakatta and been drowned. According to native law, Mr. Ch. was responsible for his death, and should have paid for him, which he omitted to do. At first there was general dismay, no one dared approach the river any more; then the natives all returned to their villages, and a few days later they swarmed round the plantation with rifles to avenge their dead relative by murdering Mr. Ch. He was warned by his boys, who were from Malekula for the most part, and this saved his life. He armed his men, and after a siege of several weeks the bushmen gave up the watch and retired. But no one would return to work for him any more.

Altogether, the bushmen of Santo are none too reliable, and only the memory of a successful landing expedition of the English man-of-war a year ago keeps them quiet. On that occasion they had murdered an old Englishman and two of his daughters, just out of greed, so as to pillage his store. They had not found much, but they had to pay for the murder with the loss of their village, pigs and lives.

I tried to find boys at the south-west corner of Santo, where the natives frequently descend to the shore. A neighbour of Mr. Ch., a young Frenchman, was going there in a small cutter to buy wood for dyeing mats to sell to the natives of Malekula, and he kindly took me with him. We sailed through the channel one rainy morning, but the wind died

down and we had to anchor, as the current threatened to take us back. We profited by the stop to pay a visit to a Mr. R., who cultivated anarchistic principles, also a plantation which seemed in perfect condition and in direct opposition to his anti-capitalistic ideas. Mr. R. was one of those French colonists who, sprung from the poorest peasant stock, have no ambitions beyond finding a new and kindlier home. Economical, thrifty, used to hard work in the fields, Mr. R. had begun very modestly, but had prospered, and was now, while still a young man, the owner of a plantation that would make him rich in a few years. This good, solid peasant stock, of which France possesses so much, makes the best colonists, and as a rule they succeed far better than those who come to the tropics with the idea of making a fortune in a few years without working for it. These fall into the hands of the big Nouméa companies, and have the greatest trouble in getting out of debt. Not only do these firms lend money at exorbitant interest, but they stipulate that the planter will sell them all his produce and buy whatever he needs from them, and as they fix prices as they please, their returns are said to reach 30 per cent.

Besides these two kinds of French settlers, there is a third, which comes from the penitentiary in Nouméa or its neighbourhood. We shall meet specimens of these in the following pages.

After having duly admired the plantation of Mr. R.—he proved himself a real peasant, knew every plant by name, and was constantly stopping to pick

a dead leaf or prune a shoot—we continued our journey and arrived at Tangoa. Tangoa is a small island, on which the Presbyterian mission has established a central school for the more intelligent of the natives of the whole group, where they may be trained as teachers. The exterior of this school looks most comfortable. One half of the island is cleared and covered with a green lawn, one part is pasture for good-looking cattle, the other is a park in which nestle the cottages of the teachers,—the whole looks like an English country-seat. At some distance is a neatly built, well-kept village for the native pupils. I presented an introduction to the director. He seemed to think my endeavours extremely funny, asked if I was looking for the missing link, etc., so that I took a speedy leave.

We spent a few lazy days on board the little cutter; the natives would not come down from their villages, in spite of frequent explosions of dynamite cartridges, the usual signal of recruiters to announce their arrival to the natives. It rained a good deal, and there was not much to do but to loaf on the beach. Here, one day, I saw an interesting method of fishing by poisoning the water, which is practised in many places. At low tide the natives rub a certain fruit on the stones of the reef, the juice mixes with the water in the pools and poisons the fish, so that after a short while they float senseless on the surface and may easily be caught.

After a few days I was anxious to return to the Segond Channel, as I expected the arrival of the

English steamer, which I wanted to meet. I could not find any guide, and the cutter was to stay for some days longer, so I decided to go alone; the distance was only about 15 km., and I thought that with the aid of my compass I would find my way along the trail which was said to exist.

I started in the morning with a few provisions and a dull bush-knife, at first along a fairly good path, which, however, soon divided into several tracks. I followed the one which seemed most likely to lead to my destination, but arrived at a deep lagoon, around which I had to make a long detour. Here the path came to a sudden stop in front of an impenetrable thicket of lianas which I could hardly cut with my knife. I climbed across fallen trunks, crawled along the ground beneath the creepers, struck an open spot once in a while, passed swamps and rocks,—in short, in a very little time I made an intimate acquaintance with the renowned Santo bush. Yet I imagined I was advancing nicely, so much so that I began to fear I had gone beyond my destination. About four o'clock in the afternoon I struck a small river and followed its crooked course to the coast, so as to get my bearings. Great was my disappointment on finding myself only about 1½ km. from the lagoon which I had left in the morning. This was a poor reward for eight hours' hard work. I was ashamed to return to the cutter, and followed the shore, not wishing to repeat that morning's experience in the forest. The walk along the beach was not agreeable at all, as it consisted of

those corroded coral rocks, full of sharp points and edges, and shaped like melted tin poured into water. These rocks were very jagged, full of crevices, in which the swell thundered and foamed, and over which I had to jump. Once I fell in, cut my legs and hands most cruelly and had only my luck to thank that I did not break any bones, and got safely out of the damp, dark prison. But at least I could see where I was, and that I was getting on, and I preferred this to the uncertain struggle in the forest. In some places the coast rose to a high bank, round which I could not walk. I had to climb up on one side as best I could and descend on the other with the help of trees and vines. Thus, fighting my way along, I was overtaken by the sudden tropical night, and I had to stop where I was for fear of falling into some hole. A fall would have been a real calamity, as nobody would ever have found me or even looked for me on that lonely coast. I therefore sat down where I was, on the corals where they seemed least pointed. I did not succeed at all in making a fire; the night was quite dark and moonless, and a fine rain penetrated everything. I have rarely passed a longer night or felt so lonely. The new day revived my spirits, breakfast did not detain me long, as I had nothing to eat, so I kept along the shore, jumping and climbing, and had to swim through several lagoons, swarming, as I heard afterwards, with big sharks! After a while the coral shore changed into a sand beach, and after having waded for some hours more in the warm water with the little rags that were

left of my boots, I arrived dead tired at the plantation of Mr. R. He was away, so I went to his neighbour's, who was at dinner and kindly asked me to join him. Although it was only a flying-fox, I enjoyed it as a man enjoys a meal after a twenty-four hours' fast.

The men were just starting for Mr. Ch.'s, and took me with them. My adventure had taught me the impassableness of the forest, and after that experience I was never again tempted to make excursions without a guide.

# CHAPTER IV

## RECRUITING FOR NATIVES

A FEW days later the English steamer came, bringing my luggage but no hope of improvement in my dull existence. A French survey party arrived too, and set to work, but as they had not enough boys with them, I could not join them. I spent my days as well as I could, collected a few zoological specimens, and read Mr. Ch.'s large stock of French novels until I felt quite silly.

At last an occasion offered to see primitive natives. George, the son of a neighbour, had agreed to go recruiting for Mr. Ch. As I have said before, providing sufficient labour is one of the most important problems to the planter in the New Hebrides. Formerly there were professional recruiters who went slave-hunting as they would have followed any other occupation, and sold the natives to the planters at a fair profit. In their schooners they hung about the shore, filled the natives with liquor and kidnapped them, or simply drove them on board wholesale, with the help of armed Loyalty boys. Their methods were as various as they were cruel, murder was a daily occurrence, and, of course, the recruiters were hated by the natives, who attacked and killed them whenever they got a chance. The

better class of planters would not countenance this mode of procedure, and the natives are now experienced enough not to enlist for work under a master they do not know. Also the English Government keeps a strict watch on the recruiting, so that the professional recruiter is dying out, and every planter has to go in search of hands for himself. But while the English Government keeps a sharp eye on these matters, the French Government is as lenient in this as in the question of the sale of alcohol, so that frequent kidnapping and many cruelties occur in the northern part of the group, and slavery still exists. I shall relate a few recruiting stories later on: some general remarks on the subject may not be amiss here.

In years past the natives crowded the recruiting schooners by hundreds, driven by the greed for European luxuries, by desire for change, and inexperience; to-day this is the case in but very few and savage districts. Generally the natives have some idea of what they may expect; moreover, by trading with coprah they can buy all they need and want. They enlist nowadays from quite different motives. With young people it is the desire to travel and to "see the world," and to escape the strict village laws that govern them, especially in sexual matters, and to get rid of the supervision of the whole tribe. Sometimes, but only in islands poor in cocoanut trees, it is the desire to earn money to buy a woman, a very expensive article at present. Then many seek refuge in the plantations from persecution

MAN FROM NITENDI, STA CRUZ, WITH ORNAMENTAL BREASTPLATE.

of all sorts, from revenge, or punishment for some misdeed at home. Some are lovers who have run away from their tribe to escape the rage of an injured husband. Thus recruiting directly favours the general anarchy and immorality, and indirectly as well, since the recruiters do their best to create as much trouble as possible in the villages, knowing it will be to their advantage. If they hear of a feud raging between two tribes, they collect at the shore and try to pick up fugitives ; if there is no war, they do their best to occasion one, by intrigue, alcohol, or *agents provocateurs*. They intoxicate men and women, and make them enlist in that condition ; young men are shown pretty women, and promised all the joys of Paradise in the plantations. If these tricks fail, the recruiters simply kidnap men and women while bathing. This may suffice to show that, as a rule, they do not use fair means to find hands, and it is hardly surprising that where they have been they leave behind them wrecked families, unhappiness, enmity, murder and a deep hatred of the white man in general as the cause of all this misery. This recruiting is not only immoral in the highest degree, but also very harmful to the race, and it is to-day one of the principal reasons for its decay.

Those planters who from principle or from fear of the law do not resort to such means generally have a special recruiting district, where they are well known, and where the natives know the treatment they are likely to get on the plantation, and feel sure they will not be cheated, and will be taken back

to their homes in due time. These planters, I am happy to say, find hands enough, as a rule, while the natives take care not to go to a French plantation if they can help it. The system of recruiting is very simple. The cutter anchors at some distance off-shore, and a dynamite cartridge is exploded to announce her arrival; some time afterwards one of the whale-boats goes ashore, all the crew armed to the teeth, while the other boat lies a short distance off, to watch the natives, and to cover the retreat of those in the first boat in case of attack. The planter, as a rule, stays on board his cutter. These warlike practices are really unnecessary in many places, but as one never knows what indiscretions the last recruiter may have committed, and as the natives consider all whites as belonging to one organization, it is the part of prudence to follow this old recruiting rule.

I will not pretend to say that the natives will never attack without provocation. Even Cook, who certainly was both careful and just, was treacherously attacked in Erromanga, for the Melanesian is blood-thirsty, especially when he thinks himself the stronger. But to-day it may be stated as a certainty that no attack on a recruiting-ship or on any white man occurs without some past brutality on the part of a European to account for it. As one of the Governments does nothing to abolish kidnapping, and as the plantations go to ruin for want of labour, it would be to the interest both of the settlers and of the natives to abolish the present recruiting system

entirely, and to introduce a conscription for work in its place, so that each male would have to work for a term of years on a plantation for adequate wages and good treatment. This would be of advantage to the islanders even more than to the planters. It would create order, and would employ the natives in useful work for the development of their own country.

It will appear from all this that recruiting is still a somewhat dangerous undertaking, especially on the north-west coast of Malekula, the home of the most primitive and savage tribes of all the group.

George, our captain, was a strange fellow, about seventeen years of age : he might just as well have been forty. Pale, with small grey eyes and a suspicious look, a long hooked nose, and narrow, yet hanging lips, he walked with bent back and crooked knees, always bare-footed, in blue dungaree trousers, green shirt and an old weather-beaten hat. He hardly ever spoke ; when he did, it was very suddenly, very fast and very low, so that no one could understand him except his boys, who evidently knew instinctively what he meant. The natives are very clever in these matters. He was brave, an excellent sailor for his age, and he knew the channels and all the anchorages. His boat may have been 6 or 7 mètres long and 3 mètres wide ; she was cutter-rigged, and was probably very suitable for a trip of a few days, but quite insufficient for a cruise of several weeks, such as we were planning. The deck was full of cases of provisions, so that only a little space was clear for us at the stern. The

cabin was about 2 mètres long, 1½ mètre wide, and 1½ mètre high, and was crammed with stuff —tinned meats, cloths, guns, trading goods, etc. One person could wriggle in it, crawling on hands and knees, but two had to wind round each other in impossible positions, and it was quite unthinkable that both should spend the night below. But with the happy carelessness and impatience of a long-delayed start, we did not think of the hardships of the future, and in fair weather, when the stay on deck in the brisk breeze was extremely pleasant, as on that first morning, existence on board seemed very bearable; but when it rained, and it rained very often and very hard, it was exceptionally disagreeable.

Mr. George took no interest in such details. Although he could have improved matters without much trouble, he was too lazy to take the trouble. The sun- and rain-sail was fixed so low that one could not stand upright, and anyone who has experienced this for some time knows how irritating it is. For food George did not seem to care at all. Not only did he lack the sense of taste, but he seemed to have an unhuman stomach, for he ate everything, at any time, and in any condition; raw or cooked, digestible or not, he swallowed it silently and greedily, and thought it quite unnecessary when I wanted the boys to cook some rice for me, or to wash a plate. The tea was generally made with brackish water which was perfectly sickening. George had always just eaten when I announced that dinner was ready, and

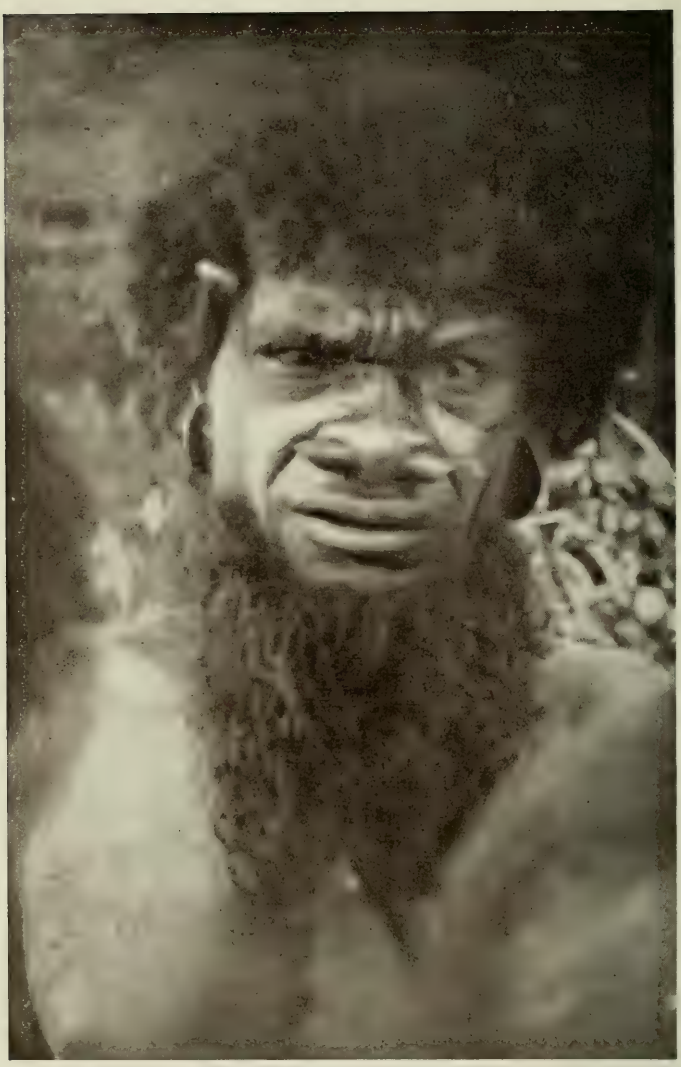
for answer he generally wrapped himself in his blankets and fell asleep. The consequence was that each of us lived his own life, and the companionship which might have made up for many insufficiencies on board was lacking entirely.

It was the first sunny day after many rainy ones when the current carried us through the channel. When we got on too slowly the oars had to help. After several hours we arrived in the open, and a fresh breeze carried us quickly alongside the small islands of Aore, Tutuba and Malo. Blue, white-crested waves lifted us up so high that we could look far over the foaming sea, and again we sank down in a valley, out of which we could only see the nearest waves rolling threateningly towards us. Behind us the little dinghy shot down the swells, gliding on the water like a duck. In the late afternoon we approached the north point of Malekula, and followed the west coast southward, towards the country of the "Big Nambas"—our destination. Contrasting with other islands of the archipelago, Malekula does not seem densely covered with vegetation at this point. We do not see much of the impenetrable bush, but rather a scanty growth of grass on the coral reefs, a few shrubs and she-oaks, then a narrow belt of forest covering the steep cliffs and sides of the hills, on whose backs we find extensive areas covered with reed-grass. Even a luxuriant forest does not look gay on a dull day, and this barren landscape looked most inhospitable in the grey mist of the afternoon. We slowly followed a coast of ragged coral patches,

alternating with light sand beaches. Towards nightfall we anchored near a stony shore, flanked by two high cliffs, in about 10 fathoms of the most transparent water. We could see in the depths the irregular shapes of the rocks, separated by white sand, and the soft mysterious colours in which the living coral shines like a giant carpet. The sea was quiet as a pond, yet we were on the shores of that endless ocean that reaches westward to the Torres Straits.

Torn clouds floated across the hills towards the north-west, the stars shone dull, and it was very lonely and oppressively silent, nowhere was there a trace of life, human or animal. Lying on deck, I listened to the sound of the surf breaking in the different little bays near and far, in a monotonous measure, soft and yet irresistible. It is the voice of the sea in its cleansing process, the continual grinding and casting out of all impurities, the eternal war against the land and its products, and the final destruction of the earth itself.

The district of the Big Nambas, to whose shores we had come, takes its name from the size of a certain article of dress, the "Nambas," which partly replaces our trousers, and is worn in different forms over the greater part of the archipelago, but nowhere of such size as here. It is such an odd object that it may well give its name to the country. Big Nambas is still the least known part of the islands, and hardly any white has ever set foot in the interior. Unlike those of other districts, the natives here have preserved their old habits and strict organization, and this



A CANNIBAL FROM BIG NAMBAS, WITH NOSE-STICK.

is evidently the reason why they have not degenerated and decayed. The old chiefs are still as powerful as ever, and preserve peace and order, while they themselves do as they please. Big Nambas has had but little contact with the whites, especially the recruiters, so that the population is not demoralized, nor the chief's power undermined. Of course it is to the chief's interest to have as strong a tribe as possible, and they reserve to themselves the right of killing offenders, and take all revenge in their own hands. They watch the women and prevent child-murder and such things, and although their reign is one of terror, their influence, as a whole, on the race is not bad, because they suppress many vices that break out as soon as they slacken their severity. The chiefs in Big Nambas seem to have felt this, and systematically opposed the intercourse with whites. But this district is just where the best workmen come from, and the population is densest, and that is why the recruiters have tried again and again of late years to get hold of Big Nambas, but with little success, for so far only few men have enlisted. One of them was on our cutter, and had to serve as interpreter. The other four of the five boys were from Malekula, a little farther south. Our man from Big Nambas was known on the plantation as Bourbaki, and had enlisted two years ago. Before that he had been professional murderer and provider of human flesh to the great chief. Now he was a useful and quiet foreman on the plantation, always cheerful, very intelligent, strong, brutal, with small,

shrewd eyes and a big mouth, apparently quite happy in civilization, and devoted to George. He was one of the few natives who openly admitted his liking for human flesh, and rapturously described its incomparable tenderness, whiteness and delicacy. A year ago, when visiting his village, he had been inconsolable because he had come a day late for a cannibal feast, and had blamed his father bitterly for not having saved a piece for him. Aside from this ghoulish propensity, Bourbaki was a thoroughly nice fellow, obliging, reliable and as happy as a child at the prospect of seeing his father again. We expected good service and help in recruiting from him, and promised him ample head-money.

Bourbaki had run away without the permission of his chief, who was furious at the loss of his best man, and had given orders to kill the recruiter, a brother-in-law of George. Some natives had ambushed and shot at them while entering the whale-boat; the white had received several wounds, and a native woman had been killed. The boat pulled away rapidly. Bourbaki laughed, and, indeed, by this time the little incident was quite forgotten, as its only victim had been a woman.

The morning was damp and dull. The hills came down to the sea in slopes of grey-green, the shore was a soft brown, and the rocks lay in dark patches on the beach, separated from the greyish-green of the sea by the white line of the breakers. The hollow sound of the dynamite explosions glided along the slopes and was swallowed in distant space.

A few hours later, thinking the natives might be coming, we got our arms ready: each of us had a revolver and a repeating rifle, the boys had old Sniders. The cutter lay about 200 mètres off-shore, and we could see everything that was going on on the beach. Behind the flat, stony shore the forest-covered hills rose in a steep cliff to a table-land about 100 mètres high. On the water we were in perfect safety, for the villages lie far inland, and the Big Nambas are no sailors, hate the sea and possess no canoes. They only come to the beach occasionally, to get a few crabs and shell-fish, yet each tribe has its own place on the shore, where no stranger is admitted.

We took Bourbaki ashore; he was very anxious to go home, and promptly disappeared in the bush, his Snider on his shoulder. We then returned to the cutter and waited. It is quite useless to be in a hurry when recruiting, but one certainly needs a supply of patience, for the natives have no idea of the value of time, and cannot understand the rush which our civilization has created.

Late in the afternoon a few naked figures appeared on the beach. One of them signalled with a branch, and soon others followed, till about fifty men had assembled, and in the background, half-hidden by shrubs, stood half a dozen women. We entered the whale-boats, two boys and a white man in each, and slowly approached the shore. All the natives carried their rifles in their right hands and yams in their left, making signs to show that they wished to trade.

We gave them to understand that they must first put down their muskets, and when they hesitated we cocked our rifles and waited. Some of them went back to the forest and laid down their guns, while the others sat down at a distance and watched. We promptly put down our rifles, approached and showed our trade-goods—tobacco, matches, clay pipes and calico. Hesitating, suspicious, yet tempted, they crowded round the boat and offered their yams, excitedly shouting and gesticulating, talking and laughing. They had quite enormous yams, which they traded for one or two sticks of tobacco or as many pipes. Matches and calico were not much in demand. Our visitors were mostly well-built, medium-sized men of every age, and looked very savage and dangerous. They were nearly naked, but for a belt of bark around their waists, about 20 cm. wide, which they wore wound several times around their bodies, so that it stood out like a thick ring. Over this they had bound narrow ribbons of braided fibres, dyed in red patterns, the ends of the ribbons falling down in large tassels. Under this belt is stuck the end of the enormous nambas, also consisting of red grass fibres. Added to this scanty dress are small ornaments, tortoise-shell ear-rings, bamboo combs, bracelets embroidered with rings of shell and cocoa-nut, necklaces, and thin bands bound under the knees and over the ankles.

The beautiful, lithe, supple bodies support a head covered with long, curly hair, and the face is framed by a long and fairly well-kept beard. The

eyes roll unsteadily, and their dark and penetrating look is in no wise softened by the brown colouring of the scela. The nose is only slightly concave, the sides are large and thick, and their width is increased by a bamboo or stone cylinder stuck through the septum. Both nose and eyes are overhung by a thick *torus*. The upper lip is generally short and rarely covers the mouth, which is exceptionally large and wide, and displays a set of teeth of remarkable strength and perfection. The whole body is covered with a thick layer of greasy soot. Such is the appearance of the modern man-eater.

Just at first we did not feel any too comfortable or anxious to go ashore, and we watched our neighbours very carefully. They, however, were hardly less frightened and suspicious; but after a while, through the excitement of trading, they became more confident, forgot their suspicions and bargained noisily, as happy as a crowd of boys; still, any violent movement on our part startled them. For instance, several of them started to run for the woods when I hastily grabbed a pipe that a roll of the boat had set slipping off the seat.

After having filled the boats to the brim with yams, and the first eagerness of bartering over, we ventured ashore. A suspicious crowd stood around us and watched every movement. We first showed them our weapons, and a violent smacking of the lips and long-drawn whistles, or a grunting "Whau!" bespoke a gratifying degree of admiration and wonder. The longer the cartridges and the larger

the bullets, the more they impressed them, and our revolvers were glanced at with contempt and a shrug of the shoulders, expressing infinite disdain, until each of us shot a few rounds. Then they winced, started to run away, came back and laughed boisterously over their own fright; but after that they had more respect for our "little guns."

Soon they became more daring, came closer and began to feel us, first touching us lightly with the finger-tips, then with their hands. They wanted to look at and handle everything, cartridge-belts, pipes, hats and clothes. When all these had been examined, they investigated our persons, and to me, at least, not being used to this, it was most disagreeable. I did not mind when they tucked up our sleeves and trousers and compared the whiteness and softness of our skin with their own dark hide, nor when they softly and caressingly stroked the soft skin on the inner side of our arms and legs, vigorously smacking their lips the while; but when they began to feel the tenderness and probably the delicacy of our muscles, and tried to estimate our fitness for a royal repast, muttering deep grunts, constantly smacking their lips, and evidently highly satisfied with the result of their investigation, I did not enjoy the situation any more; still less when I saw an ugly-looking fellow trembling violently from greedy desire, rolling his eyes in wild exultation and performing an anticipatory cannibal dinner-dance. We gradually began to shake off this wearisomely intimate crowd; the fact that there were two of us, and that I was not alone in this situation

was very comforting. However, in the course of the next few years I became accustomed to this treatment, though I never again met it in such crudeness.

We had slowly approached the forest and could get a few glimpses of the women, who had kept quite in the background and hid still more when we came near. They had braided aprons around their waists and rolled mats on their heads. Nearly all of them carried babies on their hips, and they looked fairly healthy, although the children were full of sores. Evidently the men did not like our looking at the ladies; they pushed us back and drove the women away. We returned to the boats, and the natives retired too, howling, shrieking and laughing. Towards evening another crowd arrived, and the performance was repeated in every detail. Happy over the bartered goods, they began to dance, first decorating themselves with tall branches stuck in the back of their belts. They jumped from one foot to the other, sometimes turning round, and singing in a rough, deep monotone. We withdrew to the boats, and they dispersed on the shore, lighted fires and roasted the yams they had left.

Far away across the sea there was lightning, the surf boomed more heavily than by day, the cutter rolled more violently and restlessly and the whaleboat scraped against her sides, while the wind roared through the forest gullies and thunder threatened behind the hills. We felt lonely in the thick darkness, with the tempest approaching steadily, afloat on a tiny shell, alone against the fury of the elements.

The lamp was blown out, and we lay on deck listening to the storm, until a heavy squall drove us below, to spend the night in a stuffy atmosphere, in uncomfortable positions, amid wild dreams. Next morning there were again about twenty men on the shore, and again the same performances were gone through. Evidently the people, influenced by Bourbaki, who was still in the village, were more confident, and left their weapons behind of their own accord. They came to trade, and when their provisions of yam were exhausted, most of them left; only a few, mostly young fellows, wanted to stay, but some older men stayed with them, so as to prevent them from going on board and enlisting. Evidently the young men were attracted by all our wonderful treasures, and would have liked to see the country where all these things came from. They imagined the plantations must be very beautiful places, while the old men had vague notions to the contrary, and were afraid of losing their young braves.

During a lull in the proceedings we climbed the narrow, steep and slippery path up to the tableland in order to get an idea of the country behind the hills. Half-way up we met two old men carrying yam down to the beach. They were terrified at sight of us, began to tremble, stopped and spoke to us excitedly. We immediately laid down our rifles, and signed to them to approach, but they suddenly dropped their loads, ran off and disappeared in the bush. They evidently feared we had come to kidnap them, and we decided it was wiser to return to the beach, so

as not to irritate the people. Shortly afterwards another crowd of natives came along the beach carrying yam. They approached with extreme care, ready to fight or fly, but they were less afraid of us than of the natives, for whom that part of the beach was reserved, and with whom we had been trading. They were enemies of the newcomers, who knew that they were outside their own territory and might expect an attack any moment. Squatting down near us, they anxiously watched the forest, ever ready to jump up. One of them, who spoke a little biche la mar, came up to me and asked me to anchor that night near their beach, and buy yams from them, which we promised to do. At a sound in the forest they jumped up and ran away. George, wishing to talk more with them, took his rifle and ran after them, but they had already retreated behind some boulders, and were waving their rifles and signalling him to stay where he was. They thought we were in a plot with other natives, and had ambushed them. To such a degree do these people live in constant fear, and thus arise misunderstandings which end in death, unless the whites are very prudent and quiet. Many a recruiter in our case would have welcomed this apparent provocation to shoot at the natives from a safe distance with his superior rifle.

All day it rained in heavy squalls, coming from over the hills; everything was damp, the night was dark and still and we sighed in our narrow cell of a cabin. Next morning Bourbaki came back with a new crowd of natives, who again felt and investigated,

happily, also, admired us. So vain is human-kind that even the admiration of cannibals is agreeable. I let some of them try my shot-gun, and everyone wanted to attempt the feat, although they were all badly frightened. They held the gun at arm's length, turned their faces away and shot at random; it was clear that very few knew how to shoot, and that their Sniders could be of use only at short range. This is confirmed by the fact that all their murders are done point-blank.

Bourbaki brought news that in a few days there was to be a great sacrificial feast in the village, and that, everybody being busy preparing for it, we had no chance of recruiting, neither could we see the great chief, he being shut up in his house, invisible to everybody except to a little boy, his servant. We landed a goat for Bourbaki's father; the innocent animal caused terrible fright and great admiration. All the men retreated behind trunks or rocks and no one dared touch the strange creature. Bourbaki was very proud of himself for knowing goats, and fastened the poor little thing to a tree in the shade. He then coaxed three old men on board. Clumsily they entered the whale-boats, and even on board the cutter they squatted anxiously down and dared hardly move for fear the ship might capsize or they might slip into the water, of which they were quite afraid. They could hardly speak, and stared at everything, wide-eyed and open-mouthed. They forgot their fears, however, in delight over our possessions. A saucepan proved a joy; the boards and

WOMAN ON NITENDI, WITH LARGE SORE ON FOOT.

planks of the ship were touched and admired amid much smacking of the lips; a devout "Whau!" was elicited by the sight of the cabin, which seemed a fairy palace to them. Smaller things they approved of by whistling; in general they behaved very politely. If they did not understand the use of a thing, they shrugged their shoulders with a grimace of contempt. A mirror was useless to them at first; after a while they learned to see; they were frightened, and at last they roared with laughter, put out their tongues, admired their sooty faces and began to pull out their bristles, for they all wore their upper lips shaved. Naturally, they confused right and left, and became entirely bewildered. A watch did not impress them; the ticking seemed mysterious and not quite innocent, and they put the instrument away at a safe distance. They asked to see some money, but were much disappointed, having imagined it would look bigger and more imposing. They preferred a little slip of paper, which they carefully hid in their belts. Our stock of cartridges impressed them deeply, and there was no end of whistling and grunting. Sugar and tea were objects of suspicion. They thought them poison, and took some along, probably to experiment on a good friend or a woman. Matches were stuck into the hair, the beard or the perforated ears. Pictures were quite incomprehensible.

After an hour they left, less frightened than before, but still very glad to leave all the mysterious and uncanny things behind. Bourbaki made fun of their innocence, and thought himself very civilized,

but he himself was dreadfully afraid of my camera: "White man he savee too much."

The weather cleared towards evening. Some natives stayed on the shore all night, lighted fires and sang songs in anticipation of the coming dance. Our boys mimicked them, laughed at them and felt very superior, though we whites failed to see much difference, and, as a matter of fact, a short time after having returned home these boys can hardly be told from ordinary bushmen. The shrieks of the savages pierced the velvet of the night like daggers, but by and by they quieted down, and we heard nothing more but the rhythmic rise and fall of the surf.

In the silver light of the rising moon the boats rolled gently behind the ship like dark spots, and light clouds glided westward across the stars, eternally rising behind the black cliffs and disappearing in the universal dimness. We were asleep on deck, when suddenly a violent shower woke us up and banished us into that terrible cabin.

No natives came next day; they were all busy preparing the feast. We had nothing to do but to loaf on the beach or on board, and smoke, as we had no fishing-tackle and no animals to shoot. The grey sky, the vague light, the thin rain, were depressing, and all sorts of useless thoughts came to us. We noticed the hardships of our existence on board, felt that we were wasting time, grew irritable and dissatisfied. If only my companion had been less sulky! But with him there could be no pleasant chat, no cosy evening hour over a cup of tea and a pipe; and

I would almost have preferred being alone to this *solitude à deux*. I sat on deck and listened to the breakers. Often they sounded like a rushing express train and awakened reminiscences of travel and movement. The cool wind blew softly from afar, and I could understand for the first time that longing that asks the winds for news of home and friends. I gave myself up wholly to this vague dreaming, call it home-sickness, or what you will, it enlivened the oppressive colourlessness of the days and the loneliness of the nights. As usual, a heavy shower came, luckily, perhaps, to interrupt all softer thoughts.

Then followed a few clear days, which changed our mood entirely. The cutter rolled confidingly in the morning breeze, and the sun glowed warm and golden. In picturesque cascades the green forest seemed to rush down the slopes to the bright coral beach, on which the sea broke playfully. Once in a while a bird called far off in the depths of the woods. It was delicious to lie on the warm beach and be dried and roasted by the sun, to think of nothing in particular, but just to exist. Two wild pigs came to the beach in the evening to dig for yam that the natives had buried there ; a chase, though unsuccessful, gave excitement and movement. We could venture far inland now without fear, for the natives were all away at the feast. Brilliant sunsets closed the days in royal splendour. Behind a heavy cloud-bank which hid the sun, he seemed to melt in the sea and to form one golden element. Out of the cloud five yellow rays shot across the steel-blue

sky, so that it looked like one of those old-fashioned engravings of God behind a cloud. When everything had melted into one gorgeous fire, and we were still helpless before all that glory, the colours faded away to the most delicate combinations of half-tones; soon the stars came out glittering on the deep sky, first of all the Southern Cross. Halley's comet was still faintly visible.

In the morning the sky was cloudless, and changed from one lovely colour to the other, until the sun rose to give it its bright blue and paint the shore in every tint. Then every stone at the bottom of the sea was visible, and all the marvellous coral formations, with their weird shapes and fiery colours, glowed in rose and violet and pure golden yellow. Above lay big sea-stars, and large fish in bright hues floated between the cliffs in soft, easy movements, while bright blue little ones shot hither and thither like mad.

Bourbaki arrived with his younger brother, a neat and gentle-looking boy. The feast was to begin that evening, and I asked Bourbaki if they had plenty of pigs to eat. "Oh no," he said; "but that is of no importance: we have a man to eat! Yesterday we killed him in the bush, and to-day we will eat him." He said this with the most innocent expression, as if he were talking about the weather. I had to force myself not to draw away from him, and looked somewhat anxiously into his face; but Bourbaki stared quietly into the distance, as if dreaming of the past excitements and the coming

delights ; then he picked up a cocoa-nut and tore the husk off with his strong teeth. It made me shudder to watch his brutish movements, but he was perfectly happy that morning, willing and obedient. At noon he went away to his horrid feast, and for two days we saw nobody.

We passed the time as usual ; the weather was rainy again, and everything seemed grey,—the sky, the sea and the shore, and our mood. One is so dependent on surroundings.

On the third day Bourbaki came back, a little tired, but evidently satisfied. Some of his friends accompanied him, and he brought word that the chief had given permission for a few boys to enlist, but that we would have to wait about ten days until he could come to the shore himself. Not wishing to spend the ten days there, doing absolutely nothing, we decided to go farther south, to Tesbel Bay, and try our luck at recruiting there, as we had another boy, Macao, from that district. George gave leave to Bourbaki, who had been somewhat savage these last days, to stay at home till our return, and he seemed delighted to have a holiday. We were all the more surprised when, just before we weighed anchor, Bourbaki came back, shaking hands without a word. We were quite touched by this remarkable sign of his affection, pardoned his many objectionable ways, and never thought that perhaps he might have ample reason not to feel altogether safe and comfortable at home.

The wind being contrary, we had to tack about

all night long without advancing. Squalls rushed over the water, and then, again, the breeze died down completely, only black, jagged clouds drifted westward across the sky, and here and there a few stars were visible. The cutter's deck was crowded with stuff, and there seemed less room for us than ever, except in the hateful cabin. The boys sang monotonously "for wind," quite convinced that the next breeze would be due to their efforts. A fat old man sang all night long in falsetto in three notes; it was unbearably silly and irritating, yet one could hardly stop the poor devil and rob him of his only pleasure in that dark night. We felt damp, restless and sleepless, and tried in vain to find some comfort. Next evening we reached the entrance of Tesbel Bay, and the wind having died down, we had to work our way in with the oars, a slow and hard task. Bourbaki yelled and pulled at the oars with all his might, encouraging the others. These are the joys of sailing.

Tesbel Bay is framed on two sides by high cliffs. Big boulders lie in picturesque confusion where the surf foams white against the narrow beach. Wherever there is a foot of ground, luxurious vegetation thrives. Ahead of us lies a level valley that stretches far inland to the foot of a high mountain, whose head is lost in grey clouds. A little creek runs into the bay through high reed-grass, behind a sandbank. Just before setting, the sun shone through the clouds and smiled on the lovely, peaceful landscape, seeming to promise us a pleasant stay. The smoke of many

A LARGE CANOE ON UREPARAPARA.

village fires rose out of the bush at a distance. Two ragged natives were loafing on the beach, and I engaged one of them for the next day, to guide me to some villages. Bourbaki and Macao marched gaily off, as they were to spend the night in Macao's village.

Next morning, while being pulled ashore for my excursion inland, I saw Macao on the beach, crying, waving and behaving like a madman. He called out that Bourbaki was dead, and that we must come to the village. I took him into the boat and we returned to the cutter. Macao was trembling all over, uttering wild curses, sighing and sobbing like a child. Between the fingers of his left hand he frantically grasped his cartridges, and nervously kept hold of his old rifle. We could not get much out of him; all we could make out was that Bourbaki had been shot towards morning and that he himself had run away. We guessed that Bourbaki must have committed some misdemeanour; as there was a possibility of his still being alive, we decided to go and look for him; for satisfaction it was idle to hope.

According to Macao the village was quite near, so we took our rifles, armed the boys, and in ten minutes we were ashore. The youngest, a fourteen-year-old boy, was left in the whale-boat, so as to be ready to pick us up in case of need. His elder brother, a tall, stout fellow, also preferred to stay in the boat; we left him behind, and this left five of us for the expedition. Macao showed us the way, and as we followed him we watched right and left for a

possible ambush. It was a disagreeable moment when we dived into the thicket, where we expected to be attacked any moment, and I could hardly blame another fat boy for dropping behind, too, to "watch the shore," as he said. Not wishing to lose any time, we let him go, for we were anxious to be in the village before the natives should have time to rally and prepare for resistance.

The path was miserable—slippery slopes, wildly knotted roots, stones, creeks and high reeds. We were kept quite busy enough watching our path, and were not careful at all about watching the bush; but we were confident that the natives, being very poor shots, would betray their presence by a random shot. We were exposed, of course, to shots from close quarters alongside the path, but we trusted to Macao's sharp eyes to detect a hidden enemy. After an hour's brisk walk, we asked Macao whether the village was still far off; every time we asked, his answer was the same: "Bim by you me catch him," or, "Him he close up." However, after an hour and a half, we began to feel worried. We had no idea whether we would find a peaceful village or an armed tribe, and in the latter case a retreat would doubtless have been fatal, owing to the long distance we would have had to go in the forest, where the white man is always at a disadvantage. But we had undertaken the adventure, and we had to see it through.

After two hours we unexpectedly came upon a village. A dozen men and a few women were squatting about, evidently expecting some event.

The presence of the women was a sign that the people were peacefully inclined. An old man, a relative of Macao's, joined us, and a short walk through a gully brought us quite suddenly into a village square. About thirty men were awaiting us, armed with rifles and clubs, silent and shy. Macao spoke to them, whereupon they laid down their rifles and led us to a hut, where we found Bourbaki, lying on his back, dead. He had been sitting in the house when some one shot him from behind; he had jumped up and tried to fly, but had broken down and fallen where he was then lying. He must have died almost at once, as the bullet had torn a great hole in his body. His rifle and cartridges were missing, that was all.

The villagers stood around us, talking excitedly; we could not understand them, but they were evidently not hostile, and we told them to bury Bourbaki. They began at once, digging a hole in the soft earth with pointed sticks. We then asked for the rifle, the cartridges and the murderer, and were informed that two men had done the killing. After some deliberation a number of men walked off, one of them a venerable old man, armed after the old fashion with a bow and a handful of poisoned arrows, which he handled with deliberate care; he also carried a club in a sling over his shoulder. Of all those strong men, this old one seemed to me the most dangerous but also the most beautiful and the most genuine. After a while they returned, and two other men slunk in and stood apart.

The natives seemed undecided what to do, and squatted about, talking among themselves, until at last one of them pulled me by the sleeve and led us towards the two newcomers. We understood that they were the murderers, and each of us took hold of one of them. They made no resistance, but general excitement arose in the crowd, all the other natives shouting and gesticulating, even threatening each other with their rifles. They were split in two parties,—one that wanted to give up the murderers, and their relatives, who wanted to keep them. We told them that the affair would be settled if they gave up the murderers; if not, the man-of-war would come and punish the whole village. As my prisoner tried to get loose, I bound him, and while I was busy with this I heard a shot. Seeing that all the men had their rifles ready, I expected the fight to begin, but George told me his prisoner had escaped and he had shot after him. The man had profited by George's indecision to run away.

This actual outbreak of the hostilities excited the people so that we thought it best to retire, taking our single prisoner with us. A few of the natives followed us, and when we left the village the relatives of the murderer broke out in violent wailing and weeping, thinking, as did the prisoner, Belni, himself, that we were going to eat him up, after having tortured him to death. Belni trembled all over, was very gentle and inclined to weep like a punished child, but quite resigned and not even offering any resistance. He only asked Macao anxiously what we were going to do

with him. Macao, furious at the death of his comrade, for whom he seemed to have felt real affection, put him in mortal fear, and was quite determined to avenge his murdered friend. We shut Belni up in the hold of the cutter and told the natives that they would have to hand over Bourbaki's rifle and cartridges, and pay us two tusked pigs by noon of the next day.

On this occasion we learned the reason for the murder: Belni's brother had had an intrigue with the wife of the chief, and had been condemned by the latter to pay a few pigs. Being too poor to do this, he decided to pay his debt in an old-fashioned way by killing a man, and Bourbaki was unlucky enough to arrive just at the right time, and being a man from a distant district, there was no revenge to be feared. Belni, therefore, chose him as his victim. The two brothers chatted all night with him and Macao, and asked to see Bourbaki's rifle, which he carelessly handed to them. When, towards morning, Macao left them for a few moments, they profited by the opportunity to shoot Bourbaki from behind, and to run away. Macao, rushing back, found his friend dead, and fled to the shore. By this deed the wrong to the chief was supposed to be made good—a very peculiar practice in native justice. It may be a remnant of old head-hunting traditions, inasmuch as Belni's brother would have given the dead man's head to the chief in payment, this being even more valuable than pigs.

The first excitement over, our boys were seized by fear, even Macao and the other one who had accompanied us. Although they were in perfect safety on

board the cutter they feared all sorts of revenge from Belni's relatives,—for instance, that they might cause a storm and wreck the cutter. We laughed at them, but they would not be cheered up, and, after all, Macao's horrible dread that his old father was surely being eaten up by this time in the village was not quite groundless. We were not in the brightest of humours ourselves, as this event had considerably lessened our chances of recruiting at Big Nambas; the chief made us responsible for Bourbaki's death, and asked an indemnity which we could hardly pay, except with the tusked pigs we demanded here.

We could not stay longer in Tesbel Bay, as our boys were too much frightened, and the natives might turn against us at any moment. We could hardly get the boys to go ashore for water and firewood, for fear of an ambush. In the evening we fetched Belni out of the hold. He was still doleful and ready to cry, but seemed unconscious of any fault; he had killed a man, but that was rather an honourable act than a crime, and he only seemed to regret that it had turned out so unsatisfactorily. He did not seem to have much appetite, but swallowed his yam mechanically in great lumps. The boys shunned him visibly, all but Macao, who squatted down close before him, and gave him food with wild hatred in his eyes, and muttering awful threats. Icy-cold, cruel, with compressed lips and poisonous looks like a serpent's, he hissed his curses and tortured Belni, who excused himself clumsily and shyly, playing with the yam and looking from one dark corner to the other, like a boy

being scolded. The scene was so gruesome that I had Belni shut up again, and we watched all night, for Macao was determined to take the murderer's life. It was a dry, moonlit night; one of the boys was writhing with a pain in his stomach, and we could do nothing to help him, so they were all convinced it was caused by Belni's relatives, and wanted to sail immediately. A warm breeze had driven mosquitoes to the cutter; it was a most unpleasant night.

Next noon the natives appeared, about twenty strong, but without the second murderer. They said the shot had hit him, and that he had died during the night. This might have been true, and as we could do nothing against the village anyway, we let the matter drop, especially as they had brought us Bourbaki's rifle and two tusked pigs. The chief said he hoped we were satisfied with him, and would not trouble anyone but the murderers.

We returned to the cutter, and the pigs were put in the hold, where they seem to have kept good company with Belni, after a little preliminary squealing and shrieking. Then we sailed northward, with a breeze that carried us in four hours over the same distance for which we had taken twenty-four last time. It was a bitterly cold night. We decided to return home, fearing the boys would murder Belni in an unwatched moment, as they had asked several times, when the sea was high, whether we would not throw Belni into the water now. The passage to Santo was very rough. The waves thundered against the little old cutter, and we had a nasty tide-rip. We were

quite soaked, and looking in through the portholes, we could see everything floating about in the cabin —blankets, saucepans, tins and pistols. We did not mind much, as we hoped to be at home by evening.

Rest, cleanliness and a little comfort were very tempting after a fortnight in the filthy narrowness of the little craft. We had no reason to be vain of our success; but such trips are part of the game, and we planned a second visit to Big Nambas to reconcile the chief. We were glad to greet the cloud-hung coast of Santo, and soon entered the Segond Channel. There we discovered that the old boat had leaked to such an extent that we could have kept afloat for only a few hours longer, and had every reason to be glad the voyage was at an end. It was just as well that we had not noticed the leak during the passage.

We brought Belni ashore; the thin, flabby fellow was a poor compensation for vigorous Bourbaki. He was set to work on the plantation, and as the Government was never informed of the affair, he is probably there to this day, and will stay until he dies.

DANCING-GROUND ON VAO, WITH ANCESTOR HOUSES.

# CHAPTER V

## VAO

I HAD not yet solved the problem of how to get away from the Segond Channel and find a good field of labour, when, happily, the French priest from Port Olry came to stay a few days with his colleague at the channel, on his way to Vao, and he obligingly granted me a passage on his cutter. I left most of my luggage behind, and the schooner of the French survey party was to bring it to Port Olry later on.

After a passage considerably prolonged by contrary winds, we arrived at Vao, a small island north-east of Malekula. When one has sailed along the lifeless, greyish-green shores of Malekula, Vao is like a sunbeam breaking through the mist. This change of mood comes gradually, as one notices the warm air of spring, and dry souls, weather-beaten captains and old pirates may hardly be aware of anything beyond a better appetite and greater thirst. And it is not easy to define what lends the little spot such a charm that the traveller feels revived as if escaped from some oppression. From a distance Vao looks like all the other islands and islets of the archipelago—a green froth floating on the white line of breakers ; from near by we see, as everywhere else, the bright beach in front of the thick forest.

But what impresses the traveller mournfully elsewhere,—the eternal loneliness and lifelessness of a country where nature has poured all its power into the vegetation, and seems to have forgotten man and beast,—is softened here, and an easy joy of living penetrates everything like a delicate scent, and lifts whatever meets the eye to greater significance and beauty. The celestial charm of the South Sea Islands, celebrated by the first discoverers, seems to be preserved here, warming the soul like the sweet remembrance of a happy dream. Hardly anyone who feels these impressions will wonder about their origin, but he will hasten ashore and dive into the forest, driven by a vague idea of finding some marvel. Later he will understand that the charm of Vao lies in the rich, busy human life that fills the island. It is probably the most thickly populated of the group, with about five hundred souls living in a space one mile long and three-fourths of a mile wide; and it is their happy, careless, lazy existence that makes Vao seem to the stranger like a friendly home. Here there are houses and fires, lively people who shout and play merrily, and after the loneliness which blows chill from the bush, the traveller is glad to rest and feel at home among cheerful fellow-men.

About seventy outrigger boats of all sizes lie on the beach. On their bows they carry a carved heron, probably some half-forgotten totem. The bird is more or less richly carved, according to the social standing of the owner, and a severe watch is kept to

prevent people from carrying carvings too fine for their degree. Similarly, we find little sticks like small seats fastened to the canoes, their number indicating the caste of the owner. Under big sheds, in the shade of the tall trees, lie large whale-boats of European manufacture, belonging to the different clans, in which the men undertake long cruises to the other islands, Santo, Aoba, Ambrym, to visit "sing-sings" and trade in pigs. Formerly they used large canoes composed of several trees fastened together with ropes of cocoa-nut fibre, and caulked with rosin, driven by sails of cocoa-nut sheaths; these would hold thirty to forty men, and were used for many murderous expeditions. For the inhabitants of Vao were regular pirates, dreaded all along the coast; they would land unexpectedly in the morning near a village, kill the men and children, steal the women and start for home with rich booty. European influences have put a stop to this sport, and with the introduction of whale-boats the picturesque canoes have disappeared from the water, and now lie rotting on the beach. Their successors (though according to old tradition, women may not enter them) are only used for peaceful purposes.

In the early morning the beach is deserted, but a few hours after sunrise it is full of life. The different clans come down from their villages by narrow paths which divide near the shore into one path for the men and another for the women, leading to separate places. The men squat down near one of the boat-houses and stretch out comfortably

in the warm sand, smoking and chatting. The women, loaded with children and baskets, sit in the shade of the knobby trees which stretch their trunk-like branches horizontally over the beach, forming a natural roof against sun and rain. The half-grown boys are too lively to enjoy contemplative laziness; gossip and important deliberations about pigs and sacrifices do not interest them, and they play about between the canoes, wade in the water, look for shells on the sand, or hunt crabs or fish in the reef. Thus an hour passes. The sun has warmed the sand; after the cool night this is doubly agreeable, and a light breeze cools the air. Some mothers bathe their babies in the sea, washing and rubbing them carefully, until the coppery skin shines in the sun; the little creatures enjoy the bath immensely, and splash gaily in the element that will be their second home in days to come. Everyone on the beach is in the easiest undress: the men wear nothing but a bark belt, and the women a little apron of braided grass; the children are quite naked, unless bracelets, necklaces and ear-rings can count as dress. Having rested and amply fortified themselves for the painful resolution to take up the day's work, people begin to prepare for departure to the fields. They have to cross the channel, about a mile wide, to reach the big island where the yam gardens lie, sheltered by the forest from the trade-winds; and this sail is the occasion for the prettiest sight Vao can offer.

The tides drive the sea through the narrow channel so hard as to start a current which is almost

a stream. The head-wind raises short, sharp, white-capped waves; shallow banks shine yellow through the clear water, and the coral reefs are patches of violet and crimson, and we are delighted by constant changes, new shades and various colourings, never without harmony and loveliness. A cloudless sky bends over the whole picture and shines on the red-brown bodies of the people, who bustle about their canoes, adding the bright red of their mats and dresses to the splendour of the landscape.

With sudden energy the women have grabbed the boats and pushed them into the water. The girls are slim, supple and strong as the young men, the mothers and older women rather stiff, and usually hampered by at least one child, which they carry on their backs or on their hips, while another holds on to the garment which replaces our skirts. There is plenty of laughter and banter with the men, who look on unmoved at the efforts of the weaker sex, only rarely offering a helping hand.

From the trees and hiding-places the paddles and the pretty triangular sails are fetched and fastened on the canoes; then the boats are pushed off and the whole crowd jumps in. The babies sit in their mothers' laps or hang on their backs, perilously close to the water, into which they stare with big, dark eyes. By twos and threes the canoes push off, driven by vigorous paddling along the shore, against the current. Sometimes a young man wades after a canoe and joins some fair friends, sitting in front of them, as etiquette demands. The fresh breeze catches

the sails, and the ten or fifteen canoes glide swiftly across the bright water, the spread sails looking like great red butterflies. The spray splashes from the bows, one woman steers, and the others bale out the water with cocoa-nuts,—a labour worthy of the Danaides; sometimes the outrigger lifts up and the canoe threatens to capsize, but, quick as thought, the women lean on the poles joining outrigger and canoe, and the accident is averted. In a few minutes the canoes enter the landings between the torn cliffs on the large island, the passengers jump out and carry the boats up the beach.

A few stragglers, men of importance who have been detained by politics, and bachelors, who have nothing and nobody to care for but themselves, follow later on, and only a crowd of boys stays in Vao, to enjoy themselves on the beach and get into all sorts of mischief.

Obliging as people sometimes are when the fancy strikes them, a youth took us over to the other island in his canoe, and was even skilful enough to keep us from capsizing. Narrow paths, bordered with impenetrable bush, led us from the beach across coral boulders up to the plantations on top of the tableland. Under some cocoa-nut palms our guide stopped, climbed nimbly up a slim trunk, as if mounting a ladder, and three green nuts dropped to the ground at our feet. Three clever strokes of the knife opened them, and we enjoyed the refreshing drink in its natural bowl. Sidepaths branched off to the gardens, where every individual or family had its

piece of ground. We saw big bananas, taro, with large, juicy leaves, yams, trained on a pretty basket-shaped trellis-work; when in bloom this looks like a huge bouquet. There were pine-apples, cabbages, cocoa-nut and bread-fruit trees, bright croton bushes and highly scented shrubs. In this green and confused abundance the native spends his day, working a little, loafing a great deal. He shoots big pigeons and little parakeets, roasts them on an improvised fire and eats them as a welcome addition to his regular meals. From sun and rain he is sheltered by simple roofs, under which everybody assembles at noon to gossip, eat and laugh.

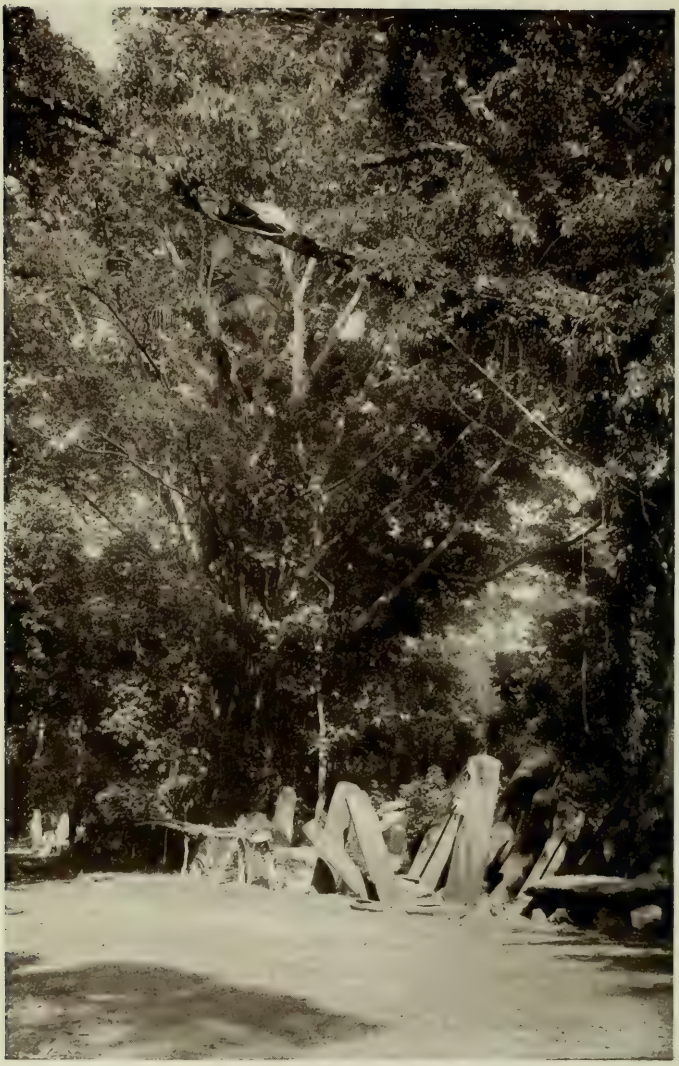
Long ago there were villages here. An enormous monolith, now broken, but once 5 mètres high, speaks for the energy of bygone generations, when this rock was carried up from the coast, probably for a monument to some great chief.

While the women were gathering food for the evening meal we returned to Vao. The breeze had stiffened in the midst of the channel, and one old woman's canoe had capsized. She clung to the boat, calling pitifully for help, which amused all the men on the shore immensely, until at last, none too soon, they went to her rescue. Such adventures are by no means harmless, as the channel swarms with sharks.

We explored the interior of Vao, going first through the thicket on the shore, then through reed-grass over 6 feet high, then between low walls surrounding little plantations. Soon the path widened,

and on both sides we saw stone slabs, set several rows deep; presently we found ourselves under the wide vault of one of those immense fig trees whose branches are like trunks, and the glare of the sun gave way to deep shadow, the heat of noonday to soft coolness.

Gradually our eyes grow accustomed to the dimness, and we distinguish our surroundings. We are in a wide square, roofed by the long branches of the giant tree. At our left is its trunk, mighty enough in itself, but increased by the numerous air-roots that stretch like cables from the crown to the earth, covering the trunk entirely in some spots, or dangling softly in the wind, ending in large tassels of smaller roots. Lianas wind in distorted curves through the branches, like giant snakes stiffened while fighting. This square is one of the dancing-grounds of Vao. The rows of stones surround the square on three sides—two, three or more deep. Near the trunk of the great tree is a big altar of large slabs of rock; around it are stone tables of smaller size, and one or two immense coral plates, which cover the buried skull of some mighty chief. A large rock lies in the middle of the road on a primitive slide half covered by stones and earth. Long ago the islanders tried to bring it up from the beach; a strong vine served as a rope, and more than fifty men must have helped to drag the heavy rock up from the coast to the square. Half-way they got tired of the job and left the stone where it lies now, and will lie for ever.



DANCING-GROUND ON VAO.

On the other side of the altar are the drums, hollow trunks, whose upper end is carved to represent a human face with wide, grinning mouth, and deep, round and hollow eyes. Rammed in aslant, leaning in all directions, they stand like clumsy, malicious demons, spiteful and brutal, as if holding their bellies with rude, immoderate laughter at their own hugeness and the puniness of mankind, at his miserable humanity, compared to the solemn repose of the great tree. In front of these are figures cut roughly out of logs, short-legged, with long bodies and exaggeratedly long faces; often they are nothing but a head, with the same smiling mouth, a long nose and narrow, oblique eyes. They are painted red, white and blue, and are hardly discernible in the dimness. On their forked heads they carry giant birds with outstretched wings,—herons, —floating as if they had just dropped through the branches on to the square.

This is all we can see, but it is enough to make a deep impression. Outside, the sun is glaring, the leaves quiver, and the clouds are drifting across the sky, but here it is dim and cool as in a cathedral, not a breeze blows, everything is lapped in a holy calm. Abandonment, repose, sublime thoughtlessness drop down on us in the shadow of the giant tree; as if in a dream we breathe the damp, soft, mouldy air, feel the smooth earth and the green moss that covers everything like a velvet pall, and gaze at the altars, the drums and the statues.

In a small clearing behind the square, surrounded

by gaily coloured croton bushes, stands the men's house—the "gamal." Strong pillars support its gabled roof, that reaches down to the ground; the entrance is flanked by great stone slabs. Oddly branched dead trees form a hedge around the house, and on one side, on a sort of shelf, hang hundreds of boars' jaws with curved tusks. Inside, there are a few fireplaces, simple holes in the ground, and a number of primitive stretchers of parallel bamboos, couches that the most ascetic of whites would disdain. Among the beams of the roof hang all kinds of curiosities: dancing-masks and sticks, rare fish, pigs' jaws, bones, old weapons, amulets and so on, everything covered with a thick layer of soot from the ever-smouldering fires. These "gamals" are a kind of club-house, where the men spend the day and occasionally the night. In rainy weather they sit round the fire, smoking, gossiping and working on some tool,—a club or a fine basket. Each clan has its own gamal, which is strictly taboo for the women, and to each gamal belongs a dancing-ground like the one described. On Vao there are five, corresponding to the number of clans.

Near by are the dwelling-houses and family enclosures. Each family has its square, surrounded by a wall about 1 mètre high, of loose stones simply piled up, so that it is unsafe to lean against it. Behind the walls are high screens of braided reeds, which preclude the possibility of looking into the enclosure; even the doors are so protected that no one can look in; for the men are very jealous,

and do not want their wives observed by strangers. These enclosures are very close together, and only narrow lanes permit circulation. As we turn a corner we may see a woman disappear quickly, giggling, while children run away with terrified howls, for what the black man is to ours the white man is to them.

Having won the confidence of a native, we may be taken into his courtyard, where there is little to be seen, as all the social life goes on in the gamals or on the dancing-grounds. A dozen simple huts stand irregularly about the square, some half decayed and serving as pigsties. One hut belongs to the master, and each of his wives has a house of her own, in which to bring up her children. The yard is alive with pigs and fowls and dogs and children, more or less peacefully at play.

In Vao, as in all Melanesia, the pig is the most valued of animals. All the thoughts of the native circle round the pig; for with pigs he can buy whatever his heart desires: he can have an enemy killed, he can purchase many women, he can attain the highest social standing, he can win paradise. No wonder, then, that the Vao pigs are just as carefully nursed, if not more so, than the children, and that it is the most important duty of the old matrons to watch over the welfare of the pigs. To call a young beauty "pig's foot," "pig's nose," "pig's tail," or similar endearing names is the greatest compliment a lover can pay. But only the male pigs are esteemed, the females are of account only as a necessary in-

strument for propagating the species, and nobody takes care of them; so they run wild, and have to look out for themselves. They are much happier than the males, which are tied all their lives to a pole under a little roof; they are carefully fed, but this, their only pleasure, is spoilt by constant and terrific toothache, caused by cruel man, who has a horrible custom of knocking out the upper eye-teeth of the male pig. The lower eye-teeth, finding nothing to rub against, grow to a surprising size, first upward, then down, until they again reach the jaw, grow on and on, through the cheek, through the jaw-bone, pushing out a few other teeth *en passant*, then they come out of the jaw again, and curve a second, sometimes a third time, if the poor beast lives long enough. These pigs with curved tusks are the pride and wealth of every native; they are the highest coin, and power and influence depend on the number of such pigs a man owns, as well as on the size of their tusks, and this is the reason why they are so carefully watched, so that no harm may come to them or their teeth. Very rich people may have quite a number of "tuskers," people of average means own one or two, and paupers none at all, but they may have the satisfaction of looking at those of the others and feeding them if they like.

It will be necessary to say a few words here about the pig-cult and the social organization of the natives, as they are closely connected and form a key to an understanding of the natives' way of living and thinking. I wish to state at once, however, that the

following remarks do not pretend to be correct in all details. It is very hard to make any researches as to these matters, as the natives themselves have only the vaguest notions on the subject, and entirely lack abstract ideas, so that they fail to understand many of the questions put to them. Without an exact knowledge of the language, and much personal observation, it is hardly possible to obtain reliable results, especially as the old men are unwilling to tell all they know, and the young know very little, but rely on the knowledge of the old chiefs. Interpreters are of no use, and direct questioning has but little result, as the people soon become suspicious or tired of thinking, and answer as they suppose the white man would wish, so as to have done with the catechizing as soon as possible. Perfect familiarity with the language, habits and character of the natives is necessary, and their confidence must be won, in order to make any progress in the investigation of these problems. Missionaries are the men to unite these qualities, but, unfortunately, the missionaries of the New Hebrides do not seem to take much interest in the strange cult so highly developed here; so that, for want of something better, my own observations may be acceptable.

The pig-cult, or "Suque," is found almost all over Melanesia. It is most highly developed in the Banks Islands and the Central New Hebrides, and rules the entire life of the natives; yet it forms only a part of their religion, and probably a newer part, while the fundamental principle is ancestor-worship. We must

not expect to find in the native mind clear conceptions of transcendental things. The religious ceremonies differ in adjoining villages, and so do the ideas concerning the other world. There is no regular dogma; and since even the conceptions of religions with well-defined dogmas are constantly changing, religions which are handed down by oral tradition only, and in the vaguest way, must necessarily be fluctuating. Following the natural laws of thought, religious conceptions split into numerous local varieties, and it is the task of the scientist to seek, amid this variety of exterior forms, the common underlying idea, long forgotten by everyone else, and to ascertain what it was in its original purity, without additions and deformations.

My observations led me to the following results: according to native belief, the soul leaves the body after death, and wanders about near by. Apparently the idea is that it remains in connection with the body for a certain time, for in some districts the corpse is fed for five days or longer; in Vao a bamboo tube is used, which leads from the surface of the earth to the mouth of the buried body. The souls of low-caste people soon disappear, but the higher the caste, the longer the soul stays on earth. Still, the natives have some conception of a paradise in which the soul of the high-caste finds all bliss and delight, and which the soul ultimately enters. This idea may have come up since the arrival of Christianity. It is customary to hold a death-feast for a man of no caste after five days, for a low-caste after one hundred, and for a

WOMAN FROM TANNA.

high-caste after three hundred or even one thousand days. The soul remains in contact with the world of the living, and may be perceived as a good or bad spirit of as much power as the man had when alive. To obtain the favour and assistance of these spirits seems to be the fundamental idea, the main object of religion in the New Hebrides. The spirit of an ancestor will naturally favour his descendants, unless they have offended him deeply; and the more powerful the dead ancestor was, the stronger and safer do his descendants feel under the protection of his spirit. If a man has no powerful ancestral ghost, he joins some strong clan, and strives for the favour of its tutelary spirit by means of rich sacrifices. The spirits admit those who bring many sacrifices to their special favour and intimacy; these people are supposed to have gone half-way to the spirit-world, and even in this life they are dreaded and enormously influential; for the spirits will help him in every way, the elements are his servants, and he can perform the most terrible sorceries. Thus he terrorizes the country, becomes chief, and after death he joins the other ghosts as a powerful member of their company.

The "Suque" transferred the hierarchy of the spirit-world into this world, and regulated the number of castes and the method of rising in caste; it also originated the rules for entering into connection with the other world. Its origin probably goes back to one of those secret societies so highly developed in Melanesia, of which I shall speak later.

Caste is obtained by sacrificing tusked pigs; it is

possible that this has taken the place of former human sacrifices. The "Suque" is the community of all the men who have sacrificed tusked pigs. It is an international society, divided into numerous groups composed of the men of different islands, districts, villages or clans. It is the only means to assure oneself of bliss hereafter, and to obtain power and wealth on earth, and whoever fails to join the "Suque" is an outcast, a man of no importance, without friends and without protectors, whether living men or spirits, and therefore exposed to every ill-treatment and utter contempt. This explains the all-important position of the "Suque" in the life of the natives, being the expression both of religion and of ambition.

Frequently a young boy will join the "Suque," an uncle on the mother's side donating pigs to be sacrificed in his name after he has touched them with his hand. The boy is then free of the gamal, the "Suque" club-house. Later he works his way up in the society by attending numberless feasts and ceremonies, by having endless discussions on tusked pigs, by borrowing, buying and lending pigs, by plotting and sacrificing.

The number of castes varies on different islands: in Ambrym there are fourteen, in Venua Lava twenty, in Aoba ten. On some islands, Santo, for example, the caste-system is connected with a severe separation of the fires; each caste cooks over its own fire, and loses its degree on eating food cooked on the fire of a lower caste. In these districts the floor of the gamal is frequently marked by bamboo rods

or sticks in as many divisions as there are castes each containing one fireplace. The highest castes sit at the front end of the gamal, the lower at the back; these are forbidden to enter the gamal from the front, in order not to touch or step over the fireplaces of their superiors. At each rise in caste the novice receives the new fire, rubbed on a special stick and decorated with flowers; certain ceremonies attend the cooking of the first food with this new fire. It is then carefully tended in the fireplace, and if it goes out it has to be rubbed afresh with the stick. The number of pigs necessary to a rise in caste also varies on the different islands. Generally, only tusked pigs are counted, and there are feasts at which as many as forty of these valuable animals are killed. Naturally, the high-castes cannot keep all the animals themselves, but they lend them, like money, to those who do not possess the number needed to rise in caste; in this way a complicated credit-system has developed, by which the so-called chiefs support and strengthen their influence and tyrannize the country.

A young man, as a rule, owns no tusked pigs. If he wishes to raise his caste, he has to borrow from the rich high-castes, who are very willing to help him, but only at exorbitant rates of interest. First he has to win their favour by presents, and then he has to promise to return a more valuable pig later. The bargain made, the transaction takes place publicly with some ceremony. The population of the district assembles, and all the transactions are ratified which have been negotiated in private. The

owner holds the pig, the borrower dances around him and then takes the animal away. All the spectators serve as witnesses, and there is no need of a written bill. In this way nearly all the men of lower rank are in debt to the high-castes, and dependent on their goodwill, and these can obtain anything they like, simply by pressing their debtors to pay for their pigs.

As a rule, the highest castes of a district work together; they are the high priests, who arrange everything connected with the "Suque," set the dates for the feasts, and decide whether a man shall be permitted to raise his caste. They are practically omnipotent, until one of them rises by still larger sacrifices to a still higher caste, and becomes sole master. If there are no more degrees to reach, the whole scale is run through again an octave higher, so to speak. The jaws of the killed pigs are hung up in the gamal in bundles or rows, as a sign of the wealth and power of the proprietor. These chiefs are in connection with the mightiest spirits, have supernatural power and are as much hated as they are feared.

There is another independent witchcraft beside the "Suque," for weather-making, charms and poisoning, which is known to private men. They take expensive "lessons" from old sorcerers, and transmit their art to the young men they consider clever enough, for good wages. These are the real mischief-makers, for they will lend their murderous assistance to anyone for adequate payment.

In some islands there is also a "Suque" for the women, but it is quite independent of that of the men, and its degrees are easier to reach. Still, women of high rank enjoy a certain consideration from the men.

Real chiefs do not exist in the northern part of the New Hebrides, but the chiefs are the high-castes, who, according to their rank and the strength of their personality, have more or less influence. They cannot give direct orders, but rule indirectly through pressure, threats and encouragement. Officially, all decisions are taken in a meeting of the whole "Suque." The chieftainship is not hereditary, but the sons and especially the nephews of high-castes generally reach high degrees themselves, being pushed by their relatives, who are naturally anxious to be surrounded by faithful and influential friends. Thus there have risen aristocratic families, who think themselves better than the others, and do not like to mix with common people. Daughters of these families command high prices, and are therefore accessible only to rich men, that is, men of high caste. Young men of less good family are naturally poor, and since a woman, as a rule, costs five pigs, it is almost impossible for them to marry, whereas old men can buy up all the young, pretty girls; the social consequences of this system are obvious. In Vao conditions are not quite so bad, because there is considerable wealth, and women are numerous, so that even young men are enabled to have a family; in consequence, the race here is healthier than elsewhere.

In Vao I had occasion to attend a death-feast. The hero of the day was still alive and in excellent health; but he did not quite trust his family, and wishing to make sure that his death-feast would not be forgotten, he held it during his lifetime. His anxiety about the feast is explained by the following facts. According to Vao beliefs, the souls of the dead travel to the island of Ambrym, and after five days climb a narrow trail up to the volcano. In order that the soul may not starve on the way, the survivors often make a small canoe, load it with food and push it off into the sea, thinking it will drift after the soul. It is generally stranded behind the nearest point, bringing the neighbours a welcome addition to the day's rations. This custom is in contradiction to the feeding of the body through a tube, and proves that quite contradictory customs can exist simultaneously, without the natives noticing it. Half-way up the volcano sits a monster with two immense shears, like a crab. If no pigs have been sacrificed for the soul by the fifth day, the poor soul is alone and the monster swallows it; but if the sacrifice has been performed, the souls of the sacrificed pigs follow after the human soul, and as the monster prefers pig, the human has time to escape and to reach the entrance to paradise on top of the volcano, where there are pigs, women, dancing and feasting in plenty.

The feast I was to attend had been in preparation for some time. On all the dancing-grounds long bamboos were in readiness, loaded with yams and flowers, as presents to the host. Everything was

brought to his gamal, and the whole morning passed in distributing the gifts, each family receiving a few yams, a little pig, some sprouted cocoa-nuts and a few rolls of money. This money consists of long, narrow, fringed mats, neatly rolled up; in this case they were supposed to be the mats in which the dead are buried, and which are taken out of the grave after a while. These mats formerly served as small coin, as similar mats are still used on other islands, and they still represent a value of about one shilling; but in daily life they have been quite replaced by European coin, and only appear on such ceremonial occasions.

All the gifts were piled up, and when the host was convinced that every guest had received his just dues, he took a stick and smashed the heads of all the pigs that were tied up in readiness for this ceremony. They struggled for a moment, the dogs came and licked the blood, and then each guest took away his portion, to have a private feast at home. The whole performance made a desperately business-like impression, and everything was done most prosaically; as for me, having no better dinner than usual to look forward to, I quite missed the slightly excited holiday feeling that ought to go with a great feast. Formerly, the braining of the pigs was done with skilfully carved clubs, instead of mere sticks, and this alone must have given the action something of solemnity; but these clubs have long since been sold to collectors and never replaced.

In spite of their frequent intercourse with whites,

the people of Vao are still confirmed cannibals, only they have not many opportunities for gratifying their taste in this direction. Still, not many years ago, they had killed and eaten an enemy, and each individual, even the little children, had received a small morsel of the body to eat, either with the idea of destroying the enemy entirely, or as the greatest insult that could be offered to him.

These same people can be so gay, childlike, kind and obliging, tactful and generous, that one can hardly believe the accounts one often hears of sudden outbreaks of brutal savagery, devilish wickedness, ingratitude and falsehood, until one has experienced them himself. The flattering and confiding child will turn suddenly and without apparent reason into a man full of gloom and hatred. All those repressing influences which lead the dwellers in civilized lands to some consistency of action are lacking here, and the morals of the natives run along other lines than ours. Faith and truth are no virtues, constancy and perseverance do not exist. The same man who can torture his wife to death from wanton cruelty, holding her limbs over the fire till they are charred, etc., will be inconsolable over the death of a son for a long time, and will wear a curl, a tooth or a finger-joint of the dead as a valuable relic round his neck ; and the same man who is capable of preparing a murder in cold blood for days, may, in some propitious evening hour, relate the most charming and poetic fairy-tales. A priest whom I met knew quite a number of such stories from a man whom he had

HOUSE FENCES ON VAO, MADE FROM STONE WALLS AND REED SCREENS.

digged alive out of the grave, where his relatives had buried him, thinking him old enough to die. This is not a rare occurrence; sometimes the old people themselves are tired of life and ask to be killed.

What has preserved the old customs so well on Vao is the aversion of the natives to plantation work. But one day, while I was there, a ship rode at anchor off the coast, and a member of the French survey party landed, collected all the men on the beach, and told them that unless there were thirty men on board that evening, the whole tribe would be driven out of the island, as the island belonged to the French company. This was, to say the least, extremely doubtful; moreover, it would never have been feasible to expropriate the natives in this summary way. They were furious, but, unprotected as they were, they had to obey, and in the evening nearly all the young men assembled on the beach and were taken away in whale-boats, disappearing in the mist and darkness of the night. The old men and the women remained behind, crying loudly, so that the terrible wailing sounded sadly over the sea. Even to the mere spectator it was a tragic moment when the tribe was thus orphaned of its best men, and one could not help being revolted by the whole proceeding. It was not womanish pity for the men who were taken off to work, but regret for the consequent disappearance of immemorial forms of tribal life. Next day the beach was empty. Old men and women crossed over to the yam-fields, the little children played as usual, but

the gay shouts were silent, the beautiful, brown, supple-bodied young men were gone, and I no longer felt the joy of living which had been Vao's greatest charm. The old men were sulky and sad, and spoke of leaving Vao for good and settling somewhere far inland. It is not surprising that the whole race has lost the will to live, and that children are considered an undesirable gift, of which one would rather be rid. What hopelessness lies in the words I once heard a woman of Vao say: "Why should we have any more children? Since the white man came they all die." And die they certainly do. Regions that once swarmed with people are now lonely; where, ten years ago, there were large villages, we find the desert bush, and in some districts the population has decreased by one-third in the last seven years. In fifteen years the native race will have practically disappeared.

# CHAPTER VI

## PORT OLRY AND A "SING-SING"

The event just described reduced my chance of finding servants in Vao to a minimum, as all the able-bodied young men had been taken away. I therefore sailed with the missionary for his station at Port Olry. Our route lay along the east coast of Santo. Grey rain-clouds hung on the high mountains in the interior, the sun shone faintly through the misty atmosphere, the greyish-blue sea and the greyish-green shore, with the brown boulders on the beach, formed a study in grey, whose hypnotic effect was increased by a warm, weary wind. Whoever was not on duty at the tiller lay down on deck, and as in a dream we floated slowly along the coast past lonely islands and bays; whenever we looked up we saw the same picture, only the outlines seemed to have shifted a little. We anchored near a lonely isle, to find out whether its only inhabitant, an old Frenchman, was still alive. He had arrived there a year ago, full of the most brilliant hopes, which, however, had not materialized. He had no boat, hardly ever saw a human being, and lived on wild fruits. Hardly anyone knows him or visits him, but he had not lost courage, and asked for nothing but a little salt, which we gave him, and then sailed on.

In Hog Harbour we spent the night and enjoyed a hearty English breakfast with the planters, the Messrs. Th., who have a large and beautiful plantation; then we continued our cruise. The country had changed somewhat; mighty banks of coral formed high tablelands that fell vertically down to the sea, and the living reef stretched seaward under the water. These tablelands were intersected by flat valleys, in the centre of which rose steep hills, like huge bastions dominating the country round. The islands off the coast were covered with thick vegetation, with white chalk cliffs gleaming through them at intervals. A thin mist filled the valleys with violet hues, the sea was bright and a fresh breeze carried us gaily along. The aspect of the country displayed the energies of elemental powers: nowhere can the origin of chalk mountains be more plainly seen than here, where we have the process before us in all its stages, from the living reef, shining purple through the sea, to the sandy beach strewn with bits of coral, to the high table mountain. We anchored at a headland near a small river, and were cordially welcomed by the missionary's dogs, cats, pigs and native teacher. There was also a young girl whom the father had once dug out of her grave, where a hard-hearted mother had buried her.

I had an extremely interesting time at Port Olry. The population here is somewhat different from that of the rest of Santo: very dark-skinned, tall and different in physiognomy. It may be called typically Melanesian, while many other races show Polynesian

admixture. The race here is very strong, coarse-featured and lives in the simplest way, without any industries, and is the primitive population in the New Hebrides.

A few details as to personal appearance may be of interest. Among the ornaments used are very large combs, decorated with pigs' tails. Pigs' tails also are stuck into the hair and ears. The hair is worn very long, rolled into little curls and plentifully oiled. A most peculiar deformation is applied to the nose and results in extreme ugliness: the septum is perforated, and instead of merely inserting a stick, a springy spiral is used, which presses the nose upward and forward, so that in time it develops into an immense, shapeless lump, as if numberless wasps had stung it. It takes a long time to get used to this sight, especially as the nose is made still more conspicuous by being painted with a bright red stripe on its point, and two black ones on each side. A more attractive ornament are flowers, which the men stick into their hair, where they are very effective on the dark background. In the lobes of the ears they wear spirals of tortoise-shell or thin ornaments of bone; the men often paint their faces with a mixture of soot and grease, generally the upper half of the forehead, the lower part of the cheeks and the back of the nose. The women and children prefer the red juice of a fruit, with which they paint their faces in all sorts of mysterious designs.

The dress of the men consists of a large belt, purposely worn very low so as to show the beautiful

curve of the loins. About six small mats hang down in front. Formerly, and even at the present day on festival occasions, they wore on the back an ovoid of wood; the purpose is quite unknown, but may originally have been a portable seat, as the Melanesian does not like to sit on the bare ground. Provided with this article of dress the wearer did not need to look about for a seat.

If the appearance of the men, while not beautiful, is at least impressive, the women are so very much disfigured that it takes quite some time to grow accustomed to their style of beauty. They are not allowed to wear many ornaments, have to shave their heads, and generally rub them with lime, so that they look rather like white-headed vultures, all the more so as the deformed nose protrudes like a beak and the mouth is large. The two upper incisors are broken out as a sign of matrimony.

Their figures, except in young girls, are generally wasted, yet one occasionally meets with a woman of fine and symmetrical build. The dress is restricted to a small leaf, attached to a thin loin-string. Both men and women generally wear at the back a bundle of leaves; women and boys have strongly scented herbs, the men coloured croton, the shade depending on the caste of the wearer. The highest castes wear the darkest, nearly black, varieties. These croton bushes are planted along the sides of the gamals, so as to furnish the men's ornaments, and they lend the sombre places some brightness and colour.

Half for ornament and half for purposes of heal-

ing are the large scars which may frequently be seen on the shoulders or breasts of the natives. The cuts are supposed to cure internal pains; the scabs are frequently scratched off, until the scar is large and high, and may be considered ornamental. Apropos of this medical detail I may mention another remedy, for rheumatism: with a tiny bow and arrow a great number of small cuts are shot into the skin of the part affected; the scars from these wounds form a network of fine, hardly noticeable designs on the skin.

The life and cult of the natives are as simple as their dress. The houses are scattered and hidden in the bush, grouped vaguely around the gamal, which stands alone on a bare square. No statues stand there, nor tall, upright drums; only a few small drums lie in a puddle around the gamal.

The dwelling-houses are simply gable-roofs, always without side-walls and often without any walls at all. They are divided into a pig-stable and a living-room, unless the owners prefer to have their pigs living in the same space with themselves.

A few flat wooden dishes are the only implements the native does not find ready-made in nature. Cooking is done with heated stones heaped around the food, which has been previously wrapped up in banana leaves. Lime-stones naturally cannot be used for that purpose, and volcanic stones have often to be brought from quite a distance, so that these cooking-stones are treated with some care. In place of knives the natives use shells or inland bamboo-

splinters, but both are rapidly being replaced by European knives.

On approaching a village we are first frightened by a few pigs, which run away grunting and scolding into the thicket. Then a pack of dogs announce our arrival, threatening us with hypocritical zeal. A few children, playing in the dirt among the pigs, jump up and run away, then slowly return, take us by the hand and stare into our faces. At noon we will generally find all the men assembled in the gamal making "lap-lap." Lap-lap is the national dish of the natives of the New Hebrides; quite one-fifth part of their lives is spent in making and eating lap-lap. The work is not strenuous. The cook sits on the ground and rubs the fruit, yam or taro, on a piece of rough coral or a palm-sheath, thus making a thick paste, which is wrapped up in banana leaves and cooked between stones. After a few hours' cooking it looks like a thick pudding and does not taste at all bad. For flavouring, cocoa-nut milk is poured over it, or it is mixed with cabbage, grease, nuts, roasted and ground, or occasionally with maggots. Besides this principal dish, sweet potatoes, manioc, bread-fruit, pineapples, bananas, etc., are eaten in season, and if the natives were less careless, they would never need to starve, as frequently happens.

The men are not much disturbed by our arrival. They offer us a log to sit on, and continue to rub their yam, talking us over the while. They seem to be a very peaceful and friendly crowd, yet in this district they are particularly cruel and treacherous,

GAMAL NEAR PORT OLROY, ABOUT SIXTY YARDS LONG.

and only a few days after my departure war broke out. The gamal is bare, except for a few wooden dishes hanging in the roof, and weapons of all kinds, not in full sight, but ready at any moment. We can see rifles, arrows and clubs. The clubs are very simple, either straight or curved sticks. Old pieces are highly valued, and carry marks indicating how many victims have been killed with them : I saw one club with sixty-seven of these marks. In former years the spear with about two hundred and fifty points of human bones was much used, but is now quite replaced by the rifle. The bones for spear-points and arrow-heads are taken from the bodies of dead relatives and high-castes. The corpse is buried in the house, and when it is decayed the bones of the limbs are dug out, split, polished and used for weapons. The idea is that the courage and skill of the dead man may be transmitted to the owner of the weapon, also, that the dead man may take revenge on his murderer, as every death is considered to have been caused by some enemy. These bones are naturally full of the poisons of the corpse, and may cause tetanus at the slightest scratch. On the arrows they are extremely sharp and only slightly attached to the wood, so that they stick in the flesh and increase the inflammation. Besides, they are often dipped in some special poison.

All over the archipelago the arrows are very carefully made, and almost every island has its own type, although they all resemble each other. Many are covered at the point with a fine spiral binding,

and the small triangles thus formed are painted in rows—red, green and white. Much less care is bestowed on the fish- and bird-arrows, which are three-pointed as a rule, and often have no point at all, but only a knob, so as to stun the bird and not to stick in the branches of the trees.

Shields are unknown. It would seem that the arrow was not, as elsewhere, the principal weapon, but rather the spear and club, and the wars were not very deadly, as the natives' skill in handling their weapons was equalled by their skill in dodging them.

Having inspected the gamal, we received from the highest caste present a gift of some yam, or taro, which we requited with some sticks of tobacco. The length of the gamal depends on the caste of the chief who builds it. I saw a gamal 60 mètres long, and while this length seems senseless to-day, because of the scanty population, it was necessary in former days, when the number of a man's followers rose with his rank. Not many years ago these houses were filled at night with sleeping warriors, each with his weapons at hand, ready for a fight. To-day these long, dark, deserted houses are too dismal for the few remaining men, so that they generally build a small gamal beside the big one.

To have killed a man, no matter in what way, is a great honour, and gives the right to wear a special plume of white and black feathers. Such plumes are not rare in Port Olry.

Each man has his own fire, and cooks his own food; for, as I have said, it would mean the loss of

caste to eat food cooked on the fire of a lower caste. Women are considered unworthy to cook a man's meal; in fact, their standing here is probably the lowest in all the archipelago. Still, they do not lack amusement; they gather like the men for social carousals, and are giggling and chattering all day long. Their principal occupation is the cultivation of the fields, but where Nature is so open-handed this is not such a task as we might think when we see them coming home in the afternoon, panting under an immense load of fruit, with a pile of firewood on top, a child on their back and possibly dragging another by the hand. Port Olry is the only place in the New Hebrides where the women carry loads on their heads. Everywhere else they carry them on their backs in baskets of cocoa-nut leaves. In consequence the women here are remarkable for their erect and supple carriage.

The work in the fields consists merely of digging out the yam and picking other fruit, and it is a sociable affair, with much talking and laughter. There is always something to eat, such as an unripe cocoa-nut or a banana. Serious work is not necessary except at the planting season, when the bush has to be cleared. Then a whole clan usually works together, the men helping quite energetically, until the fields are fenced in and ready for planting; then they hold a feast, a big "kai-kai," and leave the rest of the work to the women. The fences are made to keep out the pigs, and are built in the simplest way: sticks of the wild cotton-wood tree,

which grows rankly everywhere, are stuck into the ground at short intervals; they immediately begin to sprout, and after a short time form a living and impenetrable hedge. But they last much longer than is necessary, so that everywhere the fences of old gardens bar the road and force the traveller to make endless detours, all the more so as the natives have a way of making their fields right across the paths whenever it suits them.

The number of women here amounts only to about one-fourth of that of the men. One reason for this is the custom of killing all the widows of a chief, a custom which was all the more pernicious as the chiefs, as a rule, owned most of the young females, while the young men could barely afford to buy an old widow. Happily this custom is dying out, owing to the influence of the planters and missionaries; they appealed, not unwisely, to the sensuality of the young men, who were thus depriving themselves of the women. Strange to say, the women were not altogether pleased with this change, many desiring to die, for fear they might be haunted by the offended spirit of their husband.

When a chief died, the execution did not take place at once. The body was exposed in a special little hut in the thicket, and left to decay, which process was hastened by the climate and the flies. Then a death-feast was prepared, and the widows, half frantic with mad dancing and howling, were strangled.

Ordinary people are buried in their own houses,

which generally decay afterwards. Often the widow had to sleep beside the decaying body for one hundred days.

Being short of boys, I could not visit many of the villages inland, and I stayed on at the mission station, where there was generally something for me to do, as the natives frequently came loitering about the station. I made use of their presence as much as possible for anthropological measurements, but I could not always find willing subjects. Everything depends on the humour of the crowd; if they make fun of the first victim, the case is lost, as no second man is willing to be the butt of the innumerable gibes showered on the person under the instruments. Things are more favourable if it is only fear of some dangerous enchantment that holds them back, for then persuasion and liberal gifts of tobacco generally overcome their fears. The best subjects are those who pretend to understand the scientific meaning of the operation, or the utterly indifferent, who never think about it at all, are quite surprised to be suddenly presented with tobacco, and go home, shaking their heads over the many queer madnesses of white men. I took as many photographs as possible, and my pictures made quite a sensation. Once, when I showed his portrait to one of the dandies with the oiled and curled wig, he ran away with a cry of terror at his undreamt-of ugliness, and returned after a short while with his hair cut. His deformed nose, however, resisted all attempts at restoration.

The natives showed great reluctance in bringing me skulls and skeletons. As the bones decay very quickly in the tropics, only skulls of people recently deceased can be had. The demon, or soul, of the dead is supposed to be too lively as yet to be wantonly offended; in any case, one dislikes to disturb one's own relatives, while there is less delicacy about those of others. Still, in course of time, I gathered quite a good collection of skulls at the station. They were brought carefully wrapped up in leaves, fastened with lianas, and tied to long sticks, with which the bearer held the disgusting object as far from him as possible. The bundles were laid down, and the people watched with admiring disgust as I untied the ropes and handled the bones as one would any other object. Everything that had touched the bones became to the natives an object of the greatest awe; still they enjoyed pushing the leaves that had wrapped them up under the feet of an unsuspecting friend, who presently, warned of the danger, escaped with a terrified shriek and a wild jump. It would seem that physical disgust had as much to do with all this as religious fear, although the natives show none of this disgust at handling the remains of pigs. Naturally, the old men were the most superstitious; the young ones were more emancipated, some of them even going the length of picking up a bone with their toes.

Most of them had quite a similar dread of snakes, but some men handled them without much

fear, and brought me large specimens, which they had caught in a sling and then wrapped up in leaves. While I killed and skinned a big snake, a large crowd always surrounded me, ever ready for flight, and later my boys chased them with the empty skin, a performance which always ended in great laughing and dancing.

I had been in Port Olry for three weeks, waiting anxiously every day for the *Marie-Henry*, which was to bring the luggage I had left behind at the Segond Channel. My outfit began to be insufficient; what I needed most was chemicals for the preservation of my zoological specimens, which I had plenty of time and occasion to collect here. One day the *Marie-Henry*, a large schooner, arrived, but my luggage had been forgotten. I was much disappointed, as I saw no means of recovering it in the near future. The *Marie-Henry* was bound for Talamacco, in Big Bay, and took the Rev. Father and myself along.

One of the passengers was Mr. F., a planter and trader in Talamacco, and we soon became good friends with him and some of the others. Mr. F. was very kind, and promised to use all his influence to help me find boys. The weather was bad, and we had to tack about all night; happily, we were more comfortable on the big schooner than on the little cutters. At Talamacco Mr. F. offered us his hospitality, and as it rained continually, we were very glad to stay in his house, spending the time in sipping gin and winding up a hoarse gramophone.

Thus two lazy days passed, during which our host was constantly working for me, sending his foreman, the "moli," to all the neighbouring villages, with such good results that at last I was able to engage four boys for two months. I took them on board at once, well pleased to have the means, at last, of moving about independently.

We sailed in the evening, and when, next morning, we rounded Cape Quiros, we found a heavy sea, so that the big ship pitched and ploughed with dull hissing through the foaming waves. She lay aslant under the pressure of the wind that whistled in the rigging, and the full curve of the great sails was a fine sight; but it was evident that the sails and ropes were in a very rotten condition, and soon, with anxious looks, we followed the growth of a tear in the mainsail, wondering whether the mast would stand the strain. A heavy sea broke the rudder, and altogether it was high time to land when we entered Port Olry in the late afternoon.

A few days later I started for Hog Harbour, for the plantation of the Messrs. Th., near which I meant to attend a great feast, or "sing-sing." This meant a march of several hours through the bush. My boys had all put on their best finery,—trousers, shirts, gay handkerchiefs,—and had painted their hair with fresh lime.

"Well, boys, are you ready?" "Yes, Masta," they answer, with conviction, though they are far from ready, as they are still tying their bundles. After waiting a while, I say, "Well, me, me go."

They answer, "All right, you go." I take a few steps and wait again. One of them appears in front of the hut to look for a stick to hang his bundle on, another cannot find his pipe; still, after a quarter of an hour, we can really start. The boys sing and laugh, but as we enter the forest darkness they suddenly become quiet, as if the sternness of the bush oppressed their souls. We talk but little, and only in undertones. These woods have none of the happy, sensuous luxuriance which fancy lends to every tropical forest; there is a harshness, a selfish struggle for the first place among the different plants, a deadly battling for air and light. Giant trees with spreading crowns suppress everything around, kill every rival and leave only small and insignificant shrubs alive. Between them, smaller trees strive for light; on tall, straight, thin stems they have secured a place and developed a crown. Others look for light in round-about ways, making use of every gap their neighbours leave, and rise upward in soft coils. All these form a high roof, under which younger and weaker plants lead a skimped life—hardwood trees on thin trunks, with small, unassuming leaves, and vulgar softwood with large, flabby foliage. Around and across all this wind the parasites, lianas, rotang, some stretched like ropes from one trunk to another, some rising in elegant curves from the ground, some attached to other trunks and sucking out their life with a thousand roots, others interlaced in the air in distorted curves. All these grow and thrive on the bodies of former generations on the damp,

mouldy ground, where leaves rot and trunks decay, and where it is always wet, as never a sunbeam can strike in so far.

Thus it is sad in the forest, and strangely quiet, as in a churchyard, for not even the wind can penetrate the green surface. It passes rushing through the crowns, so that sometimes we catch an upward glimpse of bright yellow sunshine as though out of a deep gully. And as men in sternest fight are silent, using all their energy for one purpose, so here there is no sign of gay and happy life, there are no flowers or coloured leaves, but the endless, dull green, in an infinity of shapes.

Even the animals seem to shun the dark forest depths ; only on the highest trees a few pigeons bathe in the sun, and as they fly heavily over the wood, their call sounds, melancholy as a sad dream, from afar. A lonely butterfly flutters among the trees, a delicate being, unused to this dark world, seeking in vain for a ray of sun and a breath of fresh air. Sometimes we hear the grunt of an invisible pig, the breaking of branches and the rustling of leaves as it runs away. Moisture and lowering gloom brood over the swampy earth ; one would not be surprised if suddenly the ground were to move and wriggle like slimy snakes tightly knotted around each other. Thorns catch the limbs, vines catch the feet, and the wanderer, stumbling along, almost fancies he can hear the spiteful laughter of malicious demons. One feels tired, worried, unsafe, as if in an enemy's country, helplessly following the guide, who walks

noiselessly on the soft ground. With a branch he sweeps aside the innumerable spider-webs that droop across the path, to keep them from hanging in our faces. Silently the other men follow behind; once in a while a dry branch snaps or a trunk creaks.

In this dark monotony we go on for hours, without an outlook, and seemingly without purpose or direction, on a hardly visible path, in an endless wilderness. We pass thousands of trees, climb over hundreds of fallen trunks and brush past millions of creepers. Sometimes we enter a clearing, where a gaint tree has fallen or a village used to stand. Sometimes great coral rocks lie in the thicket; the pools at their foot are a wallowing-place for pigs.

It is a confusing walk; one feels quite dizzy with the constantly passing stems and branches, and a white man would be lost in this wilderness without the native, whose home it is. He sees everything, every track of beast or bird, and finds signs on every tree and vine, peculiarities of shape or grouping, which he recognizes with unerring certainty. He describes the least suggestion of a trail, a footprint, or a knife-cut, or a torn leaf. As the white man finds his way about a city by means of street signs, so the savage reads his directions in the forest from the trees and the ground. He knows every plant and its uses, the best wood for fires; he knows when he may expect to find water, and which liana makes the strongest rope. Yet even he seems to feel some-

thing of the appalling loneliness of the primeval forest.

Our path leads steeply up and down, over loose coral blocks, between ferns and mosses; lianas serve as ropes to help us climb over coral rocks, and with our knives we hew a passage through thorny creepers and thick bush. The road runs in zigzags, sometimes turning back to go round fallen trunks and swampy places, so that we really walk three or four times the distance to Hog Harbour. Our guide uses his bush-knife steadily and to good purpose: he sees where the creepers interlace and which branch is the chief hindrance, and in a few deft cuts the tangle falls.

At last—it seems an eternity since we dived into the forest—we hear from afar, through the green walls, a dull roaring, and as we go on, we distinguish the thunder of the breakers like the beating of a great pulse. Suddenly the thicket lightens, and we stand on the beach, blinded by the splendour of light that pours on us, but breathing freely in the fresh air that blows from the far horizon. We should like to stretch out on the sand and enjoy the free space after the forest gloom; but after a short rest we go on, for this is only half-way to our destination, and we dive once more into the semi-darkness.

Towards evening we reach the plantation of the Messrs. Th. They are Australians of good family, and their place is splendidly kept. I was struck by the cleanliness of the whole establishment, the good quarters of the native labourers, the quiet way in

which work was done, the pleasant relations between masters and hands, and last, but not least, the healthy and happy appearance of the latter.

The brothers had just finished the construction of what was quite a village, its white lime walls shining invitingly through the green of the cocoa-nut palms. There was a large kitchen, a storehouse, a tool-shed, a bakery, a dwelling-house and a light, open summer-house, a delightful spot, where we dined in the cool sea-breeze and sipped whisky in the moonlight, while the palm-leaves waved dreamily. Then there was a large poultry yard, pigsty and paddocks, and along the beach were the boat-houses, drying-sheds and storehouses, shaded by old trees. The boys' quarters were roomy, eight sleeping together in an airy hut, while the married couples had houses of their own. The boys slept on high beds, each with his "bocase" underneath, to hold his possessions, while all sorts of common property hung in the roof—nets, fish-spears, bows, guns, etc.

Such plantations, where the natives lack neither food nor good treatment, can only have a favourable influence on the race, and it is not quite clear why the Presbyterian missionaries do not like their young men to go in for plantation work. Owing to the good treatment of their hands the Messrs. Th. have always had enough labourers, and have been able to develop their plantation wonderfully. It consists almost exclusively of cocoa-nut palms, planted on ground wrested from the forest in a hard fight. When I was there the trees were not yet in full

bearing, but the proprietors had every reason to expect a very considerable income in a few years. The cultivation of the cocoa-nut is extremely simple; the only hard work is the first clearing of the ground, and keeping the young trees free from lianas. Once they are grown up, they are able to keep down the bush themselves to a certain extent, and then the work consists in picking up the ripe nuts from the ground, husking and drying them. The net profit from one tree is estimated at one shilling per annum. Besides the cultivation of their plantation the Messrs. Th. plied a flourishing trade in coprah and sandalwood all along the west coast of Santo, which they visited frequently in their cutter. This same cutter was often a great help to me, and, indeed, her owners always befriended me in the most generous way, and many are the pleasant hours I spent in their company.

After dinner that first day we went to the village where the "sing-sing" was to take place. There was no moon, and the night was pitch dark. The boys had made torches of palm-leaves, which they kept burning by means of constant swinging. They flared up in dull, red flames, lighting up the nearest surroundings, and we wound our way upwards through the trunk vines and leaves that nearly shut in the path. It seemed as if we were groping about without a direction, as if looking for a match in a dark room. Soon, however, we heard the dull sound of the drums, and the noise led us to the plateau, till we could see the red glare of a

GROUP OF LARGE AND SMALL DRUMS ON A DANCING-GROUND NEAR PORT SANDWICH.

fire and hear the rough voices of men and the shrill singing of women.

Unnoticed, we entered the dancing-ground. A number of men were standing in a circle round a huge fire, their silhouettes cutting sharply into the red glare. Out of a tangle of clubs, rifles, plumes, curly wigs, round heads, bows and violently gesticulating arms, sounds an irregular shrieking, yelling, whistling and howling, uniting occasionally to a monotonous song. The men stamp the measure, some begin to whirl about, others rush towards the fire; now and then a huge log breaks in two and crowns the dark, excited crowd with a brilliant column of circling sparks. Then everybody yells delightedly, and the shouting and dancing sets in with renewed vigour. Everyone is hoarse, panting and covered with perspiration, which paints light streaks on the sooty faces and bodies.

Noticing us, a man rushes playfully towards us, threateningly swinging his club, his eyes and teeth shining in the darkness; then he returns to the shouting, dancing mob around the fire. Half-grown boys sneak through the crowd; they are the most excited of all, and stamp the ground wildly with their disproportionately large feet, kicking and shrieking in unpleasant ecstasy. All this goes on among the guests; the hosts keep a little apart, near a scaffolding, on which yams are attached. The men circle slowly round this altar, carrying decorated bamboos, with which they mark the measure, stamping them on the ground with a thud. They sing

a monotonous tune, one man starting and the others joining in; the dance consists of slow, springy jumps from one foot to the other.

On two sides of this dancing circle the women stand in line, painted all over with soot. When the men's deep song is ended, they chant the same melody with thin, shrill voices. Once in a while they join in the dance, taking a turn with some one man, then disappearing; they are all much excited; only a few old hags stand apart, who are past worldly pleasures, and have known such feasts for many, many years.

The whole thing looks grotesque and uncanny, yet the pleasure in mere noise and dancing is childish and harmless. The picture is imposing and beautiful in its simplicity, gruesome in its wildness and sensuality, and splendid with the red lights which play on the shining, naked bodies. In the blackness of the night nothing is visible but that red-lit group of two or three hundred men, careless of to-morrow, given up entirely to the pleasure of the moment. The spectacle lasts all night, and the crowd becomes more and more wrought up, the leaps of the dancers wilder, the singing louder. We stand aside, incapable of feeling with these people or sharing their joy, realizing that theirs is a perfectly strange atmosphere which will never be ours.

Towards morning we left, none too early, for a tremendous shower came down and kept on all next morning. I went up to the village again, to

find a most dismal and dejected crowd. Around the square, in the damp forest, seedy natives stood and squatted in small groups, shivering with cold and wet. Some tried to warm themselves around fires, but with poor success. Bored and unhappy, they stared at us as we passed, and did not move. Women and children had made umbrellas of large flat leaves, which they carried on their heads; the soot which had formed their festival dress was washed off by the rain. The square itself was deserted, save for a pack of dogs and a few little boys, rolling about in the mud puddles. Once in a while an old man would come out of the gamal, yawn and disappear. In short, it was a *lendemain de fête* of the worst kind.

About once in a quarter of an hour a man would come to bring a tusked pig to the chief, who danced a few times round the animal, stamped his heel on the ground, uttered certain words, and retired with short, stiff steps, shaking his head, into the gamal. The morning was over by the time all the pigs were ready. I spent most of the time out of doors, rather than in the gamal, for there many of the dancers of the evening lay in all directions and in most uncomfortable positions, beside and across each other, snoring, shivering or staring sulkily into dark corners. I was offered a log to sit on, and it might have been quite acceptable had not one old man, trembling with cold, pressed closely against me to get warm, and then, half asleep, attempted to lay his shaggy, oil-soaked head

on my shoulder, while legions of starved fleas attacked my limbs, forcing me to beat a hasty though belated retreat.

In the afternoon about sixty pigs were tied to poles in front of the gamal, and the chief took an old gun-barrel and smashed their heads. They represented a value of about six hundred pounds! Dogs and men approached the quivering victims, the dogs to lick the blood that ran out of their mouths, the men to carry the corpses away for the feast. This was the prosaic end of the great "sing-sing."

As it is not always easy to borrow the number of pigs necessary to rise in caste, there are charms which are supposed to help in obtaining them. Generally, these are curiously shaped stones, sometimes carved in the shape of a pig, and are carried in the hand or in little baskets in the belt. Such charms are, naturally, very valuable, and are handed down for generations or bought for large sums. On this occasion the "big fellow-master" had sacrificed enough to attain a very high caste indeed, and had every reason to hold up his head with great pride.

Formerly, these functions were generally graced with a special feature, in the shape of the eating of a man. As far as is known, the last cannibal meal took place in 1906; the circumstances were these: Some young men were walking through the forest, carrying their Snider rifles, loaded and cocked as usual, on their shoulders. Unluckily, one of the rifles went off, and

killed the man behind, the son of an influential native. Everyone was aware that the death was purely accidental, but the father demanded a considerable indemnity. The "murderer," a poor and friendless youth, was unable to pay, and fled to a neighbouring village. He was received kindly enough, but his hosts sent secretly to the offended father to ask what they were to do with him. "Kill him and eat him," was the reply. They therefore prepared a great feast, in honour, as they said, of their beloved guest, and while he was sitting cheerfully near the fire, in anticipation of the good meal to come, they killed him from behind with an axe. The body was roasted, and the people of his village were asked to the feast. One man had received the forearm and hand, and while he was chewing the muscles and pulling away at the inflectors of the fingers, the hand closed and scratched his cheek, — "all same he alive,"—whereupon the horrified guest threw his morsel away and fled into the forest.

On my return to Port Olry I found that the Father had gone to visit a colleague, as his duties did not take up much of his time. His post at Port Olry was rather a forlorn hope, as the natives showed no inclination to become converts, especially not in connection with the poor Roman Catholic mission, which could not offer them any external advantages, like the rich and powerful Presbyterian mission. All the priests lived in the greatest poverty, in old houses, with very few servants. The one here had, besides a teacher from Malekula, an old native who had

quarrelled with his chief and separated from his clan. The good man was very anxious to marry, but no girl would have him, as he had had two wives, and had, quite without malice, strangled his second wife by way of curing her of an illness. I was reminded of this little episode every time I looked at the man's long, bony fingers.

One day a native asked me for medicine for his brother. I tried to find out the nature of the ailment, and decided to give him calomel, urging his brother to take it to him at once. The man had eaten a quarter of a pig all by himself, but, of course, it was said that he had been poisoned. His brother, instead of hurrying home, had a little visit with his friends at the coast, until it was dark and he was afraid to go home through the bush alone; so he waited till next morning, when it was too late. The man's death naturally made the murder theory a certainty, so the body was not buried, but laid out in the hut, with all sorts of finery. Around it, in spite of the fearful odour, all the women sat for ten days, in a cloud of blow-flies. They burned strong-scented herbs to kill the smell, and dug a little trench across the floor, in order to keep the liquids from the decaying corpse from running into the other half of the house. The nose and mouth of the body were stopped up with clay and lime, probably to keep the soul from getting out, and the body was surrounded by a little hut. In the gamal close by sat all the men, sulky, revengeful, and planning war, which, in fact, broke out within a few days after my departure.

The Messrs. Th. had been kind enough to invite me to go on a recruiting trip to Maevo, the most north-easterly island of the group. Here I found a very scanty population, showing many traces of Polynesian admixture in appearance and habits. The weather was nasty and our luck at recruiting poor, so that after a fortnight we returned to Hog Harbour. I went to Port Olry to my old priest's house, and a few days later Mr. Th. came in his cutter to take me to Tassimaloun in Big Bay; so I bade a hearty farewell to the good Father, whom I have never had the pleasure of meeting again.

# CHAPTER VII

## SANTO

THERE are hardly any natives left in the south of the Bay of St. Philip and St. James, generally called Big Bay. Only to the north of Talamacco there are a few villages, in which the remnants of a once numerous population, mostly converts of the Presbyterian mission, have collected. It is a very mixed crowd, without other organization than that which the mission has created, and that is not much. There are a few chiefs, but they have even less authority than elsewhere, and the feeling of solidarity is lacking entirely, so that I have hardly ever found a colony where there was so much intrigue, immorality and quarrelling. A few years ago the population had been kept in order by a Presbyterian missionary of the stern and cruel type; but he had been recalled, and his place was taken by a man quite unable to cope with the lawlessness of the natives, so that every vice developed freely, and murders were more frequent than in heathen districts. Matters were not improved by the antagonism between the Roman Catholic and Presbyterian missions and the traders; each worked against the others, offering the natives the best of opportunities to fish in troubled waters. The result of all this was a rapid decrease of the population and

VIEW ALONG THE SHORE OF A CORAL ISLAND.

frequent artificial sterility. The primitive population has disappeared completely in some places, and is only to be found in any numbers far inland among the western mountains. The situation is a little better in the north, where we find a number of flourishing villages along the coast around Cape Cumberland.

The nearest village to Talamacco was Tapapa. Sanitary conditions there were most disheartening, as at least half of the inhabitants were leprous, and most of them suffered from tuberculosis or elephantiasis. I saw hardly any children, so that the village will shortly disappear, like so many others.

Native customs along the coast are much the same as at Port Olry, but less primitive, and the houses are better built. There is wood-carving, or was. I found the doorposts of old gamals beautifully carved, and plates prettily decorated; but these were all antiques, and nothing of the kind is made at the present day.

The race, however, is quite different from that around Port Olry. There are two distinct types: one, Melanesian, dark, tall or short, thin, curly-haired, with a broad nose and a brutal expression; and one that shows distinct traces of Polynesian blood in its finer face, a larger body, which is sometimes fat, light skin and frequently straight hair. Just where this Polynesian element comes from it is hard to say, but the islands in general are very favourable to race-mixture along the coasts. As I said before, the Melanesian type shows two distinct varieties, a tall dark one, and a short light one. At first I did not realize the significance of the latter until I became

aware of the existence of a negroid element, of which I saw clear traces. The two varieties, however, are much intermingled, and the resulting blends have mixed with the Polynesian-Melanesian type, so that the number of types is most confusing, and it will be hard to determine the properties of the original one.

Finding little of interest in the immediate surroundings of Talamacco, I determined to make an excursion into the interior of the island. Mr. F. put his foreman, or moli, at my disposal, and he engaged my bearers, made himself useful during the trip in superintending the boys, and proved valuable in every way, as he was never afraid, and was known to nearly all the inland chiefs.

After a rainy spell of six weeks we had a clear day at last; and although the weather could not be taken into consideration when making my plans, still, the bright sunshine created that happy and expectant sensation which belongs to the beginning of a journey. The monthly steamer had arrived the day before, had shipped a little coprah, and brought some provisions for the trader and myself. I had completed my preparations, engaged my boys and was ready to start.

In the white glare of a damp morning we pulled from the western shore of Big Bay to the mouth of the Jordan River. The boat was cramped and overloaded, and we were all glad to jump ashore after a row of several hours. The boys carried the luggage ashore and pulled the boat up into the bush with much noise and laughter. Then we settled down in

the shade for our first meal, cooking being an occupation of which the boys are surprisingly fond. Their rations are rice and tea, with a tin of meat for every four. This discussed, we packed up, and began our march inland.

The road leads through a thin bush, over rough coral boulders and gravel deposited by the river. We leave the Jordan to our right, and march south-east. After about an hour we come to a swampy plain, covered with tall reed-grass. Grassy plains are an unusual sight in Santo ; the wide expanse of yellowish green is surrounded by dark walls of she-oak, in the branches of which hang thousands of flying-foxes. At a dirty pond we fill our kettles with greenish water, for our night camp will be on the mountain slope ahead of us, far from any spring. Even the moli has to carry a load of water, as I can hardly ask the boys to take any more. He feels rather humiliated, as a moli usually carries nothing but a gun, but he is good enough to see the necessity of the case, and condescends to carry a small kettle.

Straight ahead are the high coral plateaux across which our road lies. While we tackle the ascent, the sky has become overcast, the gay aspect of the landscape has changed to sad loneliness and a heavy shower soaks us to the skin. The walk through the jungle is trying, and even the moli loses the way now and again. Towards nightfall we enter a high forest with but little underbrush, and work our way slowly up a steep and slippery slope to an overhanging coral rock, where we decide to camp. We have

lost our way, but as night is closing in fast, we cannot venture any farther.

The loads are thrown to the ground in disorder, and the boys drop down comfortably; strong language on my part is needed before they make up their minds to pile up the luggage, collect wood and begin to cook. Meanwhile my own servant has prepared my bed and dried my clothes. Soon it is quite dark, the boys gather round the fires, and do not dare to go into the yawning darkness any more, for fear of ghosts.

The rain has ceased, and the soft damp night air hangs in the trees. The firelight is absorbed by the darkness, and only the nearest surroundings shine in its red glare; the boys are stretched out in queer attitudes round the fire on the hard rocks. Soon I turn out the lamp and lie listening to the night, where vague life and movement creeps through the trunks. Sometimes a breath of wind shivers through the trees, shaking heavy drops from the leaves. A wild pig grunts, moths and insects circle round the fires, and thousands of mosquitoes hum about my net and sing me to sleep. Once in a while I am roused by the breaking of a rotten tree, or a mournful cry from one of the dreaming boys; or one of them wakes up, stirs the fire, turns over and snores on. Long before daybreak a glorious concert of birds welcomes the new day. Half asleep, I watch the light creep across the sky, while the bush is still in utter darkness; suddenly, like a bugle-call, the first sunbeams strike the trees and it is broad day.

Chilly and stiff, the boys get up and crowd round the fires. As we have no more water there is no tea, and breakfast is reduced to dry biscuits. The moli has found the lost trail by this time, and we continue the ascent. On the plateau we again strike nearly impenetrable bush, and lose the trail again, so that after a few hours' hard work with the knives we have to retrace our steps for quite a distance. It is a monotonous climb, varied only by an occasional shot at a wild pig and fair sport with pigeons. Happily for the thirsty boys, we strike a group of bamboos, which yield plenty of water. All that is needed is to cut the joint of the stems, and out of each section flows a pint of clear water, which the boys collect by holding their huge mouths under the opening. Their clothes are soaked, but their thirst is satisfied and our kettles filled for the midday meal.

Presently we pass a native "camp" under an overhanging rock: it consists of a few parallel sticks, on which the native sleeps as well as any European on a spring-mattress, and a hollow in the ground, with a number of cooking-stones.

After a stiff climb we stop for our meal, then follow a path which gradually widens and improves, a sign that we are nearing a village. Towards evening we come to some gardens, where the natives plant their yam and taro. At the entrance of the village I make my boys close up ranks; although the natives are not supposed to be hostile, my people show signs of uneasiness, keeping close together

and carrying the few weapons we have very conspicuously.

We cross the village square to the gamal, a simple place, as they all are, with a door about a yard from the ground, in order to keep out the pigs which roam all over the village. In line with the front of the house is a row of tall bamboo posts, wound with vines; their hollow interior is filled with yam and taro, the remains of a great feast. The village seems quite deserted, and we peep cautiously into the interior of the gamal, where, after a while, we discern a man, lying on the damp and dirty ground, who stares at us in silent fright. He gets up and comes slowly out, and we can see that he has lost half of one foot from leprosy. From him the moli learns that the two chiefs are away at a great "sing-sing," and the rest of the men in the fields or in their wives' houses. There is nothing for us to do but sit down and wait, and be sniffed at by pigs, barked at by dogs and annoyed by fowls. The moli beats vigorously on one of the wooden drums that lie in the mud in front of the house. He has his own signal, which most of the natives know, so that all the country round is soon informed of his arrival.

One by one the men arrive, strolling towards the gamal as if unconscious of our presence; some of them greet one or the other of my boys whom they have met when visiting at the shore. Nearly all of them are sick with leprosy or elephantiasis or tuberculosis, and after the long rainy period they all have colds and coughs and suffer from rheumatism;

altogether they present a sad picture of degeneration and misery, and there are few healthy men to be seen.

My luggage is taken into the gamal, and I order the boys to buy and prepare food, whereupon the natives hurry away and fetch a quantity of supplies: pigs, fowls, yam, taro, of which I buy a large stock, paying in matches and tobacco. There are also eggs, which, I am assured, are delicious; but this is according to native taste, which likes eggs best when half hatched. While the boys are cooking, I spend the time in measuring the villagers. At first they are afraid of the shiny, pointed instruments, but the tobacco they receive, after submitting to the operation, dispels their fears. The crowd sits round us on the ground, increasing the uneasiness of my victims by sarcastic remarks.

Meanwhile, the women have arrived, and crouch in two groups at the end of the square, which they are forbidden to enter. There are about twenty of them, not many for nearly fifty men, but I see only three or four babies, and many faded figures and old-looking girls of coarse and virile shape, the consequence of premature abuse and artificial sterility. But they chat away quite cheerfully, giggle, wonder, clap their hands, and laugh, taking hold of each other, and rocking to and fro.

At last the two chiefs arrive, surprisingly tall and well-built men, with long beards carefully groomed, and big mops of hair. Like all the men, they are dressed in a piece of calico that hangs down in front, and a branch of croton behind. They have big

bracelets, and wear the curved tusks of pigs on their wrists. There is just time before nightfall to take their measures and photographs, then I retire into the gamal for my supper, during which I am closely observed by the entire male population. They make remarks about the spoons and the Worcester sauce, and when I put sugar into my tea, they whisper to each other, "Salt!" which idea is almost enough to spoil one's appetite, only the delicious roast sucking-pig is too tempting.

My toilet for the night is watched with the same attention; then, while I am still reading on my bed, the men seek their couches in the long, low house. They stir up all the fires, which smoke terribly, then they lie down on their bamboo beds, my boys among them, and talk and talk till they fall asleep,—a house-ful of leprous and consumptive men, who cough and groan all night.

In front of me, near the entrance, is the chief's place. He spends a long time in preparing his kava, and drinks it noisily. Kava is a root which is ground with a piece of sharp coral; the fibres are then mixed with water, which is contained in a long bamboo, and mashed to a soft pulp; the liquid is then squeezed out, strained through a piece of cocoa-nut bark into a cocoa-nut bowl and drunk. The liquid has a muddy, thick appearance, tastes like soapy water, stings like peppermint and acts as a sleeping-draught. In Santo only chiefs are allowed to drink kava.

At first, innumerable dogs disturbed my sleep,

and towards morning it grew very cold. When I came out of the hut, the morning sun was just getting the better of the mist, and spreading a cheery light over the square, which had looked dismal enough under a grey, rainy sky. I made all the women gather on the outskirts of the square to be measured and photographed. They were very bashful, and I almost pitied them, for the whole male population sat around making cruel remarks about them ; indeed, if it had not been for the chief's explicit orders, they would all have run away. They were not a very pleasant spectacle, on the whole. I was struck by the tired, suffering expression of even the young girls, a hopeless and uninterested look, in contradiction with their lively behaviour when unobserved. For they are natural and happy only when among themselves, and in the presence of the men they feel that they are under the eye of their master, often a brutal master, whose property they are. Probably they are hardly conscious of this, and take their position and destiny as a matter of course ; but they are constrained in the presence of their owners, knowing that at any moment they may be displeased or angry, for any reason or for none, and may ill-treat or even kill them. Aside from these considerations their frightened awkwardness was extremely funny, especially when posing before the camera. Some could not stand straight, others twisted their arms and legs into impossible positions. The idea of a profile view seemed particularly strange to them, and they always presented either their back or their

front view. The poor things got more and more nervous, the men roared, I was desperate,—altogether it was rather unsatisfactory.

I was in need of more bearers to carry the provisions I had bought, and the chiefs were quite willing to supply them; but their orders had absolutely no effect on the men, who were too lazy, and I should have been in an awkward position had not one of the chiefs hit on the expedient of employing his women. They obeyed without a moment's hesitation; each took a heavy load of yam, all but the favourite wife, the only pretty one of the number; her load was small, but she had to clear the trail, walking at the head of the procession.

The women led the way, chatting and giggling, patient and steady as mules, and as sure-footed and supple. Nothing stops them; with a heavy load on their heads they walk over fallen trunks, wade through ditches, twist through vines, putting out a hand every now and then to feel whether the bunch of leaves at their back is in place. They were certainly no beauties, but there was a charm in their light, soft step, in the swaying of their hips, in the dainty poise of their slim ankles and feet, and the softness and harmony of all their movements. And the light playing on their dark, velvety, shining bodies increased this charm, until one almost forgot the many defects, the dirt, the sores, the disease. This pleasant walk in the cool, dewy forest, under the bright leaves, did not last long, and after two hours' tramp we reached our destination.

INTERIOR OF A GAMAL ON VENUA LAVA.

At the edge of the square the women sat down beside their loads, and were soon joined by the women of the village. Our hostesses were at once informed of every detail of our outfit, our food and our doings, and several dozen pairs of big dark eyes followed our every movement. The women were all quite sure that I was a great doctor and magician, and altogether a dangerous man, and this belief was not at all favourable to my purposes.

We men soon withdrew to the gamal, where the men likewise had to be informed of everything relating to our doings and character. The gamal was low and dirty, and the state of health of the inhabitants still worse than in the first village, but at least there were a few more babies than elsewhere. The chief suffered from a horrible boil in his loin, which he poulticed with chewed leaves, and the odour was so unbearable that I had to leave the house and sit down outside, where I was surrounded by many lepers, without toes or even feet, a very dismal sight.

I now paid my carriers the wages agreed upon, but they claimed that I ought to pay the men extra, although their services had been included in the price. I took this for one of the tricks by which the natives try to get the better of a good-natured foreigner, and refused flatly, whereupon the whole crowd sat down in front of the house and waited in defiant silence. I left them there for half an hour, during which they whispered and deliberated in rather an uncomfortable way. I finally told them

that I would not pay any more, and that they had better go away at once. The interpreter said they were waiting for the chiefs to get through with something they had to talk over, and they stayed on a while longer. My refusal may have been a mistake, and there may really have been a misunderstanding, at any rate, I had to suffer for my unyielding way, inasmuch as the behaviour of our hosts immediately changed from talkative hospitality and childish curiosity to dull silence and suspicious reticence. The people sat around us, sullen and silent, and would not help us in any way, refused to bring firewood or show us the water-hole, and seemed most anxious to get rid of us. Under these circumstances it was useless to try to do any of my regular work, and I had to spend an idle and unpleasant afternoon. At last I induced a young fellow to show me the way to a high plateau near by, from which I had a beautiful view across trees to the east coast of the island, with the sea in a blue mist far away. As my guide, consumptive like all the others, was quite out of breath with our short walk, I soon had to return, and I paid him well. This immediately changed the attitude of all the rest. Their sullenness disappeared, they came closer, began to talk, and at last we spent the afternoon in comparative friendship, and I could attend to my business.

But the consequences of my short visit to the gamal became very noticeable. In my hat I found a flourishing colony of horrid bug-like insects; my pockets were alive, my camera was full of them, they

had crawled into my shoes, my books, my luggage, they were crawling, flying, dancing everywhere. Perfectly disgusted, I threw off all my clothes, and had my boys shake and clean out every piece. For a week I had to have everything cleaned at least once a day, and even then I found the loathsome creatures in every fold, under straps, in pouches.

On that afternoon I had a great success as an artist. My drawings of pigs, trees and men went the rounds and were quite immoderately admired, and preserved as we would a sketch of Holbein's. These drawings have to be done as simply as possible and fairly large, else the natives do not understand them. They consider every line essential, and do not understand shadows or any impressionistic treatment. We must remember that in our civilized art we work with many symbols, some of which have but a vague resemblance to the object they represent, whose meaning we know, while the savage does not. This was the reason why I had often no success at all with what I considered masterpieces, while the natives went into raptures over drawings I thought utter failures. At any rate, they made me quite a popular person.

The sick chief complained to me that a late wife of his had been poisoned, and as he took me for a great "witch-doctor," he asked me to find out the murderer. To the native, sickness or death is not natural, but always the consequence of witchcraft, either on the part of enemies or spirits. The terribly high death-rate in the last years makes it seem all

the more probable that mysterious influences are at work, and the native suspects enemies everywhere, whom he tries to render harmless by killing them. This leads to endless murders and vendettas, which decimate the population nearly as much as the diseases do. The natives know probably something about poisons, but they are always poisons that have to be mixed with food, and this is not an easy thing to do, as every native prepares his food himself. Most of the dreaded poisons are therefore simply charms, stones or other objects, which would be quite harmless in themselves, but become capable of killing by the mere terror they inspire in the victim. If the belief in these charms could be destroyed, a great deal of the so-called poisoning would cease, and it may be a good policy to deny the existence of poison, even at the risk of letting a murderer go unpunished. I therefore felt justified in playing a little comedy, all the more as I was sure that the woman had died of consumption, and I promised the chief my assistance for the next morning.

I had my bed made in the open air; even the boys would not enter the dirty house any more, and we slept well under the open sky, in spite of the pigs that grunted around us and the dew that fell like rain.

Next day the chief called all the men together; he was convinced that I could see through every one of them and tell who had done any wrong. So he made them all sit round me, and I looked very solemnly at each through the finder of my camera,

the chief watching carefully to see that I did not omit any one. The men felt uneasy, but did not quite know what to make of the whole performance. I naturally could not find anything wrong, and told the chief so, but he was not satisfied, and shook his head doubtfully. Then I talked to him seriously and tried to convince him that everyone had to die once, and that sickness was something natural, especially considering the filth in which they lived ; but I do not think my speech made much impression.

The men had now become very suspicious, the women were away, and I had great trouble in finding bearers and guides to the next village. A pleasant march brought us to this settlement, whose houses were close together in a big clearing. We were received very coolly by the chief and a few men. My bearers and guides would not be induced to accompany us farther, so that I had to ask for boys here ; but the chief said he had not a single able-bodied man, which I felt to be mere excuse. I also noticed that my own boys were very dissatisfied and sullen, and that something was in the wind. In order to raise their spirits, and not to leave our yam provisions behind, I had them cook the midday meal, but the sullen, threatening atmosphere remained the same. When it was time to continue our march, I heard them grumble and complain about their loads, and it all looked like rising mutiny. I was ahead with the chief, who had consented to show us the way, when the moli came after me and

informed me that the boys were unwilling to go on, that they were afraid to go farther inland and were ready to throw their loads away. Later on I learned that two of the boys had tried to bribe some natives to show them the road back to the coast and leave me alone with the moli. I assembled the boys and made them a speech, saying that their loads were not too heavy nor the marches too long, that they were all free to return home, but would have to take the consequences, and that I and the moli would go on without them. If they liked, I said, they could throw away their tinned meats, I did not care, and the two bottles of grog were not meant for me, and we could easily spare those. I grasped the bottles and offered to smash them, but that was too much for the boys; half crying, they begged me not to do that: the bottles were not too heavy, and they would gladly carry them as far as I liked. Hesitatingly I allowed myself to be persuaded, and kindly desisted from the work of destruction. I had won, but I had lost confidence in my boys, and was careful not to put their patience and fidelity to any more tests, conscious as I was of how much depended on their goodwill. After this episode they accomplished a long and tiresome march, up and down through thick bush on slippery clay, quite willingly. In the evening we reached a few huts in a clearing at a height of about 1200 feet, and went into camp for the night.

While cooking, we heard dismal howling and weeping from a neighbouring hut; it was a woman

mourning her husband, who had been dead ninety-nine days. To-morrow, on the hundredth day, there was to be a death-feast, to which all the neighbours were invited. Of course, this man, too, had been poisoned.

The fire of revolt was smouldering in my boys. They sat round the camp-fire in groups, whispering and plotting, grumbling and undecided; but I felt safe enough, as they were evidently divided into two parties, one faithful and the other mutinous, and the former seemed rather more influential. They proved their goodwill to me by delightful servility, and took excellent care of me.

Next morning we were wakened by the howls of the unhappy widow, and soon the guests appeared, some from far off, and all bringing contributions to the feast. They killed several pigs, and while the men cut them up in a manner rather more clever than appetizing, the women prepared the fires by lighting large quantities of wood to heat the cooking-stones. This lasted several hours. Meanwhile, every person present received his share of a half-rotten smoked pig, of the freshly killed pigs, yam, taro and sweet potatoes. The women took the entrails of the pigs, squeezed them out, rolled them up in banana leaves, and made them ready for cooking. When the fire was burnt down they took out half of the stones with forks of split bamboo, and then piled up the food in the hole, first the fruit, then the meat, so that the grease should run over the fruit; then the hole was covered with banana leaves, the hot stones

piled on top and covered with more leaves. Food cooked in this way is done in three or four hours, so that the "stoves" are usually opened in the afternoon, and enormous quantities eaten on the spot, while the rest is put in baskets to take home. The amount a native can eat at one sitting is tremendous, and one can actually watch their stomachs swell as the meal proceeds. Violent indigestion is generally the consequence of such a feast. On the whole, no one seemed to be thinking much of the dead man in whose honour it was given,—such things are said to happen in civilized countries as well.

I stayed in this village for another day, and many chiefs from the neighbourhood came to consult me, always complaining of the one thing—poison. Each secretly accused the others, each wanted me to try my glass on all the others. I did not like my reputation of being a magician at all, as it made the people still more suspicious of me and more afraid of my instruments and my camera.

These so-called chiefs were rather more intelligent than the average. Most of them had worked for whites at one time, and learned to speak pidgin-English; but they were as superstitious as anyone else, and certainly greater rogues. They were naked and dirty, but some had retained some traces of civilization, one, for instance, always took off his old felt hat very politely, and made quite a civilized bow; he must have been in Nouméa in former days.

There was no leprosy or elephantiasis here, but a great deal of tuberculosis, and very few children,

and nearly all the men complained that their women were unwilling to have any more children.

From the next village I had a glimpse of the wild mountains of western Santo. I decided to spend the night here, left the boys behind, and went southward with the moli and a few natives. This was evidently the region where the volcanic and coral formations meet, for the character of the landscape suddenly changed, and instead of flat plateaux we found a wild, irregular country, with lofty hills and deep, narrow gullies. Walking became dangerous, though the path was fair. On top of a hill I found an apparently abandoned village, from which I could overlook all central Santo. To the west were the rugged, dark-looking mountains round Santo Peak, with white clouds floating on the summit, and a confusion of deep blue valleys and steep peaks; northward lay the wild Jordan valley, and far away I could distinguish the silver mirror of Big Bay. All around us rose the silent, stern, lonely forest—imposing, unapproachable.

On our way back to camp we rested beside a fresh creek which gaily squeezed its way through rocks and rich vegetation. A little tea and a tin of sardines were all the menu, but we enjoyed a delightful bath in the cool water, and had as good a wash as we could without soap. It was a great luxury after the hot days in the coral country without any water. While our things were drying in the bright sun, we lay in the moss near the rushing stream, and it was like a summer day at home in the mountains. The

water sounded familiar, the soft, cool breeze was the same, and while I lay watching the white clouds through the bright foliage I dreamt of home. At home I had dreamt of travel, and thus one wish follows the other and the soul is preserved from lazy content. I almost fancied I heard the sound of bells and the far-away lowing of cattle. And again the reality seemed like a dream when I roused myself and saw the dark figures crouching on the rocks, with their frizzy mops of hair and their Sniders on their knees.

The village turned out to be too dirty to spend the night in, and I decided to go to one which seemed quite near, just across a gully. Had I known what an undertaking it would be, I would not have started, for the ravine was very deep and the sides unpleasantly steep ; but my boys managed the descent, over rocks and fallen trees, with their usual cleverness. At the bottom we were rewarded by a beautiful sight. Beneath us, in a narrow cut it had eaten through the rock, roared a river, foaming out of the depths of the dark wilderness. It was like one of the celebrated gorges in the Alps, only the tropical vegetation which hung in marvellous richness and variety over the abyss gave a fairy-like aspect to the scene. The boys did not seem to appreciate it in the least, and prepared, sighing, for the steep ascent. A simple bridge led across the gully ; it was made of a few trees, and even provided with a railing in the shape of a vine. The existence of this bridge surprised me very much ; for, considering the thoughtless egotism

with which the natives pass through life, I had thought them incapable of any work of public utility. They rarely think of repairing a road or cutting a vine, nor do they remove trees that may have fallen across the path, but always rely on others to see to it.

The second village was not much cleaner than the first, but we camped there, and the next day I went with the moli and a few of my boys to the western mountains. The natives warned us, saying that the people were "no good" and would kill us. But, for one thing, I could not see that they themselves were particularly "good," and, for another, I knew that all natives consider other tribes especially dangerous; so I stuck to my intention, only we hung all our available weapons about us, leaving the rest of the boys defenceless.

This turned out one of the most strenuous days I ever had in the islands, as the road—and what a road!—constantly led up and down the steepest slopes. It seemed to me we were climbing perpendicular mountains all day long, and I had many an opportunity of admiring the agility of my companions. I am a fair walker myself, but I had to crawl on my hands and knees in many spots where they jumped from a stone to a root, taking firm hold with their toes, never using their hands, never slipping, and always with a loaded and cocked rifle on their shoulders. My boys from the coast, good pedestrians though they were, always remained far behind.

First we reached well-tended taro fields, then a few scattered huts. The natives received us very kindly,

and more men kept joining us, till we formed a big, jolly crowd. The population here seemed very primitive, and evidently had but little contact with the shore, but they were clean and comparatively healthy and flourishing, and I found them rather more frank, childlike and confiding than others I had seen.

We roasted our yam, and while we were enjoying our frugal but delicious meal, I witnessed rather an amusing episode. A bushman, painted black for mourning, suddenly called to one of my boys, and wanted to shake hands with him. My boy, a respectable "schoolboy," was visibly annoyed by the idea of having anything to do with a naked "man-bush," and behaved with icy reserve; but he could not long resist the rural cordiality of the other, and presently resigned himself to his fate, and made friends. It turned out that they had once worked together in Vila, and one had become an elegant young swell, while the other returned to simple country life.

On the way back we rested by the river-bank, amusing ourselves by shooting pigeons with pistols and guns, feeling quite peaceful and happy. But the sound of our shots had an unexpected effect in the village where I had left the rest of my boys. All the natives jumped to their feet, shouting, "Did we not tell you that they would kill your master? Now you have heard them; he is dead, and now we will see what you have in your boxes and divide it among ourselves."

They approached my boys threateningly, where-

upon they all ran away, with the exception of the ringleader of the mutineers of the last few days, who sat down on the box containing the trading-stock and said they had better go and see whether I was really dead before plundering my luggage. The situation must have grown rather strained, until some one had the good sense to go and look out for us, whereupon he saw us sitting peacefully near the river below. This calmed the natives, they withdrew, much disappointed, and my boys returned and prepared everything for my arrival with remarkable zeal. I found dry clothes ready, and tea boiling, and was quite touched by so much thoughtfulness. I was not told of the day's occurrence till after my return to the coast, and perhaps it was just as well.

By this time I had seen a good part of south-east Santo, and I was eager to visit the south-west, with Santo Peak. But without guides and with marked symptoms of home-sickness on the part of my boys, I decided it would not be wise to attempt it. The news that we were going to start for home revived the boys at once. With enormous alacrity they packed up next day and raced homeward with astonishing speed and endurance; I had had to drag them along before, now I could hardly keep up with them. In two days we had reached the plain of the Jordan, had a delightful swim and a jolly last night in camp, free from pigs, dogs, fowls, fleas and bugs,—but not from mosquitoes!

The last day we strolled in and along the river, through the forest swarming with wild pigs and

pigeons, while a huge colony of flying-foxes circled in the air, forming an actual cloud, and then we came to the shore, with the wide expanse of Big Bay peaceful in the evening sun. A painful walk on the sharp pebbles of the beach brought us home towards nightfall.

## CHAPTER VIII

### SANTO (*continued*)—PYGMIES

THE term of service of my boys had now expired, and I had to look about for others. Happily, now that I was known in the region, I had less trouble, especially as I held out the prospect of a visit to Nouméa. With six boys of my own and a few other men, I started on another journey.

I had always suspected the existence of a race of pygmies in the islands, and had often asked the natives if they had ever seen "small fellow men." Generally they stared at me without a sign of intelligence, or else began to tell fairy-tales of dwarfs they had seen in the bush, of little men with tails and goat's feet (probably derived from what they had heard of the devil from missionaries), all beings of whose existence they were perfectly convinced, whom they often see in the daytime and feel at night, so that it is very hard to separate truth from imagination.

I had heard stories of a colony of tailed men near Mele, and that, near Wora, north of Talamacco, tailed men lived in trees; that they were very shy and had long, straight hair. The natives pretended they had nearly caught one once. All this sounded interesting and improbable, and I was not anxious to start on a mere wild-goose chase. More exact in-

formation, however, was forthcoming. One of my servants told me that near a waterfall I could see shining out of a deep ravine far inland, there lived "small fellow men."

It was an exceptionally stormy morning when we started, so that Mr. F. advised me to postpone my departure; but in the New Hebrides it is no use to take notice of the weather, and that day it was so bad that it could not get any worse, which was some consolation. Soon we were completely soaked, but we kept on along the coast to some huts, where we were to meet our guide. Presently he arrived, followed by a crowd of children, as they seemed to me, who joined our party. While climbing inland toward the high mountains, I asked the guide if he knew anything about the little people; he told me that one of them was walking behind me. I looked more closely at the man in question, and saw that whereas I had taken him for a half-grown youth, he was really a man of about forty, and all the others who had come with him turned out to be full-grown but small individuals. Of course I was delighted with this discovery, and should have liked to begin measuring and photographing at once, had not the torrents of rain prevented.

I may mention here that I found traces later on of this diminutive race in some other islands, but rarely in such purity as here. Everywhere else they had mingled with the taller population, while here they had kept somewhat apart, and represented an element by themselves, so that I was fortunate in having my

WILD MOUNTAIN SCENERY IN THE DISTRICT OF THE PYGMY POPULATION.

attention drawn to them here, as elsewhere I might easily have overlooked them.

The trail by which we were travelling was one of the worst I ever saw in the islands, and the weather did not improve. The higher up we went, the thicker was the fog; we seemed to be moving in a slimy mass, breathing the air from a boiler. At noon we reached the lonely hut, where a dozen men and women squatted, shivering with cold and wet, crowded together under wretched palm-leaf mats, near a smouldering fire. There were some children wedged into the gaps between the grown-ups. Our arrival seemed to rouse these poor people from their misery a little; one man after the other got up, yawning and chattering, the women remained sitting near the fire. We made them some hot tea, and then I began to measure and take pictures, to which they submitted quite good-humouredly.

I was much struck by the fact of these men and women living together, a most unusual thing in a Melanesian district, where the separation of the sexes and the "Suque" rules are so rigorously observed.

We started off once more in the icy rain, keeping along the crest of the hill, which was just wide enough for the path. The mountain sloped steeply down on either side, the thick mist made an early twilight, we could only see the spot where we set our feet, while all the surroundings were lost in grey fog, so that we felt as though we were walking in a void, far above all the world. At nightfall we arrived at a solitary hut—the home of our companions. After

having repaired the broken roof, my boys succeeded in lighting a fire, though how they did it is a mystery, as matches and everything else were soaked. Soon tea and rice were boiling, while I tried to dry my instruments, especially my camera, whose watertight case had not been able to resist the rain. Then I wrapped myself up in my blanket, sipped my tea and ate my rice, and smoked a few pipes. It certainly is a reward for the day's work, that evening hour, lying satisfied, tired and dreamy, under the low roof of the hut, while outside the wind roars through the valley and the rain rattles on the roof, and a far-off river rushes down a gorge. The red fire paints the beams above me in warm colours, and in the dark corners the smoke curls in blue clouds. Around a second fire the natives lie in ecstatic laziness, smoking and talking softly, pigs grunt and dogs scratch busily about.

In the morning the storm had passed, and I could see that the house was set on the slope of a high mountain, much as a chalet is, and that we were at the end of a wild ravine, from every side of which fresh rivulets and cascades came pouring. Owing to the mountainous character of the country there are no villages here, but numerous huts scattered all along the mountains, two or three families at the utmost living together. The structure of the houses, too, was different from those on the coast; they had side walls and a basement of boulders, sometimes quite carefully built. Here men and women live together, and a separation of the fires does not seem

to exist, nor does the "Suque" seem to have penetrated to this district.

We passed several hamlets where the mode of life was the same as in this one. The dress of the men is the same as at the coast, except that they wind strings of shell-money about their waists in manifold rows. The women wear a bunch of leaves in front and behind. The weapons are the same as elsewhere, except that here we find the feathered arrows which are such a rarity in the Pacific. It is surprising to find these here, in these secluded valleys among the pygmy race, and only here, near Talamacco, nowhere else where the same race is found. It is an open question whether these feathered arrows are an original invention in these valleys, an importation or a remnant of an earlier culture.

The population lives on the produce of the fields, mostly taro, which is grown in irrigated lands in the river bottoms.

In appearance these people do not differ much from those of central Santo, who are by no means of a uniform type. The most important feature is their size, that of the men amounting to 152 cm., that of the women to 144 cm. The smallest man I measured was 138·0 cm., others measured 146·0, 149·2, 144·2, 146·6, 140·6, 149·0, 139·6, 138·4 cm. The maximum size is hard to state, as even here the small variety has mixed with taller tribes, so that we find all the intermediate sizes, from the pygmy 139·6 cm. high, to the tall Melanesian of 178·0 cm. My object, therefore, was to find a colony of pure pygmies,

and I pursued it in many subsequent wanderings, but without success. The following description is based on the type as I constructed it in the course of my travels and observations.

The hair is very curly, and seems black, but is in reality a dark, yellowish brown. Fil-fil is less frequent than among the tall variety. The forehead is straight, very slightly retreating, vaulted and rather narrow, the eyes are close together, straight, medium-sized and dark brown. The superciliar ridges are but slightly developed. The jaw-bones are large, but do not protrude, whereas the chewing muscles are well developed, which gives the face breadth, makes the chin-line round and the chin itself small and pointed. The mouth is not very large, with moderately thick lips, the nose is straight, hardly open toward the front, the nostrils not thick. As a rule, the growth of beard is not heavy, unlike that of the tall Melanesians ; there is only a light moustache, a few tufts at the chin and near the jaw. Up to the age of forty this is all ; in later years a heavier beard develops, but the face and the front of the chin remain free.

Thus it will be seen that these people are not at all repulsive, as all the ridges of bone and the heavy muscle attachments which make the face of ordinary Melanesians so brutal are lacking. On the contrary, they look quite agreeable and childlike. Their bodies are vigorous, but lightly built : the chest broad and deep, the arms and legs fine, with beautiful delicate joints, the legs well proportioned, with hand-

some calves. Their feet are short and broad, especially in front, but the great toe does not stand off from the others noticeably. Thus the pygmy has none of the proportions of a child, and shows no signs of degeneration, but is of harmonious build, only smaller than other Melanesians.

The shade of the skin varies a good deal from a dull purple, brownish-black, to coffee colour; but the majority of individuals are light, and the dark ones probably inherited their shade from the tall race.

Deformations of the body are not practised, save for an occasional perforation of the lobes of the ear. I never saw a perforation of the septum, nor women with incisors extracted.

It seems as if the small race were better preserved here in Santo than the tall one. The diseases which destroy the other tribes are less frequent here, there are more children and a good number of women. All this may be due to a great extent to their living inland and not coming into touch with the unfavourable sides of civilization as the coast tribes do, but even more to the hardy outdoor life in the mountains. In their country one cannot walk three steps on a level, and the whole population is expert in climbing, very sure-footed, thinking nothing of jumping with a heavy load from one rock to another, or racing at full speed down the steep and uneven slopes.

In character, too, they differ from the tribes near the water. They seem less malicious and more confiding, and show less of the distrust and shy reserve of the average Melanesian. They will laugh and

chat in the presence of strangers, and are very hospitable. I do not know if these are accidental impressions, but I can only say that I always felt safer and more comfortable in a village where the majority of the inhabitants belonged to the small race.

With all this the pygmies are by no means helpless or even inferior, compared to their tall neighbours. Possibly, in former days, they may have been driven from their homes in the plains back into the mountains, but at present they are quite equal to the tall race, and the "salt-water men" are even a little afraid of their small neighbours inland. What they lack in size and strength they make up in speed and suppleness and temperament. The barrier between the races has disappeared, and the mixing process is hastened by the fact that the small race frequently sells its women to the tall one. It is rare for a woman from the coast to settle in the mountains, still, it occurs frequently enough to alloy the purity of the pygmy race, and in no village have I found more than about 70 per cent. of real pygmies.

In the afternoon we came to the chief's dwelling. The old man lived there alone with his wife, quietly and happily, venerated by all the other people. It was touching to see the little couple, delicate as two dolls, who seemed to love each other sincerely, a most uncommon occurrence in Melanesia. I really had too much respect for the old people to trouble them with my measuring instruments, but I could not resist taking their pictures. After consulting her

husband with a look of the greatest confidence, the old lady consented shyly, while he stood beside her as if it was an everyday event to him, and a sort of tribute I was paying to his age and position and the beauty of his wife.

From this point I had a fine view of the cascade that fell down in a wide silver ribbon through the forest. Some months later all that wild scenery was destroyed by an earthquake, which caused many landslides and spoilt the cascade. Following the roaring river, jumping from one block of stone to another, we soon reached our camp, a large gamal. As we were nearing the coast its arrangements were adapted to the customs of the tall Melanesians. There were a few small individuals, but the tall race was predominant. The reign of the "Suque" was evident by the floor of the gamal being divided by parallel sticks into compartments corresponding to the number of fires and castes, and each man sat down in his division and cooked his own food.

Next day, after having waded through the cold water of the river, we arrived at the coast. From the last hills I sent a farewell look into the wild green tangle of forest, rocks, ravines, cascades and valleys, over which heavy rain-clouds were gathering. Before me the greyish-blue mirror of Big Bay lay in the mist, and in the Jordan valley the rain fell heavily. The high reed-grass all around us rustled dismally, and the damp cold was depressing. I hurried home and arrived there in the night, wet as when I had started on my expedition.

With regard to the pygmies I must not omit to mention the following experience. The fact that among them husband and wife live together, and that I had nowhere seen a man with two wives, made me suspect that this race was monogamous, as other pygmy races are. I made frequent inquiries, and was assured that each man was allowed but one wife. Still, I was not quite convinced, for it seemed strange to find a monogamous population in the midst of polygamous tribes. Others having given me similar information, I began to accept this theory as a fact. At last, however, I found I had been deceived, as all the people had taken me for a missionary, and had fancied I was asking them questions in order to interfere with their matrimonial customs by sending them a teacher or a "mission-police-man." My error was cleared up, thanks to the investigations of a trader, for which I am much indebted to him.

# CHAPTER IX

## SANTO (*continued*)—PIGS

The sun had hardly risen, yet the air hung heavy in the shrubs surrounding my sleeping-hut. Damp heat and light poured into the shed-like room, where hundreds of flies and as many mosquitoes sought an entrance into my mosquito-net. It was an atmosphere to sap one's energy; not even the sunshine, so rare in these parts, had any attraction for me, and only the long-drawn "Sail ho!" of the natives, announcing the arrival of the steamer, had power to drive me out of bed.

She soon came to anchor and sent a boat ashore, and when I entered my host's house, I found some of the ship's officers there, ready for business and breakfast. Probably to drown the touch of home-sickness that the arrival of a steamer brings to those who are tied to the islands, our host set about emptying his cellar with enthusiasm and perseverance, while the visitors would have been satisfied with much smaller libations, as they had many more stations to visit that day.

While the crew was loading the coprah and landing a quantity of goods, the host started his beloved gramophone for the general benefit, and a fearful hash of music drifted out into the waving palms.

Presently some one announces that the cargo is all aboard, whereupon the supercargo puts down his paper and remarks that they are in a hurry. A famous soprano's wonderful high C is ruthlessly broken off short, and we all run to the beach and jump on the backs of boys, who carry us dry-shod to the boat. We are rowed to the steamer, and presently descend to the storeroom, which smells of calico, soap, tobacco and cheese. Anything may be bought here, from a collar-button to a tin of meat, from perfumery to a shirt, anything,—and sometimes even the very thing one wants. We provide for the necessities of life for the next month or two, hand over our mail and end our visit with a drink. Then the whistle blows, we scramble into the boat, and while my host waves his hat frantically and shouts "good-bye," the steamer gradually disappears from sight. My friend has "a bad headache" from all the excitement of the morning. I guide him carefully between the cases and barrels the steamer has brought, and deposit him in his bunk; then I retire to my own quarters to devour my mail.

Some days after this we went to see a "sing-sing" up north. We rowed along the shore, and as my host was contributing a pig, we had the animal with us. With legs and snout tightly tied, the poor beast lay sadly in the bottom of the boat, occasionally trying to snap the feet of the rowers. The sea and the wind were perfect, and we made good speed; in the evening we camped on the beach. The next day

was just as fine; my host continued the journey by boat, while I preferred to walk the short distance that remained, accompanied by the pig, whose health did not seem equal to another sea-voyage in the blazing sun. It was touching to see the tenderness with which the natives treated the victim-elect, giving it the best of titbits, and urging it with the gentlest of words to start on the walk. It was quite a valuable animal, with good-sized tusks. After some hesitation the pig suddenly rushed off, Sam, his keeper, behind. First it raced through the thicket, which I did not like, so I proposed to Sam to pull the rope on the energetic animal's leg; but Sam would not damp its splendid enthusiasm for fear it might balk afterwards. Sam managed, however, to direct it back into the path, but we had a most exhausting and exciting, if interesting, walk, for the pig was constantly rushing, sniffing, grunting and digging on all sides, so that Sam was entirely occupied with his charge, and it was quite impossible to converse. At last we proudly entered the village, and the beast was tied in the shade; we separated, not to meet again till the hour of sacrifice.

I was then introduced to the host, a small but venerable old man, who received me with dignified cordiality. We could not talk together, but many ingratiating smiles assured each of the other's sympathy. The village seemed extremely pleasant to me, which may have been due to the bright sun and the cool breeze. The square was situated on the beach, which sloped steeply to the sea. Along the

ridge were planted brightly-coloured trees, and between their trunks we could see the ocean, heavenly blue. On the other side were the large, well-kept gamals, and crowds of people in festival attire; many had come from a distance, as the feast was to be a big one, with plenty to eat for everybody.

Palo, the host, was very busy looking after his guests and giving each his share of good things. He was a most good-natured, courteous old gentleman, although his costume consisted of nothing but a few bunches of ferns. The number of guests increased steadily; besides the real heathen in unadorned beauty, there were half-civilized Christians, ugly in ill-fitting European clothes, of which they were visibly vain, although they made blots on the beautiful picture of native life. All around the square grunted the tusked pigs.

At noon four men gave the signal for the beginning of the festivities by beating two big drums, which called the guests to dinner. Palo had sent us a fowl cooked native fashion between hot stones, and, like everything cooked in this way, it tasted very delicious. Shortly afterwards the real ceremonies began, with the killing of about two hundred young female pigs which had been kept in readiness in little bamboo sheds.

Accompanied by the drums, Palo led all the high-castes in dancing steps out of the gamal and round the square. After a few turns the chiefs drew up in line in front of him, and he mounted a stone table, while everyone else kept on dancing. His favourite

wife was next to the table, also dancing. Palo was entirely covered with ferns, which were stuck in his hair, his bracelets and his belt. He still looked quite venerable, but with a suggestion of a faun, a Bacchus or a Neptune. It was a warm day, and the dancing made everybody perspire more than freely.

Now one of the other men took hold of a little pig by the hind-legs and threw it in a lofty curve to one of the dancing chiefs, who caught the little animal, half stunned by the fall, and, still dancing, carried it to Palo, who killed it by three blows on the head, whereupon it was laid at his feet. This went on for a long time. It was a cruel sight. Squealing and shrieking, the poor animals flew through the air, fell heavily on the hard earth, and lay stunned or tried to crawl away with broken backs or legs. Some were unhurt, and ran off, but a bloodthirsty crowd was after them with clubs and axes, and soon brought them back. Still, one man thought this troublesome, and broke the hind-legs of each pig before throwing it to the chief, so that it might not escape. It was horrible to see and hear the bones break, but the lust for blood was upon the crowd, and on all sides there were passionate eyes, distorted faces and wild yells. Happily the work was soon done, and in front of Palo lay a heap of half-dead, quivering animals. He and his wife now turned their backs to the assembly, while a few high-castes counted the corpses. For each ten one lobe was torn off a sicca-leaf, then the missing lobes were counted, and after a puzzling calculation, the result was announced. Palo turned

round and descended from his pedestal with much dignity, though panting from his exertions, and looking so hot that I feared an apoplexy for the old man. I did not know how tough such an old heathen is, nor that his efforts were by no means at an end. *Noblesse oblige* and such high caste as Palo's is not attained without trouble.

As female pigs may not be eaten, those just killed were thrown into the sea by the women; meanwhile, the chiefs blew a loud blast on the shell-bugles, to announce to all concerned that Palo's first duty was accomplished. The deep yet piercing tones must have sounded far into the narrow valleys round.

Then poles were driven into the ground, to which the tusked pigs were tied. Some were enormous beasts, and grunted savagely when anyone came near them. I saw my companion of the morning lying cheerfully grunting in the shade of a tree. Now came a peculiar ceremony, in which all who had contributed pigs were supposed to take part. To my disappointment, Mr. F. refused to join in. Palo took up his position on the stone table, armed with a club. Out of a primitive door, hastily improvised out of a few palm-leaves, the chiefs came dancing in single file, swinging some weapon, a spear or a club. Palo jumped down, danced towards them, chased each chief and finally drove them, still dancing, back through the door. This evidently symbolized some fight in which Palo was the victor. After having done this about twenty times, Palo had to lead all the chiefs in a long dance across the square, passing

in high jumps between the pigs. After this he needed a rest, and no wonder. Then the pigs were sacrificed with mysterious ceremonies, the meaning of which has probably never been penetrated. The end of it all was that Palo broke the pigs' heads with a special club, and when night fell, twenty-six "tuskers" lay agonizing on the ground. Later they were hung on trees, to be eaten next day, and then everybody retired to the huts to eat and rest.

Some hours later great fires were kindled at both ends of the square, and women with torches stood all around. The high-castes opened the ball, but there was not much enthusiasm, and only a few youngsters hopped about impatiently, until their spirits infected some older people, and the crowd increased, so that at last everybody was raving in a mad dance. The performance is monotonous: some men with pan-pipes bend down with their heads touching, and blow with all their might, always the same note, marking time with their feet. Suddenly one gives a jump, others follow, and then the whole crowd moves a number of times up and down the square, until the musicians are out of breath, when they come to a standstill. The excitement goes on until the sun rises. The women, as a rule, keep outside the square, but they dance too, and keep it up all night; now and then a couple disappears into the darkness.

Next morning Palo, who had hardly closed his eyes all night, was very busy again, giving each guest his due share of the feast. The large pigs were dressed, cut up and cooked. This work lasted

all day, but everybody enjoyed it. The dexterity and cleanliness with which the carcases are divided is astonishing, and is quite a contrast to the crude way in which native meals are usually dressed and devoured. We whites received a large and very fat slice as a present, which we preferred to pass on, unnoticed, to our boys. Fat is considered the best part of the pig.

The lower jaws of the tuskers were cut out separately and handed over to Palo, to be cleaned and hung up in his gamal in the shape of a chandelier, as tokens of his rank.

Palo is a weather-maker. When we prepared to go home, he promised to smooth the sea, which was running too high for comfort, and to prevent a head-wind. We were duly grateful, and, indeed, all his promises were fulfilled: we had a perfectly smooth sea, and such a dead calm that between the blue sky and the white sea we nearly fainted, and had to row wearily along instead of sailing. Just as we were leaving, Palo came to the bank, making signs for us to come back, a pretty custom, although it is not always meant sincerely.

Late at night we arrived at home once more.

IRRIGATED TARO FIELD ON SANTO.

# CHAPTER X

## CLIMBING SANTO PEAK

Some days later I left Talamacco for Wora, near Cape Cumberland, a small station of Mr. D.'s, Mr. F.'s neighbour. What struck me most there were the wide taro fields, artificially irrigated. The system of irrigation must date from some earlier time, for it is difficult to believe that the population of the present day, devoid as they are of enterprise, should have laid it out, although they are glad enough to use it. The method employed is this: Across one of the many streams a dam of great boulders is laid, so that about the same amount of water is constantly kept running into a channel. These channels are often very long, they skirt steep slopes and are generally cut into the earth, sometimes into the rock; sometimes a little aqueduct is built of planks, mud and earth, supported by bamboo and other poles that stand in the valley. In the fields the channel usually divides into several streams, and runs through all the flat beds, laid out in steps, in which the taro has only to be lightly stuck to bring forth fruit in about ten months. Taro only grows in very swampy ground, some varieties only under water, so that it cannot be grown in the coral region, where there is plenty of rain, but no running water. In these

districts yam is the principal food, while we find taro in the mountains of primary rock. Both are similar in taste to the potato.

My next journey led me across the peninsula to the west coast of Santo. As usual, it was a very rainy day when we started, but once across the divide the air became much drier. The clouds, driven by the south-east trade-wind, strike the islands on the east side, and this is the reason why the east coast is so much damper than the west, and why the vegetation is so immoderately thick on the one side, and much less luxuriant on the other. On the west side the bush is thinner and there are wide stretches of reed-grass, but there is plenty of water, bright creeks fed by the rainfall on the mountains. Here, on the coast, it was much warmer than where we had come from, but the air was most agreeable, dry and invigorating, quite different from the damp, heavy air on the other side.

Late at night, after a long walk on the warm beach sand, we reached the village of Nogugu. Next day Mr. G., a planter, was good enough to take me with him in his motor-boat, southward along the coast. High mountains came close to the shore, falling in almost perpendicular walls straight down into the sea. Deep narrow valleys led inland into the very heart of the island. Several times, when we were passing the openings of these valleys, a squall caught us, and rain poured down ; then, again, everything lay in bright sunshine and the coast was pictur-

esque indeed with its violet shadows and reddish rocks. The only level ground to be seen was at the mouths of the valleys in the shape of little river deltas.

The village to which we were going was on one of these deltas. Hardly had we set foot on shore than a violent earthquake almost threw us to the ground. The shock lasted for at least thirty seconds, then we heard a dull rumbling as of thunder, and saw how all along the coast immense masses of earth fell into the sea from the high cliffs, so that the water boiled and foamed wildly. Then yellow smoke came out of all the bays, and hung in heavy clouds over the devastated spots, and veiled land and sea. Inland, too, we saw many bare spots, where the earth and trees had slipped down. The shocks went on all night, though with diminished violence, and we continually heard the thunderous rattling of falling rocks and earth.

Next day we stopped at the village of Wus, and I persuaded a dainty damsel (she was full-grown, but only 134·4 cm. high) to make me a specimen of pottery. It was finished in ten minutes, without any tool but a small, flat, bamboo splinter. Without using a potter's wheel the lady rounded the sides of the jar very evenly, and altogether gave it a most pleasing, almost classical shape.

When we returned south we could see what damage the earthquake had done. All the slopes looked as if they had been scraped, and the sea was littered with wood and bushes. We also experienced

the disagreeable sensation of an earthquake on the water. The boat suddenly began to shake and tremble, as if a giant hand were shaking it, and at the same time more earth fell down into the water. The shocks recurred for several weeks, and after a while we became accustomed to them. The vibrations seemed to slacken and to become more horizontal, so that we had less of the feeling of being pushed upwards off our feet, but rather that of being in an immense swing. For six weeks I was awakened almost every night by dull, threatening thunder, followed some seconds later by a shock.

Another village where pottery was made was Pespia, a little inland. The chief obligingly gathered the scattered population, and I had ample opportunity to buy pots and watch the making of them. The method is different from that at Wus, for a primitive wheel, a segment of a thick bamboo, is used. On this the clay is wound up in spirals and the surface smoothed inside and out. This is the method by which most of the prehistoric European pottery was made. The existence of the potter's art in these two villages only of all the New Hebrides is surprising. Clay is found in other districts, and the idea that the natives might have learnt pottery from the Spaniards lacks all probability, as the Spaniards never visited the west coast of Santo. The two entirely different methods offer another riddle.

I made my way back along the coast, round Cape Cumberland. One of my boys having run away, I had to carry his load myself, and although

it was not the heaviest one, I was glad when I found a substitute for him. This experience gave me an insight into the feelings of a tired and discontented carrier.

At Wora I found that my host had returned to his station near Talamacco. So I returned to Talamacco by boat; the earthquake had been very violent there, and had caused the greatest damage, and I heard that all the new houses of the Messrs. Thomas at Hog Harbour had been ruined.

Times had been troublous in other respects at Talamacco; the natives, especially the Christians, were fighting, and one Sunday they were all ready, looking very fierce, to attack each other with clubs and other weapons, only neither side dared to begin. I asked them to do the fighting out in the open, so that I could take a picture of it, and this cooled them down considerably. They sat down and began a long palaver, which ended in nothing at all, and, indeed, no one really knew what had started the excitement.

In spite of the supercargo's announcement that the steamer would arrive on the twentieth, she did not come till the first of the following month. This kept me constantly on the look out and ready for departure, and unable to do anything of importance. At last we sailed, touching the Banks Islands on our route; and after enjoying a few days of civilization on board, I went ashore at Tassimaloun, on the south-west corner of Santo, where I had the pleasure of being Mr. C.'s guest. My object there

was to follow the traces of the pygmy population, but as the natives mostly live inland, and only rarely come to the coast, I had to go in search of them. At that time I was often ill with fever, and could not do as much as I could have wished. Once I tried to reach the highest mountain of the islands, Santo Peak, but my guides from the mission village of Vualappa led me for ten days through most uninteresting country and an unfriendly population without even bringing me to the foot of the mountain. I had several unpleasant encounters with the natives, during one of which I fully expected to be murdered, and when our provisions were exhausted we had to return to the coast. But every time I saw the tall pyramid of Santo Peak rising above the lower hills I longed to be the first European to set foot on it, and I tried it at last from the Tassiriki side.

After long consultations with the natives, I at last found two men who were willing to guide me to the mountain. I decided to give up all other plans, and to take nothing with me but what was strictly necessary. On the second day we climbed a hill which my guides insisted was the Peak, the highest point of the island. I pointed out a higher summit, but they said that we would never get up there before noon, and, indeed, they did everything they could to delay our advance, by following wrong trails and being very slow about clearing the way. Still, after an hour's hard work, we were on the point in question, and from there I could see the real Santo

Peak, separated from us by only one deep valley, as far as I could judge in the tangle of forest that covered everything. The guides again pretended that we were standing on the highest mountain then, and that it would take at least a fortnight to reach the real Peak. I assured them that I meant to be on its top by noon, and when they showed no inclination whatever to go on, I left them and went on with my boys. We had to dive into a deep ravine, where we found a little water and refilled our bottles. Then we had to ascend the other side, which was trying, as we had lost the trail and had to climb over rocks and through the thickest bush I ever met. The ground was covered with a dense network of moss-grown trunks that were mouldering there, through which we often fell up to our shoulders, while vines and ferns wound round our bodies, so that we did our climbing more with our arms than with our feet. After a while one of the guides joined us, but he did not know the way; at last we found it, but there were many ups and downs before we attained the summit. The weather now changed, and we were suddenly surrounded by the thick fog that always covers the Peak before noon. The great humidity and the altitude combine to create a peculiar vegetation in this region; the tree-ferns are tremendously developed, and the natives pretend that a peculiar species of pigeon lives here.

I was surprised to find any paths at all up here; but the natives come here to shoot pigeons, and

several valleys converge at Santo Peak, so that there are important passes near its summits. One of my boys gave out here, and we left him to repose. The rest of the way was not difficult, but we were all very tired when we reached the top. There was another summit, a trifle higher, separated from the first by a long ridge, but we contented ourselves with the one we were on, especially as we could see absolutely nothing. I was much disappointed, as on a clear day the view of Santo and the whole archipelago must be wonderful. I deposited a bottle with a paper of statistics, which some native has probably found by this time. We were wet and hungry, and as it was not likely that the fog would lift, we began the descent. Without the natives I never could have found the way back in the fog; but they followed the path easily enough, and half-way down we met the other guides coming slowly up the mountain. They seemed pleased to have escaped the tiresome climb; possibly they may have had other reasons for their dislike of the Peak. They were rather disappointed, I thought, that I had had my way in spite of their resistance. They now promised to lead us back by another route, and we descended a narrow valley for several hours; then came a long halt, as my guides had to chat with friends in a village we passed. At last I fairly had to drive them away, and we went down another valley, where we found a few women bathing in a stream, who ran away at the sight of us. We bathed, and then enjoyed an excellent meal of taro,

which one of the guides had brought from the village. Before leaving, one of my boys carefully collected all the peelings of my food, and threw them into the river, so that I might not be poisoned by them, he said. A last steep climb ended the day's exertions, and we entered the village where we were to sleep. While the guides bragged to the men of their feats, the women brought us food and drink, and I had a chance to rest and look about me.

I was struck by the great number of women and the very small number of men in this place; after a while I found out the reason, which was that ten of the men had been kidnapped by a Frenchman while on their way to a plantation on the Segond Channel, where they meant to work a few days. The women are now deprived of their husbands for at least three years, unless they find men in some other village. If five of the ten ever return, it will be a good average, and it is more than likely that they will find a deserted and ruined village if they do come back.

This is one of many illustrations of how the present recruiting system and the laxity of the French authorities combine to ruin the native population. (I have since heard that by request of the British authorities these men were brought back, but only after about nine months had passed, and without receiving any compensation. Most kidnapping cases never come to the ears of the authorities at all.)

As our expedition was nearly at an end, and I had no reason to economize my provisions, I gave some to the villagers, and the women especially who had

hardly ever tasted rice or tinned meat, were delighted. One old hag actually made me a declaration of love, which, unfortunately, I could not respond to in the same spirit.

Night crept across the wide sea, and a golden sunset was followed by a long afterglow. Far away on the softly shining silver we saw a sail, small as a fly, that drifted slowly seaward and was swallowed up by the darkness, from which the stars emerged one by one. The women had disappeared in the huts; the men were sitting outside, around the fires, and, thinking I was asleep, talked about me in biche la mar.

First they wondered why a man should care to climb up a mountain simply to come down again; and my boys told them of all my doings, about my collecting curios and skulls, of my former wanderings and the experiences we had had, and how often the others had tried to shoot me, etc. In short, I found out a great many things I had never known, and I shivered a little at hearing what I had escaped, if all the boys said was true. At last, when I had been sufficiently discussed, which was long after midnight, they lay down, each beside a small fire, and snored into the cool, clear night.

The following morning was brilliantly fine. We took a hearty leave of our hosts, and raced, singing and shouting, down the steep hills, and so home. The fine weather was at an end. The sky was cloudy, the barometer fell and a thin rain pierced everything. Two days later the steamer arrived, and I meant to go aboard, but a heavy swell from the

west set in, such as I had never seen before, although not a breath of wind was stirring. These rollers were caused by a cyclone, and gave us some idea of its violence. I despaired of ever reaching the steamer, but Mr. B. was an expert sailor, and making the most of a slight lull, he brought me safely through the surf and on board. His goods, however, could not be loaded on to the steamer, which immediately sailed. We passed New Year's Eve and New Year's Day at anchor in South-West Bay, Malekula, while a terrific gale whipped the water horizontally toward the ship and across the deck. We spent gloomy holidays, shut up in the damp, dark steamer, unable to stay on deck, restless and uncomfortable below. How one learns to appreciate the British impassiveness which helps one, in such conditions, to spend a perfectly happy day with a pipe and a talk about the weather!

On the morning of the third day we lay off the east coast of Malekula, on a blue, shining sea, with all the landscape as peaceful and bright as if there were no such thing as a cyclone in the world.

I landed, packed my collections, which I had left in Vao, and, with the help of a missionary, I reached Bushman Bay, whence Mr. H. kindly took me to Vila. There H.B.M. Resident Commissioner, Mr. Morton King, did me the honour of offering me his hospitality, so that I was suddenly transplanted to all the luxuries of civilized life once more. I spent the days packing the collections awaiting me at Vila, and which I found in fairly good condition; the

evenings were passed in the interesting society of Mr. King, who had travelled extensively and was an authority on matters relating to the Orient. He inspired me with admiration for the British system of colonial politics with its truly idealistic tendencies. The weeks I spent at Port Vila will always be a pleasant memory of a time of rest and comfort and stimulating intercourse.

In February I left for Nouméa, where I hoped to meet two friends and colleagues, Dr. Fritz Sarasin and Dr. Jean Roux, who were coming to New Caledonia in order to pursue studies similar to mine. The time I spent with them was rich in interest and encouragement, and in March I returned to the New Hebrides with renewed energy.

DWELLING OF A TRADER ON AMBRYN.

# CHAPTER XI

## AMBRYM

It was a miserable little boat in which I sailed from Nouméa. We were to have started on a Monday, but it was Friday before we got off. The boat was overloaded. On deck there was a quantity of timber, also cattle, pigs, sheep and calves, all very seasick and uncomfortable. The deck was almost on a level with the water, and even while still inside the reef occasional waves broke over the gunwale and flooded the ship. At nightfall we entered the open ocean. Now the waves began to pour on to the deck from all sides, and the bow of the vessel dived into the sea as if it were never going to rise again. The night was dark, shreds of cloud raced across a steel-grey sky, while a greenish patch showed the position of the moon. At the horizon glistened an uncertain light, but the sea was a black abyss, out of which the phosphorescent waves appeared suddenly, rolled swiftly nearer and broke over the ship as if poured down from above.

I looked on without another thought save that of pity for the poor sick calves, when the captain whispered in my ear that things looked bad, as the ship was much too heavily loaded. In the darkness I could see nothing but that the boat was very deep

in the water, and that her bow, instead of rising on the waves, dug into them. On deck a quantity of water ran backward and forward in a wave as high as the bulwarks, and it seemed as if the ship could scarcely right herself when once she lay over on one side. The growing excitement of the captain, his nervous consultations with the engineer and the supercargo, were most uncomfortable; presently the passengers began to take part in the deliberations, and to observe the behaviour of the ship. As our course gave us a sidewise current, the captain ordered the sails to be hoisted, in order to lessen the rolling; but the sea was too heavy, and we shipped still more water and rolled alarmingly. The captain sighed, ran hither and thither, then lowered the sails and took a more westerly course, in the direction of one of the Loyalty Islands; thus we had the current from behind, which made things still worse, as the sea, rolling along the ship, filled the deck from both sides; and as the bulwarks were blocked up by the lumber, the water could not run off, thus adding an enormous weight to the already overloaded ship; the water ran forward, pressing down the bow, while the stern reared upward.

When the captain saw the state of affairs, he lost his head completely, and began to lament piteously: "We do not want to drown, no, we do not want to drown; but we are going to. Oh, my poor wife and children! Do you like to drown, doctor?" I denied this energetically, but I could not help looking at the dark sea and trying to get used to the idea of a closer

acquaintance with it. The feeling of insecurity was increased by the knowledge that the boat was old and in poor repair, and might spring a leak at any moment.

Meanwhile the skipper had turned her round and was making headway against the waves, but still her bow would not lift, and the captain wept still more. His womanish behaviour disgusted me. At last a quiet passenger, an experienced sailor, gave some advice, which the skipper followed, and which helped matters a little, so that he regained his self-control to the extent of calling a general council; he announced that he dared not continue the voyage, and asked our consent to return to Nouméa. We all agreed, and about midnight we approached the reef. Now there are lights in the passage, but they are so poor as to be invisible until the traveller is already in the passage, so that they are of little use. We were trying to find the entrance, when the experienced seaman I mentioned before, who was keeping a look out, called out that we were close to the breakers and surrounded by the reef. The only thing we could do was to turn seaward again and beat about till daylight. After some hours the wind fell and the worst was over; still, the night was unpleasant enough, and frequent squalls kept us awake. We were all glad when the day broke and we were able to enter the passage. We landed at Nouméa in the finest of weather, and our unexpected return created quite a sensation. We passengers convinced ourselves that the cargo was considerably reduced before starting out again the next day.

This time we arrived safely at Port Vila, where the British and French native police forces came aboard, bound for Santo, to quell a disturbance at Hog Harbour; and so the hapless boat was overloaded again, this time with passengers.

Next day we arrived at Epi, and I landed at Ringdove Bay. The station of the Messrs. F. and H. is one of the oldest in the islands. Besides running a plantation, they trade with the natives, and their small cutters go to all the neighbouring islands for coprah and other produce. There is always plenty of life and movement at the station, as there are usually a few of the vessels lying at anchor, and natives coming in from all sides in their whale-boats to buy or sell something. From Malekula one can often see them tacking about all day, or, if there is a calm, drifting slowly along, as they are too lazy to row. When they have found the passage through the reef, they pull down the sails with much noise and laughter, and come to anchor; then the whole crowd wades through the surf to the shore, with the loads of coprah, and waits patiently for business to begin.

On these stations, where almost everyone is squeezed into decent European clothes, it is a charming sight to see the naked bodies of the genuine savages, all the more so as only young and able-bodied men take part in these cruises, under the leadership of one older and more experienced companion. Their beauty is doubly striking beside the poor station hands, wrapped in filthy calico.

When the coprah has been bought and paid for, they all go to the store, where they buy whatever they need or think they need. The native of the coast districts to-day goes beyond needs to luxuries; he buys costly silks, such as he may once have seen in Queensland, and he samples sewing-machines or whatever else tempts him. In consequence of competition, the prices for coprah and the wages of labour are unreasonably high, and the natives might profit greatly by this state of things if they knew the value of money or how to use it to advantage. But, as a rule, they spend it for any nonsense they may fancy, to the joy of the trader, who makes an average profit of 50 per cent. on all commodities; or else the natives economize to buy a pig (tusked pigs have brought as much as forty pounds), or they bury their money.

It is astonishing how easily a native might make a small fortune here, and how little use he makes of his opportunities, not only from laziness, but also because he has no wants. Nature supplies food in abundance without any effort on his part, so that matches, tobacco, a pipe and a knife satisfy all his needs, and he can spend all the rest of his money for pleasure. Thus the native, in spite of everything, is economically master of the situation in his own country, and many traders have been made to realize this fact to their cost, when the natives, to avenge some ill-treatment, have simply boycotted a station. Needless to say that the traders always do their best to excite the natives' cupidity by exhibiting the most tempting objects, and, careful as the islander may be

when buying necessaries, he is careless enough when luxuries are in question.

The house of the planters is a long, low building with whitewashed walls, a broad, flat roof and wide verandas. Around it is an abandoned garden, and one feels that long ago a woman's hand must have worked here; but now no one cares about keeping the surroundings clean and pretty, and the wilderness is reclaiming its own and advancing steadily towards the house. Inside, the house is clean and neat; from the veranda there is a splendid view over the sea, in which the sun disappears at evening.

The employés are quiet people, who have but little to say; the weather and speculations as to the name and destination of some far-off sail are their chief topics. After lunch they sit in easy-chairs, enjoying the breeze and reading the papers. Soon the "Bubu" calls to work once more, and the natives come creeping out of their huts, away from their ever-burning fires.

The production of coprah varies greatly on the different islands. While on some of them there is scarcely any to be had, there are others which are practically covered with cocoa-nut trees; this is chiefly the case on islands of volcanic origin, on which springs and rivers are very scarce. It has been supposed that the natives, being dependent on the water of the cocoa-nut as a beverage, had planted these trees very extensively. This is not quite exact, although it is a fact that in these islands the natives hardly ever taste any other water than that of the cocoa-nut.

In sun and shower, the natives work in the plantations in long rows, the women together with their husbands or with other women at some lighter task. The men dislike to be separated from their wives, for they are very jealous; neither do they approve of the women discussing their husbands among themselves. For light work the women are more useful, as they are more accustomed to regular work from their youth up than the men, who are used to spending their days in easy laziness.

Towards sunset, the "Bubu" announces the end of work, and the natives stroll towards their quarters, simple huts of straw, where each man has his couch, with a trunk underneath containing his belongings. Meals are prepared by a cook, and the men go to fetch their rations, rice, yam, or taro. Sometimes there is meat, but not often, except in places where wild pig is plentiful. In that case, it is simplest for the master to send his boys shooting every Sunday, when it depends on themselves if they are to have meat during the coming week or not. After the meal, the natives sit round the fires chatting, gossiping and telling fairy-tales. They know stories of all sorts of monsters and demons, and excite each other by tales of these horrors to such a degree, that bad dreams or even a general panic are often the consequence, and the whole crowd turns out in the middle of the night, declaring that the place is haunted, and that they have seen a devil, who looked thus and so. If someone suddenly dies in a hut, it is worst of all. Death is invariably caused, so they all believe, by poison or

witchcraft, and the natives will build another house of their own accord rather than go on living in one they consider haunted. If a planter loses many hands by death, his plantation gets a bad reputation, and the natives refuse to work there; so that it is to the planter's advantage to take some care of their labourers, and they do so to a certain extent, whereas in former years the mortality on French plantations was very high, as much as 44 per cent. per annum.

Sometimes, especially on moonlight nights, the boys wish to dance, and they all go to the beach and spend the whole night singing and dancing. Another amusement is hunting for crayfish on the reef at low tide.

My boys' term of service was over in a month. They were very much afraid of being taken to another island, which was natural in a way, as a savage is really not as safe in a strange place as a white man. Besides, they had had their desire and had seen Nouméa, so that there was no longer any inducement for them to stay with me. They accordingly became most disagreeable, slow, sulky and sleepier than ever, and as I could not be punishing them all day long, life with them became somewhat trying. It is disappointing to find so little gratitude, but the natives are quite unaccustomed to be treated better by a white man than his interest demands, so that they suspect a trap in every act of kindness. Under the circumstances, I thought it best to dismiss my boys, and, finding little of interest in Epi, the natives having

VIEW FROM THE PRESBYTERIAN HOSPITAL, DIP POINT, AMBRYN.

nearly all died out, I boarded the Australian steamer for Ambrym.

Although Ambrym is only twenty-five miles from Epi, I was five days on the way, so zigzag a route did the steamer pursue. But if one is not in a hurry, life on board is quite entertaining. The first day we anchored near the volcano of Lopevi, a lofty peak that rises from a base six kilomètres in diameter to a height of 1440 mètres, giving its sides an average slope of 48°, which offers rather an unusual sight. The whole of Lopevi is rarely to be seen, as its top is usually covered with a thick cloud of fog or volcanic steam. It is still active, and but few whites have ascended it. At periods of great activity, the natives climb to the top and bring sacrifices to appease it, by throwing cocoa-nuts and yam into the crater.

We touched at Port Sandwich, and then steamed along the coast of Malekula, calling every few miles at some plantation to discharge goods, horses, cattle and fowls, and take on maize or coprah. At last we arrived at Dip Point, Ambrym, where I was kindly received by Dr. B. of the Presbyterian Mission, who is in charge of the fine large hospital there. Its situation is not more picturesque than others, but the place has been made so attractive that one can hardly imagine a more lovely and restful sight. The buildings stand on level ground that slopes softly down to the beach. The bush has been cleared, with the exception of a number of gigantic fig trees, that overshadow a green lawn. Under their airy roof there is always a light breeze, blowing from the hills down to

the sea. In the blue distance rises Aoba, and the long-drawn coast of Malekula disappears in the mist. A quieter, sweeter place for convalescents does not exist, and even the native patients, who are not, as a rule, great lovers of scenery, like to lie under the trees with their bandaged limbs and heads, staring dreamily into the green and blue and sunny world.

Dr. B. is an excellent surgeon, famous all over the group, not only among the white population, but among the natives as well, who are beginning to appreciate his work. Formerly they used to demand payment for letting him operate on them, but now many come of their own accord, so that the hospital never lacks patients. The good that Dr. B. does these people can hardly be overrated, and the Presbyterian Mission deserves great credit for having established the hospital; but it is a regrettable fact that all these efforts are not strong enough to counteract other effects of civilization, such as alcoholism, which is the curse of the native race, especially on Ambrym.

Although the sale of alcohol to natives is strictly prohibited by the laws of the Condominium, the French pay no attention to these rules, and sell it in quantities without being called to account. The sale of liquor is the simplest means of acquiring wealth, as the profit on one bottle may amount to five shillings. The natives of Ambrym spend all their money on drink, and as they are quite rich and buy wholesale, the results, in money for the trader and in death for the native, are considerable. For they

drink in a senseless way, simply pouring down one bottle after the other, until they are quite overcome. Some never wake up again; others have dangerous attacks of indigestion from the poison they have consumed; still more catch colds or pneumonia from lying drunk on the ground all night. Quarrels and fights are frequent, and it is not a rare sight to see a whole village, men, women and children, rolling on the sand completely intoxicated. The degeneration which results from this is all the sadder, as originally the race on Ambrym was particularly healthy, vigorous and energetic. These conditions are well known to both governments, and might be suppressed on the French side as easily as they are on the English; but the French government seems to take more interest in the welfare of an ex-convict than in that of the native race, although the latter is one of the most important sources of wealth on the islands, setting aside all considerations of humanity. If the liquor traffic is not speedily suppressed, the population is doomed.

Ambrym offers quite a different aspect from the coral islands, as its sloping sides are seamed by streams of lava, the course of which may be traced by the breaks in the forest, as the glowing mass flows slowly down to the coast, congealing in the water to peculiarly shaped jagged rocks. Every few hundred yards we find one of these black walls on the shore in which the sea foams, and the sand that covers the beaches is black too. In dull weather all this looks extremely gloomy, monotonous and im-

posing—the war of two elements, fire and water; and this dark, stern landscape is far more impressive than the gay, smiling coral beach with the quiet blue sea.

My stay on Ambrym was very pleasant. By the help of Dr. B., I was enabled to find four bright boys, willing and cheerful, with whom I used to start out from Dip Point in the mornings, visit the neighbouring villages, and return loaded with objects of all sorts at noon; the afternoons were devoted to work in the house. The weather was exceptionally favourable, and the walks through the dewy forest, on the soft paths of black volcanic dust, in the cool, dark ravines, with occasional short climbs and delightful glimpses of the coast, were almost too enjoyable to be regarded as a serious duty.

The culture of Ambrym is similar to that of Malekula, as is plainly shown by the natives' dress. The men wear the bark belt and the nambas, which they buy on Malekula; the dress of the women is the same as that worn in central Malekula, and consists of an apron of pandanus or some similar fibre, wound several times round the waist; this forms a thick roll, not unlike ballet skirts, but more graceful. It is a pretty dress, though somewhat scanty, and the "skirts" flap up and down coquettishly when the wearer walks. The other parts of the body are covered with a thick layer of soot, filth, oil, fat and smoke, for the Ambrymese are not at all fond of bathing.

The villages are open, rarely surrounded by a hedge. The houses are rather close together,

grouped irregularly in a clearing; a little apart, on a square by themselves, are the houses of the secret societies, surrounded by images and large drums. The dwelling-houses are rather poor-looking huts, with low walls and roofs and an exceedingly small entrance which is only to be passed through on one's hands and knees. Decency demands that the women should always enter the houses backward, and this occasions funny sights, as they look out of their huts like so many dogs from their kennels.

As a rule, the first event on my entering a village was that the women and children ran away shrieking and howling; those not quite so near me stared suspiciously, then retired slowly or began to giggle. Then a few men would appear, quite accidentally, of course, and some curious boys followed. My servants gave information as to my person and purpose, and huge laughter was the result: they always thought me perfectly mad. However, they admired me from all sides, and asked all sorts of questions of my boys: what was my name, where did I live, was I kind, was I rich, what did I have to eat, did I smoke or drink, how many shirts and trousers did I have, how many guns and what kinds, etc. The end of it was, that they either took me for a dangerous sorcerer, and withdrew in fear, or for a fool to be got the better of. In the latter case, they would run eagerly to their houses and bring out some old broken article to offer for sale. A few sarcastic remarks proved useful; but it was always some time before they realized what I wanted. The fine old

possessions from which they did not like to part would suddenly turn out to be the property of someone else, which was a polite way of saying, "we have that, but you won't get it."

In this way collecting was a very tiresome and often disappointing process of bargaining, encouraging, begging and flattering; often, just as I was going away, some man or other would call me aside to say that he had decided to sell after all, and was ready to accept any price.

Horror and silent consternation were aroused when I asked for skulls. "Lots over there," they said, pointing to an enclosed thicket, their burying-ground. Only very rarely a man would bring me a skull, at the end of a long stick. Once I started on the quest myself, armed with a shovel and spade; as my servants were too much afraid of the dead to help, I had to dig for myself. A man loafed near by, attracted by the excited chatter of some old women. He told me sadly that I was digging up his papa, although it was a woman; then he began to help with some show of interest, assuring me that his papa had two legs, whereas at first I could find but one. A stranger had given me permission to dig, so as to play a trick on the son; but the latter was quite reconciled when I paid him well. For a week all the village talked of nothing but the white madman who dug up bones; I became a celebrity, and people made excursions from a distance to come and stare at me.

Although the Suque is highly developed here,

WOMEN COOKING ON AMBRYN.

there are other secret societies whose importance, however, is decreasing, as they are being more or less absorbed by the Suque. As each of these clubs has its own house, we sometimes find quite a number of such huts in one village, where they take the place of gamals. Each Suque high caste has his own house, which the low castes may not enter. The caste of the proprietor may be seen by the material of which the hedge is made, the lower castes having hedges of wood and logs, the highest, walls of stone and coral slabs. Inside the courtyard, each man lives alone, served only by his wives, who are allowed to cook his food. The separation of the sexes is not so severe on Ambrym as on Santo. On the whole, it would seem that in the past Ambrym had a position apart, and that only lately several forms of cult have been imported from Malekula and mingled with genuinely local rites. Even to-day, it is not rare for a man from Ambrym to settle for a while on Malekula, so as to be initiated into some rites which he then imports to Ambrym; and the Ambrymese pay poets large fees to teach them poems which are to be sung at certain feasts, accompanied by dances. Unhappily, I never had occasion to attend one of these "sing-songs."

The originality of Ambrym has been preserved in its sculpture only. The material used is tree-fern wood, which is used nowhere else but in the Banks Islands. The type of human being represented differs from that on the other islands, especially as regards the more moon-shaped form of the head

Representations of the whole body are frequent, so are female statues; these I have only found again in Gaua, where they are probably modern inventions. Sometimes a fish or a bird is carved on the statue, probably as a survival of old totemistic ideas, and meant to represent the totem animal of the ancestor or of his clan. The meaning of these carvings is quite obscure to the natives, and they answer questions in a very vague way, so that it is probable that totemistic ideas are dying out in the New Hebrides.

Most of the statues are meant to represent an ancestor. If a native is in trouble, he blows his whistle at nightfall near the statue, and if he hears a noise, he thinks the spirit of the ancestor has approached and entered the statue, and he proceeds to tell the statue his sorrows and ask the spirit for help. Occasionally sacrifices are made to the figures, as is shown by the pigs' jaws frequently found tied to them.

The Ambrymese conceptions of the spirit world are very similar to those of other islanders. The native likes to wear on his back or chest or arm the tusks of the most valuable pigs he has sacrificed, and has them buried with him, so that in the other world he may at any time be able to prove how much he respected his ancestors.

The centre of the dancing grounds is generally occupied by the big drums, not quite so numerous but better made than those of Malekula. By the drums, too, the caste of the proprietor may be recognized:

the higher his standing, the more heads are carved on them. Horizontal drums are sometimes found, but they are always small, and only serve to accompany the sound of the larger ones.

There are usually a few men sitting round the drums, playing games. One game is played by two men sitting opposite to each other; one sticks a small shell into the ground, and his opponent tries to hit it with another. There does not seem to be any winning or losing, as in our games, but they keep it up for hours and even days. Another favourite game borders on the marvellous. One man has six shells and the other five. Each in turn puts a shell on the ground, and when they have all been dealt, each in turn picks up one at a time, when the one who had six before has five, and the one who had only five has six. They stare at each other, wonder, and try it again; behold, the one who had six at the beginning has five now and the other six. They try again and again, and each time the shell changes hands, and nobody can explain how on earth it could have jumped from one man to the other. It seems too strange to be natural, and while a cold shiver creeps up their backs, they play on and on, with ever new delight and wonder. At such enviable pastimes these people spend their days and kill time, which would otherwise hang heavy on their hands. Tops, nicely made from nuts, are a popular toy; and there are other games, more sportsmanlike, such as throwing reeds to a distance, and throwing wooden shells, at which two villages often compete against each other.

After I had exhausted the surroundings of Dip Point, I marched along the coast to Port Vato, where I lived in an abandoned mission house, in the midst of a thickly populated district. At present, the people are quiet, and go about as they please; but not long ago, the villages lived in a constant state of feud among themselves, so that no man dared go beyond his district alone, and the men had to watch the women while they were at work in the fields, for fear of attack. The sense of insecurity was such that many people who lived in villages only twenty minutes' walk from the coast had never seen the ocean. The population as a whole enjoys the state of peace, which the missionaries have brought about, though there are always mischief-makers who try to create new feuds, and there is no doubt that the old wars would break out anew, if the natives were left to themselves.

These disturbances were not very destructive in the days of the old weapons; it is only since the introduction of firearms that they have become a real danger to the race as a whole. They even had their advantages, in forcing the men to keep themselves in condition, and in providing them with a regular occupation, such as preparing their weapons, or training, or guarding the village and the women. With the end of the feuds, the chief occupation of the men disappeared, and but few of them have found any serious work to take up their time. Thus civilization, even in its rôle of peace-maker, has replaced one evil by another.

In this district, I could go about with my servants wherever I pleased; only one Santo boy I had with me did not feel safe, and suddenly developed great interest in cooking, which allowed him to stay at home while the rest of us went on expeditions. His cooking was not above reproach; he would calmly clean a dirty cup with his fingers, the kitchen towels occasionally served as his head-dress, and one day he tried to make curry with some iodoform I had left in a bottle on the table. However, I had learned long ago not to be too particular, and not to take too much interest in the details of the kitchen.

An exceptionally bright man had offered me his services as guide, and with his help I obtained many objects I would never have found alone. He had a real understanding of what I wanted, and plenty of initiative. He made the women bring their modest possessions, and they approached, crawling on their hands and knees, for they are not allowed to walk before the men. Later on the men appeared with better things. It is an odd fact that all over the archipelago the owner rarely brings things himself, but generally gives them to a friend. This may be due to the desire to avoid the ridicule they would surely be exposed to if their possessions were to be refused. The extreme sensitiveness and pride with which the natives feel every refusal and are deeply hurt by any rebuke, may surprise those who look on them as savages, incapable of any finer sentiment; but whoever learns to know them a little better will find that they have great delicacy of feeling, and will

be struck by the politeness they show a stranger, and by the kind and obliging way in which they treat each other. It must be admitted that this is often enough only a veneer, under which all sorts of hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness are hidden, just as among civilized people; still, the manners of the crudest savages are far superior to those of most of the whites they meet.

One sign of this sensitiveness is their reluctance to express any desire, for fear of a refusal. I saw a daily illustration of this, when my boys wanted the tin of meat for dinner which was their due. Although they might have taken it themselves, a different boy came each day to the room where I was writing, and waited patiently for some time, then began coughing with increasing violence, until I asked what he wanted. Then he would shyly stammer out his request. Never would they accost me or otherwise disturb me while I was writing or reading; yet at other times they could be positively impertinent, especially if excited. The islander is very nervous; when he is quiet, he is shy and reticent, but once he is aroused, all his bad instincts run riot, and incredible savageness and cruelty appear. The secret of successful treatment of the natives seems to be to keep them very quiet, and never to let any excitement arise, a point in which so many whites fail.

They are very critical and observant, and let no weakness pass without sarcastic comment; yet their jokes are rarely offensive, and in the end the victim usually joins in the general laughter. On the whole,

the best policy is one of politeness, justice and consistency; and after many years, one may possibly obtain their confidence, although one always has to be careful and circumspect in every little detail.

In general, the Ambrymese are more agreeable than the Santo people. They seem more manly, less servile, more faithful and reliable, more capable of open enmity, more clever and industrious, and not so sleepy.

Assisted by my excellent guide, I set about collecting, which was not always a simple matter. I was very anxious to procure a "bull-roarer," and made my man ask for one, to the intense surprise of the others; how could I have known of the existence of these secret and sacred utensils? The men called me aside, and begged me never to speak of this to the women, as these objects are used, like many others, to frighten away the women and the uninitiated from the assemblies of the secret societies. The noise they make is supposed to be the voice of a mighty and dangerous demon, who attends these assemblies.

They whispered to me that the instruments were in the men's house, and I entered it, amid cries of dismay, for I had intruded into their holy of holies, and was now standing in the midst of all the secret treasures which form the essential part of their whole cult. However, there I was, and very glad of my intrusion, for I found myself in a regular museum. In the smoky beams of the roof there hung half-finished masks, all of the same pattern, to be used

at a festival in the near future; there was a set of old masks, some with nothing left but the wooden faces, while the grass and feather ornaments were gone; old idols; a face on a triangular frame, which was held particularly sacred; two perfectly marvellous masks with long noses with thorns, carefully covered with spider-web cloth. This textile is a speciality of Ambrym, and serves especially for the preparation and wrapping of masks and amulets. Its manufacture is simple: a man walks through the woods with a split bamboo, and catches all the innumerable spider-webs hanging on the trees. As the spider-web is sticky, the threads cling together, and after a while a thick fabric is formed, in the shape of a conical tube, which is very solid and defies mould and rot. At the back of the house, there stood five hollow trunks, with bamboos leading into them. Through these, the men howl into the trunk, which reverberates and produces a most infernal noise, well calculated to frighten others besides women. For the same purpose cocoa-nut shells were used, which were half filled with water, and into which a man gurgled through a bamboo. All this was before my greedy eyes, but I could obtain only a very few articles. Among them was a bull-roarer, which a man sold me for a large sum, trembling violently with fear, and beseeching me not to show it to anybody. He wrapped it up so carefully, that the small object made an immense parcel. Some of the masks are now used for fun; the men put them on and run through the forest, and have the right

to whip anybody they meet. This, however, is a remnant of a very serious matter, as formerly the secret societies used these masks to terrorize all the country round, especially people who were hostile to the society, or who were rich or friendless.

These societies are still of great importance on New Guinea, but here they have evidently degenerated. It is not improbable that the Suque has developed from one of these organizations. Their decay is another symptom of the decline of the entire culture of the natives; and other facts seem to point to the probability that this decadence may have set in even before the beginning of colonization by the whites.

My visit to the men's house ended, and seeing no prospects of acquiring any more curiosities, I went to the dancing-ground, where most of the men were assembled at a death-feast, it being the hundredth day after the funeral of one of their friends. In the centre of the square, near the drums, stood the chief, violently gesticulating. The crowd did not seem pleased at my coming, and criticized me in undertones. A terrible smell of decomposed meat filled the air; evidently they had all partaken of a half-rotten pig, and the odour did not seem to trouble them at all.

The chief was a tall man, bald-headed, wearing the nambas, of larger size than those of the others, and with both arms covered with pigs' tusks to show his rank. He looked at me angrily, came up to me, and sat down, not without having first swept the

ground with his foot, evidently in order not to come into contact with any charm that an enemy might have thrown there. One of the men wanted me to buy a flute, asking just double what I was willing to give; seeing that I did not intend to pay so much, he made me a present of the flute, and seemed just as well pleased. Still, the others stared at me silently and suspiciously, until I offered some tobacco to the chief, which he accepted with a joke, whereat everybody laughed and the ice was broken. The men forgot their reserve, and talked about me in loud tones, looking at me as we might at a hopelessly mad person, half pitying, half amused at his vagaries. The chief now wished to shake hands with me, though he did not trouble to get up for the ceremony. We smiled pleasantly at each other, and then he took me to his house, which, according to his high rank, was surrounded by a stone wall. He rummaged about inside for a long time, and finally brought out a few paltry objects; I thought best to pay well for them, telling him that as he was a "big fellow-master," I was ready to pay extra for the honour of having a souvenir of him. This flattered him so much that he consented to have his photograph taken; and he posed quite cleverly, while the others walked uneasily around us, looking at the camera as if it were likely to explode at any moment; and as none of them dared have his picture taken, I left.

Rounding a bend of the path on my way home, I suddenly came upon a young woman. First she

looked at me in deadly fright, then, with a terrified cry, she jumped over the fence, and burst into hysterical laughter, while a dozen invisible women shrieked; then they all ran away, and as I went on, I could hear that the flight had ceased and the shrieks changed to hearty laughter. They had taken me for a kidnapper, or feared some other harm, as was natural enough with their experience of certain kinds of white men.

Walking along, I heard the explosions of the volcano like a far-away cannonade. The dull shocks gave my walk a peculiar solemnity, but the bush prevented any outlook, and only from the coast I occasionally saw the volcanic clouds mounting into the sky.

From the old mission-house the view on a clear day is splendid. On the slope stand a few large trees, whose cleft leaves frame the indescribably blue sea, which breaks in snowy lines in the lava-boulders below. Far off, I can see Malekula, with its forest-covered mountains, and summer clouds hanging above it. It is a dreamlike summer day, so beautiful, bright and mild as to be hardly real. One feels a certain regret at being unable to absorb all the beauty, at having to stand apart as an outsider, a patch on the brightness rather than a part of it.

At night the view is different, but just as enchanting. A fine dust from the volcano floats in the air and the pale moonlight plays softly on the smooth surface of the bay, filling the atmosphere with silver,

so that everything shines in the white light, the long, flat point, the forest; even the bread-fruit tree on the slope, whose outline cuts sharply into the brightness, is not black, but a darker silver. In the greenish sky the stars glitter, not sharply as they do elsewhere, but like fine dots, softly, quietly, as if a negligent hand had sprinkled them lightly about. And down by the water the breakers roll, crickets cry, a flying-fox chatters and changes from one tree to the other with tired wings, passing in a shapeless silhouette in front of the moon. It is the peace of paradise, dreamlike, wishless; one never tires of listening to the holy tropical night, for there is secret life everywhere. In the quiet air the trees shiver, the moonlight trembles in the bushes and stirs imperceptibly in the lawn; and from the indistinct sounds of which the mind is hardly conscious the fancy weaves strange stories. We see all those creatures that frighten the natives under the roof of the forest, giants with crabs' claws, men with fiery eyes, women that turn into deadly serpents, vague, misty souls of ancestors, that pass through the branches and appear to their descendants; all that we dream of in our northern midsummer night wakes in tenfold strength here.

Suddenly, violent shocks shake the house, explosions follow, like distant shots, and the thin, misty silver is changed to a red glow. The volcano is in action,—a dull, reddish-yellow light mounts slowly up behind the black trees, thick smoke rises and rises, until it stands, a dark monster, nearly touching

the zenith, its foot still in the red glare. Slowly the fire dies out, the cloud parts, and it is dark night again, with the silver of the moon brooding everywhere.

But the charm is broken by this warning from the primitive powers that counterbalance each other behind the peace of the tropic night. By and by, one grows accustomed to the uncanny neighbourhood of the volcano, and only the more formidable eruptions attract notice. Sometimes, while at work, I hear one of the boys exclaim, "Huh, huh!" to call my attention to the fact that a particularly violent outbreak has taken place; and, indeed, half the sky is a dirty red, the smoke rises behind the trees as if from a gigantic bonfire, and the dull detonations resound. The glowing lava flies high in the air, and comes down in a great curve. One of these performances lasted several hours, presaging a wonderful spectacle for my visit to the volcano, which was set for the next day.

Several natives joined my party, evidently thinking it safer to go to see the "fire" in my company than alone. Yet the Ambrymese in general show remarkably little fear of the volcano, and regard it as a powerful but somewhat clumsy and rather harmless neighbour, whereas on other islands legend places the entrance to hell in the craters.

Quite a company of us marched through the forest, accompanied by the cannonading of the volcano; we felt as if we were going to battle. We traversed the plain and mounted the foot-hills; half-

way up, we observed an eruption, but we could see only the cloud, as the crater itself was hidden by hills. Through thick bush, we came to a water-course, a narrow gully, formed by lava-streams. The rocks in the river-bed had been polished smooth by the water, and though the natives walked over them with ease, my nailed boots gave me great trouble, and I had to cross many slippery spots on my hands and knees, which greatly amused my companions. We passed many tree-ferns, whose dainty crowns seemed to float on the surface of the forest-like stars, and often covered the whole bush, so that the slopes looked like a charming carpet of the loveliest pattern. This tree, the most beautiful of the tropical forest, far surpasses the palm in elegance, whose crown too often looks yellowish and unkempt.

For a few hours we followed the river, which led nearly to the edge of the plateau. When the path branched off, I called a halt for lunch, as we were not likely to find any water later on. We were now quite near the craters, and while we ate our rice, we heard the roaring, so that the boys grew nervous, till the joker of the company made them laugh, and then the meal absorbed their attention. Still, they occasionally sent furtive glances skyward, to see if any lava was coming down upon us.

Having filled all our vessels with water, we marched on, and after a short ascent, found ourselves on the great plain, 650 mètres above sea-level, about 12 kilomètres in diameter, and shaped like a huge dinner-plate, a chain of hills forming the rim.

FERN TREES ON AMBRYN.

It would seem that the whole plain was formerly one gigantic crater; now only two openings are left, two craters 500 and 700 mètres high, in the north-west of the plain.

The ground consists of black, coarse-grained slag, which creaks when walked on, and forms a fine black dust. Naturally the vegetation in this poor soil is very scanty,—only bushes and reed-grass, irregularly scattered in the valleys between little hillocks ranged in rows. This arid desert-scene is doubly surprising to the eye, owing to the sudden change from the forest to the bare plain.

In this seemingly endless plain, the two craters rise in a bold silhouette, grimly black. One of them stands in lifeless rigidity, from the top of the other curl a few light, white clouds of steam. It is a depressingly dismal sight, without any organic life whatever on the steep, furrowed slopes.

We camped on a hillock surrounded by shrubs; on all sides spread the plain, with low hills, rounded by rain and storm, radiating from the craters, and where these touched, a confused wilderness of hills, like a black, agitated sea, had formed. The hilltops were bare, on the slopes there clung some yellowish moss. The farther away from the craters, the lower the hills became, disappearing at the edge of the plain in a bluish-green belt of woods.

The sky was cloudy, a sallow light glimmered over the plain, and the craters lay in forbidding gloom and lifelessness, like hostile monsters. Hardly had I set up my camera, when the western giant began

his performance. The clouds of steam thickened, detonations followed, and at each one a brownish-grey cloud rose out of the mountain, whirled slowly upwards, and joined the grey clouds in the sky. The mountain-top glowed red, and red lumps of lava came flying out of the smoke and dropped behind a hill. Then all became quiet again, the mountain relapsed into lifelessness, the clouds dissolved to a thick mist, and only the steam curled upward like a white plume.

I had taken care to observe how far the lava flew, so as to know how near it would be safe to approach. The path towards the craters was the continuation of the one we had followed, and led to the north shore of the island, passing between the craters. It is remarkable that the natives should dare to use this road, and indeed it is not much travelled; but it speaks for the courage of the first man who had the courage to cross the plain and pass between the craters. The sharp points of the lava caused great suffering to the bare-footed natives, and here I had the advantage of them for once, thanks to my nailed boots.

The clouds had disappeared, the sky shone deeply blue, everything reminded me of former trips in other deserts. The same dry air cooled the heat that radiated from the ground, the same silence and solemnity brooded over the earth, there was the same colouring and the same breadth of view. After the painful march through the forest, where every step had to be measured and watched, it was a joy to step out freely and take great breaths of clear, sweet air.

After a short, steep climb, I reached the ridge, sharp as a knife, that joins the two craters, and following it, I suddenly found myself on the brink of the crater, from which I could overlook the great bowl, 800 mètres wide. The inside walls fell vertically to the bottom, an uncanny, spongy-looking mass of brownish lava, torn, and foaming, and smoking in white or yellowish clouds. The opposite side rose much higher, and the white cloud I had seen from below floated on top. There was a smaller crater, the real opening, and through a gap in it I had a glimpse inside, but failed to see much because of the smoke. The general view was most imposing, the steep, naked walls, the wild confusion in the crater, the red and yellow precipitates here and there, the vicious-looking smoke from the slits, the steam that floated over the opening, swayed mysteriously by an invisible force, the compactness of the whole picture, in the gigantic frame of the outer walls. There was no need of the oppressive odour, the dull roaring and thundering and hissing, to call up a degree of reverent admiration, even fear, and it required an effort of will to stay and grow used to the tremendous sight. The first sensation on seeing the crater is certainly terror, then curiosity awakens, and one looks and wonders; yet the sight never becomes familiar, and never loses its threatening aspect. Still, the inner crater may be a disappointment. From a distance, we see the great manifestations, the volcano in action, when its giant forces are in play and it looks grand and monumental. From near by, we see it in repose, and the crater looks quite insignificant. Instead

of the fire we expected to see, we find lava blocks and ashes, and instead of the clash of elemental forces, we see a dark mass, that glows dully. We can hardly believe that here is the origin of the explosions that shake the island, and are inclined to consider the demon of the volcano rather as a mischievous clown than a thundering, furious giant.

I went to the slope of the eastern crater to find a spot from which I might be able to photograph an eruption, and returned to camp just as the sun sank down in red fire, and the evening mists formed a white belt around the two black mountains. The tops of the craters shone red against a cool evening sky.

Suddenly an immense cloud shot up, white and sky-high. One side of it shone orange in the last sunbeams, the other was dull and grey, and the top mingled with the evening clouds. It was a wildly beautiful sight, gone too soon. A hawk circled afar in the green sky, night crept across the plain, and soon the moon poured her silver over the tranquil scene. I hoped in vain to see an eruption equal to that of the last nights. Everything was quiet, the volcano seemed extinct, the fog thickened, covering the mountains and the moon. It became disagreeably cool, and there was a heavy dew. The natives shivered in their blankets, and I was most uncomfortable under a light canvas. We were all up long before daylight, when the volcano sent out a large cloud. The sun and the fog had a long struggle, when suddenly the clouds tore apart, and the welcome sunbeams came to warm us.

I went to the spot chosen the day before and dug my camera into the lava and waited. My impatience was quieted by the splendid view I enjoyed, embracing nearly all the islands of the group: Epi, Malekula, Aoba, Pentecoste, and higher than all, the cone of Lopevi. All these floated in a soft, blue haze, and even the two craters shone in a violet hue.

We waited for several hours, freezing in spite of the bright sun, between the damp, mossy walls of the gully where we sat, and the volcano remained quiet, merely hissing and roaring and emitting steam, but a real eruption did not occur then, nor for several weeks later. We returned to camp, packed up our things, and hurried down the slippery gullies and lava banks, diving back into the thick, heavy atmosphere of the sea-level; and at nightfall I washed off the heat and dust of the day in the warm waves of the ocean.

# CHAPTER XII

## PENTECOSTE

THE term of service of my Ambrym boys being over, I tried to replace them in Paama, but failed; but Mr. G. kindly took me to Epi, where I engaged four new boys. However, they proved as sulky as they were dirty, and I was disgusted with them, and quite glad they had refused to sign for more than a month. As they were all troubled with many sores, they were of very little service to me, and I gladly sent them home by steamer when their month was up.

I returned to Dip Point, and a few days later Dr. B. escorted me to Olal, where I took up my quarters with Mr. D., a young Australian who was trying to make a living by the coprah trade. In Olal, at the northern point of Ambrym, the alcohol trade is particularly flourishing, and numerous settlers along the coast earn large sums by selling liquor. Everybody knows this, and numbers of intoxicated natives are always to be seen, so that it is somewhat surprising that the authorities pretend not to have sufficient proof to punish these traders. If ever one of them is fined, the amount is so minute that the sale of half a dozen bottles makes up for it, so that they go on as before. I myself witnessed two cases of death in

consequence of drinking, alone and at one sitting, a bottle of pure absinthe.

The house of Mr. D. was typical of the dwellings built by the colonists. In a circumference of about 50 mètres, the bush had been cleared, on a level spot somewhat off the shore and slightly elevated. Here stood a simple grass hut, 3 mètres wide and 6 long ; the floor was covered with gravel, and the interior divided into a store-room and a living-room. On the roof lay a few sheets of corrugated iron, the rain from which was collected in a tank to provide water. A few paces off was another hut, where the coprah was smoked and the boys slept, and on the beach was a shed for storing the coprah.

The actual work a coprah trader has to do is very small, amounting to little besides waiting for the natives who bring the coprah or the fresh nuts, to weigh them and sell his goods. Occasionally he may visit a distant village by boat to buy coprah there ; but there is plenty of unoccupied time, and it is not surprising that many of the settlers take to drink from pure boredom. Not so Mr. D., who tried to educate the neighbouring natives, but with small success.

I did not see much of interest here, or learn anything new about the natives, but I was able to obtain some interesting objects, and my collection of skulls was nicely started, until some one told the natives not to bring me any more skulls, as on the day of resurrection the former owners would not be able to find their heads. The same person created all sorts of difficulties when I attempted some excava-

tions, and at last insinuated that I was a German spy. It is sad to see that the very people who, by virtue of their education and position, ought to help one most, work against one, while very often poor and plain people make sacrifices to help one along.

A young Ambrymese who had worked for me for some days, wanted to enlist in my service when I left, although he grew tearful at the thought of Malekula, where I intended to go next, and where he was convinced he would be killed. Lingban was a light-haired native, very nice-looking, and a favourite with the ladies; this fact had brought him into considerable trouble, and he was obliged to leave his home. He stayed with me for three months, and was not killed, but suffered much from home-sickness. He finally settled at the south end of Pentecoste, whence he could see his beloved Ambrym, count the cocoa-nut trees on the shore and see the heavy clouds over the volcano.

From Dip Point Mr. S. took me over to Aunua on Malekula, the station of the Rev. F. Paton, a son of the celebrated J. G. Paton, the founder of the Presbyterian missions in the New Hebrides. He lived there as a widower, devoting all his strength, time and thought to the spiritual and physical welfare of the natives.

Malekula has the reputation of being one of the most dangerous islands in the group. The natives in the north, the Big Nambas, are certainly not very gentle, and the others, too, are high-spirited and will not submit to ill-treatment from the settlers. Malekula

GROUP OF DRUMS AND STATUES ON MALEKULA.

is the second largest island of the group, and its interior is quite unexplored. I could not penetrate inland, as I was unable to find boys and guides for a voyage they all thought extremely dangerous. Mr. Paton, who had traversed the island at various points, consoled me by telling me that the culture inland was much the same as along the coast. So I gave up my plan, though with some regret.

Mr. Paton took me to the south end of Malekula, and left me on one of the flat coral islands, which are all connected under the surface by an extensive reef. The landscape is charming, the sea above the reef shining in all possible shades, and small flat islands enlivening the view in all directions. In these islands only Christians live, the few remaining heathen having retired to the mainland.

Here on the south coast the strange fashion obtains of deforming the head. This habit is very rare in the Pacific, and restricted to two small districts. It is now purely a matter of fashion or vanity,—the longer the head, the handsomer the individual is thought to be,—but probably there was originally some religious or hygienic notion at the bottom of the peculiar custom. The operation is begun about a month after birth, by rubbing the child's head with grease and soot, and then putting on a small cap of braided pandanus fibre, which is very tight and allows the head to develop only in the direction of the crown. When the cap becomes too tight, it is cut off, and another, a little larger, put on, until the parents are satisfied with the shape of the

child's head. These baby skulls have an extreme shape which is very ugly, and the whole process can hardly be agreeable to the patient; but the operation does not seem to have any prejudicial effect on the intellect, and in later years the shape of the head becomes somewhat less marked, although a man from the south of Malekula is always unmistakable.

This region is remarkable, too, for its highly developed ancestor-worship. Although the general ideas on the subject are the same here as elsewhere in the archipelago, there is a special veneration here for the head or skull of deceased ancestors. The bones are generally used in making arrow-heads and lance-points, and the head, which is useless, is thrown away in most islands, or buried again; but in the south of Malekula, the heads are kept, and the face is reproduced in a plastic material of fibres, clay and sticky juice. The work is very cleverly done, and the face looks quite natural, with fine, slightly Semitic features. The surface is varnished and painted with patterns corresponding to the caste of the dead. Often the face has eyes made of bits of shell, the real hair is stuck on, and the plumes and nose-stick are not forgotten, so that the whole becomes an exact portrait of the deceased. Whether this head is to have a body or not is a question of caste. The higher the caste of the dead, the more completely is his body modelled. The heads of low castes are simply stuck on poles, higher ones have bodies of carved wood, often branches to indicate arms; but the bodies of the highest castes are composed of

bamboo, fibres and straw, and modelled throughout in the same way as the head. They are covered with varnish, and every detail reproduced, including dress, ornaments and caste signs. In their right hands these statues carry a "bubu" or shell horn, and in their left, a pig's jaw. The shoulders are modelled in the shape of faces, and from these, occasionally, sticks protrude, bearing the heads of dead sons, so that such a statue often has three or four heads. These figures stand along the walls of the gamal, smiling with expressionless faces on their descendants round the fires, and are given sacrifices of food.

Side by side with this ancestor-worship there goes a simpler skull-cult, by which a man carries about the head of a beloved son or wife, as a dear remembrance of the departed. Among a flourishing population it would naturally be impossible to obtain such objects, but here, where the people are rapidly decreasing in number, a statue often enough loses its descendants, whereupon others have no objection to sell it.

The taste for plastic art shows in other things as well. I found several grotesque dancing-masks and sticks, made for some special dance. The feeling for caricature expressed in these articles is extraordinary and amusing even, from a European point of view. Here, too, the Semitic type appears, and the natives seem to delight in the hooked noses, thick lips and small chins. I gathered a rich harvest of these curios near the little island of Hambi; unfortunately Mr. Paton came to take me home before

I had time to pack the objects carefully, and I had to leave them in charge of natives until the arrival of the steamer; when I found them again, after six months, they had suffered a good deal.

Towards evening, while rounding the south-east corner of Malekula, our motor broke down, and we had neither oars nor sail. Fortunately the tide was in our favour, and we improvised a sail from a blanket, so that we drifted slowly along and reached the anchorage late at night.

Mr. Paton then took me to Malo, where a Frenchman, Mr. I., was expecting me. On the east coast there was but little to be done, as the natives had nearly all disappeared; but I was able to pick up some skulls near a number of abandoned villages. I found very considerable architectural remains,—walls, mounds and altars, all of masonry; buildings of this importance are to be found nowhere else except in Aoré and the Banks Islands, and it seems probable that the populations of these three districts are related.

I had an interesting experience here. Mr. I. and his neighbour did not enjoy the best of reputations as regarded their treatment of natives. One day Mr. I. took me over to N.'s place. N. was just returning from a recruiting trip to Malekula. We saw him come ashore, staggering and moaning; on being questioned, he told us that he had been attacked by the natives, and his crew eaten up. He was in a frightful state, completely broken, weeping like a child, and cursing the savages, to whom, he

said, he had never done any wrong. His grief was so real that I began to pity the man, and thought he had probably been paying the penalty for the misdeeds of another recruiter. Mr. I. was just as emphatic in cursing the bloodthirstiness of the natives, but while we were going home, he told me that Mr. N. had kidnapped thirty-four natives at that very place a year before, so that the behaviour of the others was quite comprehensible. From that moment I gave up trying to form an opinion on any occurrence of the kind without having carefully examined the accounts of both parties. One can hardly imagine how facts are distorted here, and what innocent airs people can put on who are really criminals. I have heard men deplore, in the most pathetic language, acts of cruelty to natives, who themselves had killed natives in cold blood for the sake of a few pounds. It requires long and intimate acquaintance with the people to see at all clearly in these matters, and for a Resident it is quite impossible not to be deceived unless he has been on the spot for a year at least.

While waiting at Dip Point for an opportunity to cross to Pentecoste, I saw the volcano in full activity, and one day it rained ashes, so that the whole country was black as if strewn with soot, and the eruptions shook the house till the windows rattled. I made a second ascent of the mountain, but had such bad weather that I saw nothing at all. We came back, black as chimney-sweeps from the volcanic dust we had brushed off the bushes. I heard later that the

extinct eastern crater had unexpectedly broken out again, and that several lava streams were flowing towards the coast.

Pentecoste, a long, narrow island running north and south, resembles Maevo in shape. My host here was a missionary who seemed to connect Christianity with trousers and other details of civilization. It was sad to see how many quaint customs, harmless enough in themselves, were needlessly destroyed. The wearing of clothes constitutes a positive danger to health, as in this rainy climate the natives are almost constantly soaked, do not trouble to change their wet clothes, sleep all night in the same things and invariably catch cold. Another source of infection is their habit of exchanging clothes, thus spreading all sorts of diseases. That morals are not improved by the wearing of clothes is a fact; for they are rather better in the heathen communities than in the so-called Christian ones. It is to be hoped that the time is not far off when people will realize how very little these externals have to do with Christianity and morality; but there is reason to fear that it will then be too late to save the race.

We undertook an excursion into the interior, to a district whose inhabitants had only recently been pacified by Mr. F., my host; the tribes we visited were very primitive, especially on the east coast, where there is little contact with whites. The people were still cannibals, and I had no difficulty in obtaining some remnants of a cannibal meal.

We frequently tried to obtain information about the organization of the family among these natives, but, being dependent on biche la mar, we made small progress. My observations were supplemented later by the Rev. Mr. Drummond, for which I am very much indebted to him; some of these observations may be of interest.

The population is divided into two clans—the Bule and the Tabi. The former is supposed to have originated from the tridacna shell, the latter from the taro. Every individual knows exactly to which clan he belongs, although there are no external signs. There is a strict rule forbidding marriage within the clan, and an offence against this law was formerly punished by death; to this day, even in Christian districts, marriage within the clan is extremely rare. No one can change his clan. Children do not belong to the clan of the father, but to that of the mother, and property cannot be alienated from the clan. The father has no rights over his children, and the head of the family is not the father, but the eldest brother of the mother, who educates the boys and helps them along in the Suque. Land belongs to the clan, which is like a large family, and indeed seems a stronger organization than the family itself; but the clans live together in the villages, and as such they form a whole with regard to the outside world. Quarrels between two clans are not so rare as those inside a clan, and the vendetta does not act inside the clan, whereas a murder outside the clan must be avenged. Uncles and aunts within the clan are

called father and mother, and the cousins are called sister and brother.

However, this exogamic system could not prevent inbreeding, as there was always the possibility that uncles and nieces might marry, so that a "horizontal" system was superimposed across this "vertical" one, forbidding all marriages between different generations. Thus, all marriages between near relations being impossible, the chances to marry at all are considerably diminished, so that nowadays, with the decreased population, a man very often cannot find a wife, even though surrounded by any number of girls. I do not mean to imply by this that the whole clan-system was organized simply to prevent inbreeding.

As I have said before, young men, as a rule, either cannot marry, being too poor to buy a wife, or, at best, can only afford to pay for an old widow, a low-priced article. The young, pretty girls are generally bought by old men, who often buy them when children, paying half the price down, and waiting till the girl is of marriageable age. As soon as she is old enough, she has to work for her future husband, and is under the care of one of his wives. Later on, the husband pays the rest of the money, builds a house for the girl, and the marriage takes place without any ceremony beyond a dinner to the nearest relatives of the couple. In most islands the girl cannot object to a match otherwise than by running away from a disagreeable husband. Generally, when she has run away several times, and repeated beatings have not changed her mind, her

parents pay back the money and the husband gives up his wife. What is valued highest in a woman is her capacity for work; but the young men have a marked taste for beauty, and there are girls that are courted by all the young fellows of the village, and who, although married to an old man, accept the addresses of a young one. The husband does not seem to mind much, provided the woman continues to work well for him.

There is such a thing as love even here, and it has been known to grow so powerful as to lead, if unrequited, to suicide or to rapid pining away and to death.

On the whole, the women are treated fairly well by their husbands, but for an occasional beating, which is often provoked by foolish behaviour; and they are taken care of, as they represent a great value. There are old ruffians, however, who take a perverse pleasure in torturing their wives, and these unhappy women are quite helpless, as they are entirely in the power of their husbands. Otherwise, the fate of the women is not as bad as many people think, and the severest rules have never yet prevented Eve from finding and taking her pleasure.

During babyhood the children stay with their mothers; but from the age of four on the boys spend most of their time in the gamal, while the girls remain under their mother's care. Clothes are not worn by the boys till they have joined the Suque, which, in some cases, takes place long after puberty. The girls seem to begin to wear something whenever the

mother thinks fit, generally between the ages of four and seven. From that moment every connection between brother and sister ceases; they may not speak to each other, not meet on the road, in some regions not even see each other, and to mention the sister's name before the brother is, if not an actual insult, certainly very tactless. Similar rules regulate the relations between parents- and children-in-law.

The parents are very lenient to their children, and pass over every impertinence; they get small thanks for their kindness, and the boys, especially, often treat their mothers very badly. The natives' fondness for children makes them very good nurses, and it is a source of the greatest pride to a native boy to take care of a white child.

The father's death is of little importance to the children, and not much to their mother, who, as a rule, goes over to her husband's oldest brother. If the mother dies, the children are adopted by a maternal aunt or some other woman of the clan. One reason why all this is of no great importance is the far-reaching communism which is a feature of native life, every one sleeping and eating wherever he pleases.

Mr. F. took me up north, where I wished to study the population. I must not omit to mention that the population of Pentecoste is divided into two distinct types: the people in the south are like those of Ambrym, those in the north resemble the inhabitants of Aoba. This is evident not only in the dress, but also quite distinctly in the exterior of the people.

Yet in spite of the close relations with Ambrym, the art of sculpture, so highly developed in the other island, is entirely lacking in the south of Pentecoste.

In the north we find a dress similar to that of Aoba: the men do not wear the nambas, while the women have a small mat around the waist. The art of braiding is brought to great perfection here, and the mats from Pentecoste are surpassed only by those from Maevo. The material is pandanus, whose leaves are split into narrow strips, bleached and then braided. Some of the mats are dyed with the root of a plant, by boiling in a dyeing vat of bark. Besides the small mats, chiefly used for the women's dress, there are larger ones which serve as money and represent a great amount. They are as much as 1 mètre wide and 4 long, and are always dyed. The manufacture of these mats is very laborious, and only high-caste men with many wives can afford to have them made. The patterns for dyeing are cut out of banana-sheath, which is then tied tightly on the mat, and the whole rolled round a thick stick. The dyeing takes almost an entire day. These mats are used, for example, to buy the valuable tusked pigs.

The only form of wood-carving in this region are clubs, and those made here are the most elegant of the whole group, and so much in demand in all the islands that they are quite largely exported. At present they are mostly used as ceremonial clubs at dances. All those of modern make are inferior to the old ones in regard to hardness, elegance of shape, polish and strength. Here, in Pentecoste, I found

the first basket-plates I had ever seen. They are frequent farther north, in the Banks Islands, but do not exist in the south. These plates had no centre, and had to be lined with leaves to make them serviceable, being mere rings. They are used to carry cooked food about. In the Banks Islands the natives have learned to braid the centre too.

Up in these northern mountains I spent a most unpleasant week in wet, cold weather, in a wretched house; but I had the satisfaction of finding two boys to take the place of Lingban, who had, by this time, become semi-idiotic with home-sickness.

I returned to the coast and waited for an opportunity to cross to Aoba, but the weather was so bad that even Mr. G., an old sea-dog, would not risk the voyage; so we tried to get to Ambrym instead, where I could meet the steamer for Aoba. We waited for a calm day, and started out in the tiny whale-boat. Soon we were caught by one after another of the ill-famed Pentecoste squalls, and though my skipper was known as one of the best sailors in the islands, one squall struck us so suddenly that the boat heeled over, and only a very quick turn of the wheel saved us from capsizing. The escape was such a narrow one that even Mr. G. turned pale, and decided to go back, especially as the boys sat on deck, quite useless, green with fear and incapable of helping us in any way.

It took us a long time to beat back, and we were all glad to feel solid ground under our feet once more. After a few days we started again, but luck was

against me on this occasion, and inside of twelve hours I missed the steamer no less than three times, which, in the New Hebrides, implies a delay of four weeks.

So, in a heavy whale-boat, I rowed along the coast toward Olal with some natives. A dull rain drenched us, followed by glaring sunshine that stewed us in heavy dampness. Like the ruins of a giant wall, black lava blocks lay here and there along the coast. The surf foamed white in the crevasses, and the forest rose, sallow and greenish-yellow, above the high bank. Here and there naked natives squatted on the rocks, motionless, or looking lazily for crabs; among the huge boulders they looked tiny, and their colouring scarcely distinguished them from their surroundings; so that they seemed rather like animals, or the shyest of cave-dwellers. Floating slowly on the grey sea, in the sad broken light, I thought I had never seen a more inhospitable coast.

Owing to the heavy swell, we had difficulty in passing through the narrow channel inside the reef. The great rollers pounded against the coral banks, and poured back in a thousand white streamlets, like a wonderful cascade, to be swallowed by the next wave.

I found my friend, Mr. D., in a sad state with fever, cold and loneliness; wrapped up in woollen caps, blankets and heavy clothes, he looked more like an Arctic explorer than a dweller near the Equator. He spoke of leaving the islands, and, indeed, did so some months later.

On my way to Aoba I had to spend a few days off Pentecoste, in such rainy weather that I went ashore but once in all that time. The day was fine, and I shall never forget the beauty of that woodland scene. A lovely creek winds through reeds, reflecting the bright sand and the bushes on its banks. Dark iron-woods rise in stiff, broken lines, and their greyish needles quiver like a light plume against the blue sky, where white clouds float serenely. Inland the forest swells in a green wall, and farther off it lies in rounded cupolas and domes of soft green, fading into a light around the distant hills. Under overhanging branches I lie, sheltered from the sun; at my feet the ripples caress the bank; delicate lianas hang from the branches and trail lazily in the water. Swallows dart across the stream, and sometimes the low call of a wood-dove sounds from far away. A cricket shrieks, and stops suddenly, as if shocked at the discordant sound of its own voice. Far off in the hills I can hear the rushing of the wind, like a deep chord that unites in a sacred symphony with the golden sun and the glittering water to voice the infinite joy of living that penetrates all creation to-day.

Down-stream I can see the heavy coast banks, with a narrow strip of brilliant blue sea shining above them, and now and then a glint of snowy foam. Two pandanuses frame the view, their long leaves waving softly in the breeze that comes floating down the valley. Half asleep, I know the delights of the lotus-eaters' blessed isle.

COOKING-HOUSE ON AOBA.

## CHAPTER XIII

### AOBA

NEXT day I landed in Aoba, at "Albert's." He was an American negro, who, after having been a stoker and sailor, had settled here as a coprah trader. His language was of the strangest, a mixture of biche la mar, negro French and English, and was very hard to understand. With the help of two native women he kept his house in good order, and he was decidedly one of the most decent colonists of the group, and tried to behave like a gentleman, which is more than can be said of some whites. He seemed to confirm the theory that the African is superior to the Melanesian. Albert sheltered me to the best of his ability, although I had to sleep in the open, under a straw roof, and his bill of fare included items which neither my teeth nor my stomach could manage, such as an octopus. There were several other negroes in Aoba; one was Marmaduke, an enormous Senegalese, who had grown somewhat simple, and lived like the natives, joining the Suque and dancing at their festivals. He occasionally came to dinner at Albert's; this was always amusing, as Albert thought himself far superior to Marmaduke, and corrected his mistakes with still more comical impossibilities. Both were most polite and perfectly sober. The

talk, as a rule, turned on stories of ghosts, in which both of them firmly believed, and by which both were much troubled. Marmaduke was strangled every few nights by old women, while a goblin had sat on Albert's chest every night until he had cleared the bush round his house and emptied his Winchester three times into the darkness. This had driven the ghosts away,—a pretty case of auto-suggestion. I was interested in hearing these stories, though I should hardly have thought a sensible man like Albert could have believed such things.

The people of Aoba are quite different from those of the other islands,—light-coloured, often straight-haired, with Mongolian features; they are quite good-looking, intelligent, and their habits show many Polynesian traits. The Suque is not all-important here: it scarcely has the character of a secret society, and the separation of the sexes is not insisted on. Men and women live together, and the fires do not appear to be separated. As a result, there is real family life, owing in part to the fact that meals are eaten in common. The gamal is replaced by a cooking-house, which is open to the women; generally it is nothing but a great gabled roof, reaching to the ground on one side and open on the others. Here the families live during the day, and the young men and guests sleep at night, while the married couples sleep in their huts, which are grouped around the cooking-house.

The position of the women, so much better here than elsewhere, is not without effect on their

behaviour. They are independent and self-possessed, and do not run away from a stranger nor hide in dark corners when a white man wants to speak to them. Because of their intelligence they are liked on plantations as house-servants, and so many of them have gone away for this purpose that Aoba has been considerably depopulated in consequence; few of these women ever return, and those who do are usually sick. Some Aoba women have made very good wives for white men.

The people of Aoba are remarkable for their cleanliness, the dwellers on the coast spending half the day in the water, while those from the mountains never miss their weekly bath, after which they generally carry a few cocoa-nuts full of salt water up to their homes. The women are very pretty, slim and strong; their faces often have quite a refined outline, a pointed chin, a small mouth and full but well-cut lips; their eyes are beautiful, with a soft and sensual expression; and the rhythm of their movements, their light and supple walk, give them a charm hardly ever to be found in Europe. The men, too, are good to look at. Considering the intelligence and thriftiness of the race, it is doubly regrettable that alcoholism, recruiting and consumption have had such evil effects of recent years.

I roamed about in the neighbourhood of Nabutriki and attended several festivals; they are much the same as elsewhere, except that the pigs are not killed by braining, but by trampling on their stomachs, which apparently causes rupture of the heart and speedy death.

As I mentioned elsewhere, a man's rise in caste is marked on every occasion by the receipt of new fire, rubbed on a special stick ornamented with flowers. Fire is lighted here, as in all Melanesia, by "ploughing," a small stick being rubbed lengthwise in a larger one. If the wood is not damp, it will burn in less than two minutes: it is not necessary, as is often stated, to use two different kinds of wood. To-day matches are used nearly everywhere, and the natives hardly ever "plough" their fire, except for ceremonial purposes; but they are still very clever about keeping the fire burning, and often take along a smouldering log on their walks.

Wood-carving and sculpture are wanting, except in the shape of drums, which are placed in a horizontal position, and often reach considerable dimensions.

Not far from Albert's lived a man of the highest caste, my friend Agelan. He was planning to kill one hundred tusked pigs in the near future, which would raise him to the highest caste far and wide, but would also impoverish him for the rest of his life. He lived quietly and comfortably, like a country squire, surrounded by his relatives and descendants. He seemed fond of good living, and his wife was an excellent housekeeper. In the midst of a somewhat colourless Christian population, wearing trousers and slovenly dresses, using enamel pots and petrol-lamps, Agelan and his household were a genuine relic of the good old times, and no one could have pretended that his home was less pleasant than those around

FIRE RUBBING.

him. These things are largely a matter of taste; and those who prefer grotesque attire to beautiful nakedness will be happy to know that their wishes will soon be fulfilled. I liked the old heathen, and spent a good deal of time with him. A sketch of his home life may not come amiss, just because these primitive ways are dying out so fast.

As I near the house, some dogs rush out at me, and a woman's voice calls them back; Agelan roars a welcome—he always shouts, and likes to put on masterful airs; for in years gone by he was a very unpleasant customer, until the man-of-war—but that is all ancient history, and now his bark is much worse than his bite. I have the honour of being in his good books, thanks to certain medical services I was able to render him; he has an ugly cough, for which we have tried in turn: iodine, Peruvian balsam, eucalyptus oil, quinine, and other medicines; nothing helps, but he seems to enjoy swallowing the drugs.

The floor of the house is hard clay; there are two fireplaces at one end, and at the other some large drums serve as seats. Everywhere in the roofing hang bows, arrows, bones, plummets, ropes, and clubs. Agelan has been toasting himself at a little fire of his own; now he rises, coughing, and shakes hands. He is a very tall, strongly-made man of about sixty, with a high forehead, long, hooked nose, wide mouth, thin lips and white beard. His dress is the old-fashioned loin-mat, and around his wrists he wears heavy strands of shell money. His wife, too, is very tall and strong, with quiet, dignified movements; she may

be forty years old. Everything about her is calm and determined; while not handsome, she has such a kind expression as to look very pleasant. She wears a small loin-cloth, and her light coffee-coloured skin is scrupulously clean. Around her neck and over her left shoulder she wears a string of shells, and around her ankles, small red beads. Near her squats her little daughter, a pretty child of six; an adopted daughter plays near the fire with a small, thick-bellied orphan boy, who is always crying. The girls, too, wear little ornaments; and their dainty movements, curly heads, round faces and great dark eyes are very attractive.

The midday meal is steaming under a heap of leaves and dust, and a man is busily scraping cocoa-nuts for the delicious cocoa-nut milk. Agelan sends one of the girls for an unripe nut, which is opened in three deft cuts, and I am offered the refreshing drink as a welcome. Now Agelan, who has been brooding for days over these matters, questions me as to my origin and plans, and he roars himself nearly hoarse, for we cannot understand each other. The other man, a fugitive from the east coast, is asked to interpret, but he is sulky and awkward; not that he is a bad sort, but he is sick, and spends most of his time asleep in a shed he has built for himself in a corner of the house, and only appears at meals.

The youngest son comes in, the last left to Agelan, for the older ones have all joined the mission,—it is the fashion. This boy is a quiet, cheerful lad of twelve, already a high caste, for his father has killed

many pigs for him. He has shot a miserable pigeon, and his mother and the girls laugh at the poor booty, much to his chagrin.

Agelan now takes me to "view" a particularly fine tusked pig, tied under a roof, on a clean couch of straw; the boy shows it bits of cocoa-nut to make it open its mouth, so that I can see and admire its tusks. Agelan would like nothing better than to show off all his pigs, and if I were a native I would pass them in review as we Europeans visit picture-galleries; but I refuse as politely as I can. We return to the cook-house, where the cocoa-nut rasping is finished; the man washes his hands in the water of a nut, splitting it open and squeezing the water in a little spray on to his hands. Mrs. Agelan knows a simpler way; she fills her mouth with water and squirts it on her hands. The cocoa-nut gratings are kneaded with a little water, while the girls sweep the earth off the cooking-place and uncover the stones; an appetizing smell spreads, and the master of the house watches the preparations with a sharp eye and a silent tongue. One feels that the least carelessness will provoke an outburst, and, indeed, a solemn silence has fallen on the company, only the wife smiles quietly.

"Lap-lap banana good!" Agelan roars in my ear, and I nod assent. Now the hot stones are removed with bamboo tongs, and the great flat object, wrapped in banana leaves, is taken out. Mrs. Agelan throws back the leaves and uncovers the beautifully cooked golden lap-lap. Her lord looks at it critically, and

returns to his corner silent, but evidently satisfied. His wife cannot quite hide a smile of pride.

The stranger now squeezes the cocoa-nut gratings over a wooden bowl, and a creamy juice runs through his fingers. The bowl is brought to Agelan, who looks at it as if reading an oracle; then he selects a hot stone from his own fire, and sends the bowl back to be embedded in the gratings. He approaches with his stone in a wooden fork, and squats down near the bowl lost in thought, as if anxious not to miss the right moment; then he drops the stone into the milk, which hisses, bubbles and steams. A fine smell of burnt fat is noticeable; and while the liquid thickens, Agelan behaves as if he could perform miracles and was in league with supernatural powers. After a while his wife hands him the bowl, and he holds it over the pudding, undecided how and where to pour the milk; one would think the fate and welfare of creation depended on his action. Being a man of energy, he makes up his mind, and pours one stream right across the pudding, then empties his bowl and retires with a sigh to his seat. About ten more bowlfuls are needed, but these are poured by Mrs. Agelan without further ceremony. The solemn hush is over. With a long bush-knife, Mama cuts the pudding into strips and squares and distributes it, and the meal proceeds amid general satisfaction. I am given a large slab; fortunately it tastes very good and is easily digestible, for politeness ordains that one must eat enormous quantities. At one stage of the proceedings the girls are sent to take some food to

the neighbours as a present. When everyone has finished, Agelan lies down for a siesta, while his wife lights a pipe and squats in silent happiness near the fire. The girls play with the dirty little boy, and the son plucks his tiny pigeon and a flying-fox; singeing the creature's fur off occasions such an evil smell that I prefer to take my leave. Mrs. Agelan smiles her farewell, the girls giggle, and when I have gone some distance I hear Agelan, awakened from his siesta, roar a sleepy good-bye after me.

## CHAPTER XIV

### LOLOWAY—MALO—THE BANKS ISLANDS

Having traversed the western part of the island, I sailed to Loloway, near the eastern point, one of the loveliest spots in the archipelago. Lofty cliffs flank two sides of a round bay; at the entrance a barrier-reef breaks the swell, which glides in a soft undulation over the quiet water, splashing up on the sandy beach. All around is the forest, hanging in shadowy bowers over the water, and hardly a breeze is astir. The white whale-boat of the Anglican missionary floats motionless on the green mirror; sometimes a fish leaps up, or a pigeon calls from the woods. In the curve of the bay the shore rises in two terraces; on the lower lies the Anglican missionary's house, just opposite the entrance. In the evening the sun sets between the cliffs, and pours a stream of the purest gold through the narrow gap. It is a pity this fairy spot is so rarely inhabited; Melanesian missionaries are not often at home, being constantly on the road, or at work in the native villages. Mr. G., too, was on the point of departure, and agreed to take me with him on his trip.

In his alarmingly leaky boat we sailed westward, two boys baling all the time. We ran into a small anchorage, pulled the boat ashore, and marched off

TATTOOING ON AOBA.

inland. The people I found here were similar to those in the west, except that they had developed certain arts to a greater degree of perfection, particularly mat-braiding and tattooing. The braiding is done by a method very similiar to that in vogue on Pentecoste. The tattooing is mostly done by women and on women; but the men, especially the high castes, often have a beautifully designed sicca leaf running from the chest towards one shoulder, which probably has some religious significance. The women often have their whole body, arms and legs, covered with tattooing, as if with fine lace. The operation is done bit by bit, some one part being treated every few days. The colour used is the rosin of a nut-tree precipitated on a cool stone and mixed with the juice of a plant; the pattern is drawn on the skin with a stick, and then traced with the tattooing-needle. This consists of three orange thorns, tied at right angles to a stick. The needles are guided along the design with the left hand, while the right keeps striking the handle softly with a light stick, to drive the needles into the skin. This is kept up until a distinct outline is produced; the operation is not very painful. The skin is then washed and rubbed with a certain juice, which evidently acts as a disinfectant; at least I never saw any inflammation consequent on tattooing. During the next few days some of the dye works out and falls off with the dry crust that forms on the wound, leaving the tattooing a little paler. The patterns are rather complicated, and at the present day there are

no recognizable representations of real objects; yet there seems no doubt that at one time all the designs represented some real thing. They are carefully adapted to the body, and accentuate its structure. The women who do the tattooing are well paid, so that only the wealthy can afford to have their wives and daughters tattooed all over; and naturally a tattooed woman brings a higher price in the matrimonial market than a "plain" one.

In this same place I had occasion to observe an interesting zoological phenomenon, the appearance of the palolo-worm, which occurs almost all over the Pacific once a year, at a certain date after the October full moon. The natives know the date exactly, which proves the accuracy of their chronology. The palolo is a favourite delicacy, and they never fail to fish for it. We went down to the shore on the first night; there were not many worms as yet, but the next evening the water was full of the greenish and brownish threads, wriggling about helplessly. Each village had its traditional fishing-ground, and we could see the different fires all along the coast. The worms were gathered by hand and thrown into baskets, and after midnight we went home with a rich harvest. The palolo is mixed with pudding, and said to taste like fish; I am not in a position to pronounce an opinion.

I returned to Nabutriki, and thence to Malo, where Mr. W. informed me that the Burns-Philp steamer had already passed, and asked me to stay with him and his kind family until I should find an oppor-

tunity to cross. I accepted all the more gladly, as this part of Malo was still quite unknown to me. The population I found here is probably identical with that which formerly inhabited the south shore of Santo. This was interesting to me because of certain scientific details, though on the whole the life was much the same as elsewhere in Melanesia, with the Suque, etc. I collected a number of charms and amulets, which the people sold willingly, as they no longer believed in their power. Formerly, they were supposed to be useful for poisoning, as love-charms, or for help in collecting many tusked pigs.

I also visited the neighbouring islands, and heard the gruesome story of how the last village on Aoré disappeared. The Aoré people were for ever at war with those of South Santo, across the Segond Channel. The men of Aoré were about sixty strong, and one day they attacked a Santo village. Everyone fled except one man, who was helpless from disease. He was killed and eaten up, and in consequence of this meal thirty out of the sixty men from Aoré died. The others dispersed among the villages of Malo. In Aoré, I had the rare sensation of witnessing an earthquake below the surface. I was exploring a deep cave in the coral banks when I heard the well-known rumbling, felt the shock, and heard some great stalactites fall from the ceiling. This accumulation of effects seemed then to me a little theatrical and exaggerated.

The next steamer took me to the Banks Islands, and I went ashore at Port Patterson on Venua Lava.

Here were the headquarters of a rubber planting company; but the rubber trees had not grown well, and the company had started cocoa-nuts. I had met Mr. Ch., the director, before, and he took me in. The company owned a motor-launch, which cruised all through the Banks Islands, visiting the different plantations; this gave me a good opportunity to see nearly all the islands. The sea is much more dangerous here than in the New Hebrides, being open everywhere; and the strong currents cause heavy tide rips at the points of the jagged coasts.

An excursion to Gaua was a failure, owing to bad weather. After having shivered in a wet hut for four days, we returned to Port Patterson only just in time; for in the evening the barometer fell, a bad sign at that season, and the wind set in afresh. The launch was anchored in a sheltered corner of the bay, near an old yacht and a schooner belonging to Mr. W., a planter on a neighbouring islet. All the signs pointed to a coming cyclone, and suddenly it shot from the mountains, furrowed the sea, and ruled supreme for two days. From the director's house I watched the whirling squalls gliding over the water, lifting great lumps of spray, that shot like snow over the surface and disappeared in the misty distance. Rain rattled in showers on the roof; everywhere was a hissing, rushing, thundering; the surf broke in violent, irregular shocks like the trampling of an excited horse; the wind roared in the forest till the strongest trees trembled and the palms bent over with inverted crowns. In a moment the creeks

DWELLING-HOUSE ON GAUA, WITH PAINTINGS AND CARVED POLES.

swelled to torrents, and in every gully there ran rivers, which collected to a deep lake in the plain. In the house the rain penetrated everywhere, leaked through the roof, dripped on the beds, and made puddles on the floor.

Meanwhile the captain and engineer of the launch had passed an unpleasant time; they had stayed aboard till the rolling of the boat drove them to the larger yacht; but seeing the schooner break her two chains and drift on to the reef, they became frightened and went ashore in the dinghey, and home along the beach. Later they arrived at the station and reported "all well," and were amazed when I told them that the launch had stranded. I had just been looking from the veranda through the glass at the boats, when a huge wave picked up the launch and threw her on the beach. There she had rolled about a little, and then dug herself into the sand, while the tide fell and the wind changed. Next day the cyclone had passed, but the swell was still very heavy. Equipped with everything necessary to float the launch, we marched along the beach, which was beaten hard by the waves. We had to cross a swollen river on an improvised raft; to our satisfaction we found the boat quite unhurt, not even the cargo being damaged; only a few copper plates were torn. Next day Mr. W. arrived, lamenting his loss; for his beautiful schooner was pierced in the middle by a sharp rock, and she hung, shaken by the waves that broke over her decks and gurgled in the hold. The rigging was torn, the cabin washed away, and the shore strewn with her

doors, planks, beams and trade goods. It was a pitiful sight to see the handsome ship bending over like a fallen warrior, while the company's old yacht had weathered the cyclone quite safely.

During the work of refloating the boat, Mr. Ch. was taken very ill with fever, and I nursed him for some days; he was somewhat better by Christmas Eve, and we had the satisfaction of bringing the saved launch back to the station. He was visibly relieved, and his good humour was agreeably felt by his boys as well as by his employés, to whom he sent a goodly quantity of liquor to celebrate the occasion. We sat down to a festive dinner and tried to realize that this was Christmas; but it was so different from Christmas at home, that it was rather hard. At our feet lay the wide bay, turquoise blue, edged with white surf; in the distance rose the wonderful silhouette of Mota Lava Island; white clouds travelled across the sky, and a gentle breeze rustled in the palms of the forest. The peaceful picture showed no trace of the fury with which the elements had fought so few days ago.

Tired with his exertions, Mr. Ch. withdrew early, and I soon followed; but we were both aroused by the barking of the dogs, followed by the pad of bare feet on the veranda, whispering and coughing, and then by a song from rough and untrained throats. The singers were natives of a Christian village some miles away, who came to sing Christmas hymns in a strange, rough language, discordant and yet impressive. When they had finished the director went out

to them; he was a man whom one would not have believed capable of any feeling, but he had tears in his eyes; words failed him, and he thanked the singers by gestures. We all went down to the store, where they sang to the employés, and received presents; after which they spent the rest of the night with the hands, singing, eating and chatting. On Christmas Day the natives roasted a fat pig, the employés spent the day over their bottles, and I was nurse once more, my patient being delirious and suffering very much.

Before New Year's Day the launch was sent to all the different stations to fetch the employés, an interesting crowd of more or less ruined individuals. There was a former gendarme from New Caledonia, a cavalry captain, an officer who had been in the Boer war, an ex-priest, a clerk, a banker and a cow-boy, all very pleasant people as long as they were sober; but the arrival of each was celebrated with several bottles, which the director handed out without any demur, although the amount was prodigious. Quarrels ensued; but by New Year's Eve peace was restored, and we all decorated the director's house with wreaths for the banquet of the evening. The feast began well, but towards midnight a general fight was going on, which came to an end by the combatants falling asleep one by one. Thus the new year was begun miserably, and the next few days were just as bad. The natives looked on at the fights with round-eyed astonishment; and the director was in despair, for a second cyclone was threatening,

and there was hardly anyone in a fit condition to help him secure the launch.

All one morning it rained, and at noon the cyclone broke, coming from the south-west, as it had done the first time, but with threefold violence. We sat on the veranda, ready to jump off at any moment, in case the house should be blown away. The view was wiped out by the mist; dull crashes resounded in the forest, branches cracked and flew whirling through the air, all isolated trees were broken off short, and the lianas tangled and torn. The blasts grew ever more violent and frequent, and if the house had not been protected by the mountain, it could never have resisted them. As it was, it shook and creaked, and a little iron shed went rolling along the ground like a die. Down in the plain the storm tore the leaves off the palms, and uprooted trees and blew down houses. The cyclone reached its climax at sunset, then the barometer rose steadily, and suddenly both wind and rain ceased. The stillness lasted for about half an hour and then the storm set in again, this time from the north, striking the house with all its strength; fortunately it was not so violent as at first. With the rising barometer the storm decreased and changed its direction to the east. All next day it rained and blew; but on the third morning the storm died out in a faint breeze from the south-east, and when we came to reckon up our damages, we found that it might have been worse. Meanwhile the employés had had time to recover from their orgy. A brilliant day dried the damp house, and soon everything resumed

ANCESTOR HOUSE ON GAUA, WITH PICTURES AND CARVED STATUES.

a normal aspect except the forest, which looked brown and ragged, like autumn woods at home.

I made use of the first calm day to visit the lonely little islet of Meralava. As it has no anchorage, no one can land there except in quiet weather, and so it had come about that the company's employé had had no communication with the outside world for four months. The island is an extinct volcano, a regular cone, with the crater as a deep cavity in the top. There is hardly a level square mètre on the whole island, and the shores rise steeply out of the sea; only a few huge lava blocks form a base, on which the swell breaks and foams. When we reached the island, this swell was so heavy as to render landing almost impossible. All we could do was to take the employé aboard and return home. I was very sorry to have to give up my visit to Meralava, as the natives, though all christianized, have preserved more of their old ways than those of other islands, owing to their infrequent intercourse with civilization. For the same reason, the population is quite large; but every time a ship has landed an epidemic goes through the island, the germs of which appear to be brought by the vessels, and the natives evidently have very small powers of resistance. We may here observe on a small scale what has taken place all over the archipelago in the degeneration and decimation of the aborigines.

The people of Meralava live on taro, which they grow in terraced fields, the water being obtained

from holes in the rocks, and on cocoa-nuts, of which the island yields a fair supply.

The following day we started for Ureparapara, also a volcanic island, with an enormous crater, one side of which has fallen in ; because, as the natives say, a great fish knocked against it. The sea has penetrated into the interior of the crater, forming a lovely bay, so that ships now lie at anchor where formerly the lava boiled and roared.

In consequence of the frequent intercourse with whites, the population is scanty. There is hardly a level patch, except the small strip at the base of the slope and the great reef outside. Here, too, we had difficulty in landing, but in the evening we found an ideal anchorage inside the bay. The water was scarcely ruffled, and little wavelets splashed on the shore, where mangrove thickets spread their bright foliage. Huge trees bent over the water, protecting the straw roofs of a little village. In the deep shade some natives were squatting round fires, and close by some large outrigger-canoes lay on the beach. On three sides the steep wooded slopes of the former crater's walls rise up to a sharply dented ridge, and it all looks like a quiet Alpine lake, so that one involuntarily listens for the sound of cow-bells. Instead, there is the call of pigeons, and the dull thunder of the breakers outside.

We took a holiday in this charming bay; and though the joys of picnicking were not new to us, the roasting of some pigeons gave us a festive sensation and a hearty appetite. The night under

DRUM CONCERT ON UREPARAPARA.

the bright, starlit sky, on board the softly rocking launch, wrapped me in a feeling of safety and coziness I had not enjoyed for a long time.

Along the steepest path imaginable I climbed next morning to the mountain's edge. The path often led along smooth rocks, where lianas served as ropes and roots as a foothold; and I was greatly surprised to find many fields on top, to which the women have to climb every day and carry the food down afterwards, which implies acrobatic feats of no mean order.

Ureparapara was the northernmost point I had reached so far, and the neighbourhood of the art-loving Solomon Islands already made itself felt. Whereas in the New Hebrides every form of art, except mat-braiding, is at once primitive and decadent, here any number of pretty things are made, such as daintily designed ear-sticks, bracelets, necklaces, etc.; I also found a new type of drum, a regular skin-drum, with the skin stretched across one end, while the other is stuck into the ground. The skin is made of banana leaves. These and other points mark the difference between this people and that of the New Hebrides. As elsewhere all over the Banks group, the people have long faces, high foreheads, narrow, often hooked, noses, and a light skin. Accordingly, it would seem that they are on a higher mental plane than those of the New Hebrides, and cannibalism is said never to have existed here.

My collections were not greatly enriched, as a

British man-of-war had anchored here for a few days a short time before; and anyone who knows the blue-jackets' rage for collecting will understand that they are quite capable of stripping a small island of its treasures. A great deal of scientifically valuable material is lost in this way, though fortunately these collectors go in for size chiefly, leaving small objects behind, so that I was able to procure several valuable pieces.

After our return to Port Patterson the launch took me to a plantation from which I ascended the volcano of Venua Lava. Its activity shows principally in sulphur springs, and there are large sulphur deposits, which were worked fifteen years ago by a French company. A large amount of capital had been collected for the purpose, and for a few weeks or months the sulphur was carried down to the shore by natives and exported. Then it was found that the deposits were not inexhaustible, that the employés were not over-conscientious, that the consumption of alcohol was enormous, and finally the whole affair was given up, after large quantities of machinery had been brought out, which I saw rusting away near the shore. In this way numerous enterprises have been started and abandoned of late years, especially in Nouméa. It is probably due to this mining scheme that the natives here have practically disappeared; I found one man who had once carried sulphur from the mine, and he was willing to guide me up the volcano.

There are always clouds hanging round the top

of the mountain, and the forest is swampy; but on the old road we advanced quite rapidly, and soon found ourselves on the edge of a plateau, from which two streams fell down in grand cascades, close together, their silver ribbons gleaming brightly in the dark woods. One river was milk-white with sulphur precipitate, the other had red water, probably owing to iron deposits. The water was warm, and grew still warmer the farther up we followed the river. Suddenly we came upon a bare slope, over certain spots of which steam-clouds hung, while penetrating fumes irritated one's eyes and nose. We had come to the lower margin of the sulphur springs, and the path led directly across the sulphur rocks. Mounting higher, we heard the hissing of steam more distinctly, and soon we were in the midst of numerous hillocks with bright yellow tops, and steam hissing and whistling as it shot out of cracks, to condense in the air into a white cloud. The whole ground seemed furrowed with channels and crevasses, beneath which one heard mysterious noises; one's step sounded hollow, and at our side ran a dark stream, which carried the hot sulphur water to the shore. Great boulders lay about, some of them so balanced that a slight touch sent them rolling into the depths, where they broke into atoms. Sometimes we were surrounded by a thick cloud, until a breeze carried it away, and we had a clear view over the hot, dark desert, up to the mountain-top. It was uncanny in the midst of those viciously hissing hillocks, and I could not blame my boys for turning green with fear and wishing to go

home. But we went on to a place where water boiled in black pools, sometimes quietly, then with a sudden high jump; some of the water was black, some yellowish, and everything around was covered with sulphur as if with hoar-frost.

We followed the course of a creek whose water was so hot as to scald our feet, and the heat became most oppressive. We were glad to reach the crater, though it was a gloomy and colourless desert, in the midst of which a large grey pool boiled and bubbled. In front was a deep crevice in the crater wall, and a cloud of steam hid whatever was in it; yet we felt as though something frightful must be going on there. Above this gloomy scene stretched a sky of serenest blue, and we had a glimpse of the coast, with its little islands bathing in the sapphire sea.

Next day we left for Gaua. Unhappily the captain met friends, and celebrated with them to such an extent that he was no longer to be relied on, which was all the more unpleasant as the weather was of the dirtiest, and the barometer presaged another cyclone. After two days it cleared up a little; I went ashore at the west point of Gaua, where the launch was to pick me up again two days later, as I meant to visit the interior while the others went to buy coprah. Even now the wind and the swell from the north-west were increasing suspiciously, and after I had spent a rainy night in a village off the shore, I saw the launch race eastward along the coast, evidently trying to make a safe anchorage, with the storm blowing violent squalls and the sea very high.

INTERIOR OF A GAMAL ON GAUA.

On my way inland I still found the paths obstructed by fallen trees from the last cyclone, while nearly all the cocoa-nut palms had lost their nuts. And again the storm raged in the forest, and the rain fell in torrents.

I was anxious to buy statues of tree-fern wood; they are frequently to be seen here, standing along a terrace or wall near the gamal, and seem not so much images of ancestors, as signs of rank and wealth. The caste may be recognized by the number of pigs' jaws carved on the statues. Often the artist first makes a drawing of the statue in red, white and black paint on a board; and these same designs are used as patterns for tattooing, as well as on ear-sticks and other objects. Female statues are common, which is an unusual thing.

I obtained a good number of skulls, which were thrown into the roots of a fig tree, where I was allowed to pick them up as I pleased.

The Suque is supposed to have originated here; and here certainly it has produced its greatest monuments, large altar-like walls, dams and ramparts. The gamals, too, are always on a foundation of masonry, and on either side there are high pedestals on which the pigs are sacrificed. Among the stones used for building we often find great boulders hollowed out to the shape of a bowl. No one knows anything about these stones or their purpose; possibly they are relics of an earlier population that has entirely disappeared.

When I returned from my excursion I looked

down on a wild foam-flecked sea, over which the storm was raging as it did during the previous cyclones. I realized that I should have to stay here for some time, and ate my last provisions somewhat pensively. I only hoped that the launch had found an anchorage, else she must inevitably have been wrecked, and I should be left at the mercy of the natives for an indefinite time. The hut in which I camped did not keep off the rain, and I was wet and uncomfortable; thus I spent the first of a series of miserable nights. I was anxious to know the fate of the launch, and this in itself was enough to worry me; then I was without reading or writing materials, and my days were spent near a smoky fire, watching the weather, trying to find a dry spot, sleeping and whistling. Sometimes a few natives came to keep me company; and once I got hold of a man who spoke a little biche la mar, and was willing to tell me about some old-time customs. However, like most natives, he soon wearied of thinking, so that our conversations did not last long.

The natives kept me supplied with food in the most hospitable manner: yam, taro, cabbage, delicately prepared, were at my disposal; but, unaccustomed as I was to this purely vegetable diet, I soon felt such a craving for meat that I began to dream about tinned-meat, surely not a normal state of things. To add to my annoyance, rumours got afloat to the effect that the launch was wrecked; and if this was true, my situation was bad indeed.

On the fifth day I decided to try and find the

anchorage where I supposed the launch to be. The wind had dropped a little, but it was still pouring, and the walk through the slippery, devastated forest, up and down steep hills and gullies, across fallen trees, in a thick, oppressive fog, was strenuous enough. In the afternoon, hearing that the launch was somewhere near, we descended to the coast, where we came upon the captain and the crew. They had managed to anchor the launch at the outbreak of the storm, and had camped in an old hut on the beach; but the huge waves, breaking over the reef, had created such a current along the beach that the launch had dragged her anchors, and was now caught in the worst of the waves and would surely go down shortly. Unfortunately the captain had sent the dinghey ashore some time before coming to this bay, so that there was no means whatever of reaching the launch. The rising sea had threatened to wash away the hut, and the captain, leaving the boat to her fate, had gone camping inland.

I went down to the beach to see for myself how things stood, and was forced to admit that the man had not exaggerated. In the midst of the raging surf the launch rocked to and fro, and threatening waves rose on every side and often seemed to cover her. Still she was holding her own, and had evidently not struck a rock as yet; and if her cables held out, hope was not lost. I watched her fight for life for some time, and she defended herself more gallantly than I should ever have expected from so clumsy a craft; but I had little hope. We spent a miserable

night in the village, in a heavy atmosphere, amid vermin and filth, on an uneven stone floor. The rain rattled on the roof, the storm roared in the forest like a passing express train, the sea thundered from afar, and a river echoed in a gorge near by; to complete the gloomy scene, a violent earthquake shook the hills.

In the morning the launch was still afloat on the same spot; the wind had abated, and the sky no longer looked quite so stormy. During the night things improved still more, and we ventured to camp on the shore. The boys went for the dinghey, and although they had hard work, half dragging, half carrying it along the shore over the cliffs, they succeeded in bringing it to our beach, and then made an attempt to row to the launch, but were almost carried out beyond the reef. Encouraged by a faintly rosy sunset and a few stars, we waited another day; then the current along the coast had nearly ceased, only outside the reef huge mountains of water rolled silently and incessantly past, and broke thundering against the cliffs. The second attempt to reach the launch was successful, and, wonderful to relate, she had suffered no damage, only she had shipped so much water that everything was soaked and rusty. The engineer began to repair her engines, and by evening she steamed back to her anchorage, where we welcomed her as if she had been a human being.

The wind had quite fallen when we steamed out next day. It was dull weather, and we were rocked

by an enormous swell; yet the water was like a mirror, and the giant waves rose and disappeared without a sound. It all seemed unnatural and uncanny, and this may have produced the frightened feeling that held us all that morning. While we were crossing over to Port Patterson a sharp wind rose from the north, and the barometer fell, so that we feared another edition of the storm. If our engines had broken down, which happened often enough, we should have been lost, for we were in a region where the swell came from two directions, and the waves were even higher than in the morning. Fortunately the wind increased but slowly; presently we were protected by the coast, and at night we arrived at Port Patterson. The men had given us up, and welcomed us with something akin to tenderness. Here, too, the cyclone had been terrible, the worst of the three that had passed in four weeks.

Soon afterwards the steamer arrived, bringing news of many wrecks and accidents. A dozen ships had been smashed at their anchorages, four had disappeared, and three were known to have foundered; in addition, news came of the wreck of a steamer. Hardly ever had so many fallen victims to a cyclone.

Painfully and slowly our steamer ploughed her way south through the abnormally high swell. None of the anchorages on the west coast could be touched, and everywhere we saw brown woods, leafless as in winter, and damaged plantations; and all the way down to Vila we heard of new casualties.

# CHAPTER XV

## TANNA

Of the larger inhabited islands of the New Hebrides, only Tanna remained to be visited. Instead of stopping at Vila, I went on to White Sands, Tanna, where the Rev. M. was stationed. The large island of Erromanga has but little native population, and that is all christianized; the same is true of the smaller islands of Aneityum, Aniwa and Futuna. I preferred to study Tanna, as it is characteristic of all the southern part of the archipelago. The population is quite different from that in the north, and one would call it Polynesian, were it not for the curly hair which shows Melanesian admixture. Light-coloured, tall, strong, with the fleshy body that is often a feature of the Polynesian, the people have, not infrequently, fine open features, small noses and intelligent faces of oval outline. They are more energetic, warlike and independent than those up north, and their mode of life is different, the Suque and everything connected with it being entirely absent. Instead, we find hereditary chieftainship, as in all Polynesia, and the chiefs are held in the highest veneration by their subjects. This state of things was greatly to the advantage of the missions, as the chiefs, even if converted, retained

MEN FROM TANNA.

their authority, whereas in the north the high castes, on their conversion, lost all influence and position, as these only depended on the Suque. The brilliant results of the missions in Tanna are due, apart from the splendid work of the two Presbyterian missionaries, chiefly to this fact. If the missionaries and the authorities would join forces for the preservation of the native race, great good might be done. Intelligent efforts along this line ought to comprise the following features: revival of the wish to live and the belief in a future for the race, increase in the birth-rate, rational distribution of the women, abolition of the present recruiting system, compulsory medical treatment, creation of law and order, and restoration of old customs as to daily life and food.

The houses on Tanna are poor huts of reed-grass, probably because the perpetual wars discouraged the people from building good dwellings. The principal weapons are the spear and club, the arrow, as elsewhere in Polynesia, playing a subordinate part. A weapon which is probably peculiar to Tanna are throwing-stones, carefully made stone cylinders, which were hurled in battle. If a man had not time to procure one of these granite cylinders, a branch of coral or a slab of stone, hewn into serviceable shape, would serve his turn; and these instruments are not very different from our oldest prehistoric stone implements.

Quite a Polynesian art is the manufacture of tapa: bark cloth. The Tannese do not know how

to make large pieces, but are satisfied with narrow strips, used as belts by the men, and prettily painted in black and red.

The dress of the men is similar to that of Malekula, that of the women consists of an apron of grass and straw; and they often wear a hat of banana leaves, while the men affect a very complicated coiffure. The hair is divided into strands, each of which is wound with a fibre from the head out. A man may have several hundred of these ropes on his head all tied together behind, giving a somewhat womanish appearance. It takes a long time to dress the hair thus, and the custom is falling into disuse.

On the whole, the culture of the Tannese is low; there is no braiding or carving, and the ornaments worn consist only of a few bracelets and necklaces, with an occasional nose-stick; the only conspicuous feature are ear-rings of tortoise-shell, of which as many as a dozen may hang in one ear.

On the other side of Tanna is Lenakel, where the Rev. W. was working with admirable devotion and success in a hospital. I crossed the island several times, and enjoyed the delightful rides through the shady forest, on very good bridle-paths the natives had made.

Tanna's most striking sight is its volcano; there is hardly another in the world so easily accessible; for in half an hour from the shore its foot may be reached, and in another half-hour one is at the top. It is about 260 m. high, a miniature volcano, with

WOMEN FROM TANNA.

all its accessories complete, hot springs, lake, desert, etc., always active, rarely destructive, looking like an overgrown molehill. A wide plain stretches inland, utterly deserted owing to the poisonous vapours always carried across it by the south-east trade-wind, and in the centre of the plain is a sweet-water lake.

I climbed the volcano for the first time on a rainy day. On top, I suddenly found myself at the end of the world; it was the edge of the crater, completely filled with steam. As I walked along the precipice, such an infernal thundering began just under my feet as it seemed, that I thought best to retire. My next ascent took place on a clear, bright day; but the wind drove sand and ashes along the desert, and dimmed the sunshine to a yellowish gloomy light. I traversed the desert to the foot of the crater, where the cone rose gradually out of brownish sand, in a beautiful curve, to an angle of 45°. The lack of all vegetation or other point of comparison made it impossible to judge whether the mountain was 100 or 1000 m. high. The silence was oppressive, and sand columns danced and whirled up and down, to and fro, like goblins. A smell of sulphur was in the air, the heat was torturing, the ground burnt one's feet, and the climb in the loose sand was trying. But farther up the sea-breeze cooled the air deliciously, and stone blocks afforded a foothold. Soon I was on top, and the sight I saw seemed one that only the fancy of a morbid, melancholy genius could have invented, an ugly

fever dream turned real, and no description could do it justice.

In front of me the ground fell down steeply, and the torn sides of the crater formed a funnel-shaped cavity, a dark, yawning depth. There were jagged rocks, fantastic, wild ridges, crevices, fearful depths, from which issued steam and smoke. Poisonous vapour poured out of the rocks in white and brownish clouds that waved to and fro, slowly rising, until a breeze caught and carried them away. The sight alone would suffice to inspire terror, without the oppressive smoke and the uncanny noise far down in the depths. Dull and regular, it sounded like the piston of an engine or a great drum, heard through the noises of a factory. Presently there was silence, and then, without any warning, came a tearing crack, the thunder as of 100 heavy guns, a metallic din, and a cloud of smoke rose; and while we forced ourselves to stay and watch, the inferno below thundered a roaring echo, the walls shook, and a thousand dark specks flew up like a swarm of frightened birds. They were lava blocks, and they fell back from the height of the crater, rattling on the rocks, or were swallowed up by the invisible gorge. Then a thick cloud surrounded everything, and we realized that our post at the mouth of the crater, on an overhanging ridge, was dangerous; indeed, a part of the edge, not far off, broke down and was lost in the depths. Another and another explosion followed; but when we turned, we overlooked a peaceful landscape, green forests, palms

bending over the bright blue water, and far off the islands of Erromanga, Futuna and Aniwa.

A visit to the volcano at night was a unique experience. Across the desert the darkness glided, and as we climbed upward, we felt and heard the metallic explosions through the flanks of the mountain, and the cloud over the crater shone in dull red. Cautiously we approached the edge, just near enough to look down. The bottom of the crater seemed lifted, the walls were almost invisible, and the uncertain glare played lightly over some theatrical-looking rocks. We could see three orifices ; steam poured out of one, in the other the liquid lava boiled and bubbled, of the third there was nothing to be seen but a glow ; but underneath this some force was at work. Did we hear or feel it? We were not sure ; sometimes it sounded like shrill cries of despair, sometimes all was still, and the rocks seemed to shake. Then suddenly it boiled up, hissing as if a thousand steam-pipes had burst, something unspeakable seemed preparing, yet nothing happened. Some lava lumps were thrown out, to fall back or stick to the rocks, where they slowly died out. All at once a sheaf of fire shot up, tall and glowing, an explosion of incredible fury followed ; the sheaf dispersed and fell down in marvellous fireworks and thousands of sparks. Slowly, in a fiery stream the lava flowed back to the bottom. Then another explosion and another, the thumping increased, one of the other openings worked, spitting viciously in all directions, the noise became unbearable. All one's senses were affected, for the din was too

violent to touch one's hearing only. Then there was silence; the cloud rose, and beside it we saw the stars in the pure sky, and heard the surf beat peacefully, consolingly, as if there were no volcano and no glowing lava anywhere near.

While we were standing on the brink as if fascinated, the silver moon rose behind us, spread a broad road of light on the quiet sea, played round us with her cool light, shone on the opposite wall of the crater, and caressed the sulphurous cloud. It was a magical sight, the contrast of the pure moonlight and the dirty glare of the volcano; an effect indescribably grand and peculiar, a gala performance of nature, the elements of heaven and hell side by side.

At last we left. Behind and above us thundered the volcano, below us lay the desert, silvery in the moonlight, in quiet, simple lines; far away rolled the sea, and in the silence the moon rose higher and higher, and our shadows followed us as we traversed the plain and gained the friendly shade of the palm grove.

CANOE FROM NITENDI.

# CHAPTER XVI

## THE SANTA CRUZ ISLANDS

After my return to Port Vila, where I again had the honour of being Mr. King's guest, and having practically finished my task in the New Hebrides, I decided not to leave this part of the world without visiting the Santa Cruz Islands, a group of small islands north of the New Hebrides and east of the Solomon Islands. This archipelago has not had much contact with civilization, and is little known. I had a good opportunity to go there, as the steam yacht *Southern Cross* of the Anglican mission in Melanesia was expected to stop at Vila on her way to the Solomons. She touched at the Santa Cruz island of Nitendi going and returning, and could therefore drop me and take me up again after about six weeks. While waiting for her arrival, I investigated some caves on Leleppa, near Port Havannah, which the natives reported to be inhabited by dwarfish men; but the results were insignificant.

Passage having been granted me by the skipper of the *Southern Cross*, I once more sailed the well-known route northward through the New Hebrides and Banks Islands; but from Ureparapara onward I was in strange waters. The *Southern Cross* was a steamer of about five hundred tons, built especially

for this service, that is, to convey the missionaries and natives from the headquarters on Norfolk Island to the different islands. Life on board was far from luxurious; but there was good company and an interesting library. I had the pleasure of making some interesting acquaintances, and the missionaries gave me much valuable information about the natives and their customs. When the tone of the conversation in the evening threatened to become too serious, our jovial Captain S. speedily improved matters by his grotesquely comical sallies. A strenuous life was that of the missionary who was responsible for the organization of the voyage; he had to visit the native communities, and went ashore at every anchorage, sometimes through an ugly surf or dangerous shoals, generally with overcrowded whaleboats; and this went on for three months. I had nothing to do, and amused myself by comparing the boys from the various islands, who were quite different in looks, speech and character. There were the short, thick-set, plebeian natives from the New Hebrides, the well-built men from the Solomons, with their long faces and open, energetic expression, the languid, sleepy boys from the Torres Islands and the savage Santa Cruzians.

The trip of the *Southern Cross* was important as an experiment, being the first with an exclusively native crew. Hitherto the Melanesians had been considered incapable of any work calling for energy, initiative and conscientiousness. Captain C. was convinced that this was unjust, and started on this

MAN FROM NITENDI, SHOOTING.

voyage without any whites except the officers; the result was most satisfactory. The natives, when carefully and patiently trained, work quite as well as low-class whites, and have proved themselves capable of more than plantation work.

It was a bright morning when we entered the lovely Graciosa Bay on Nitendi. The island had a much more tropical aspect than those of the New Hebrides, and the vegetation seemed more varied and gayer in colour. Natives in canoes approached from every side, and all along the beach lay populous villages, a sight such as the now deserted shores of the New Hebrides must have afforded in days gone by. Hardly had we cast anchor when the ship was surrounded by innumerable canoes. The men in them were all naked, except the teachers the missionaries had stationed here; all the others were genuine aborigines, who managed their boats admirably, and came hurrying on board, eager to begin bartering.

The natives here have a bad reputation, and are supposed to be particularly dangerous, because they never stir from home without their poisoned arrows. A missionary had recently been forced to leave the island, after having been besieged by the natives for several days. But it would seem that they are not hostile unless one of their many intricate laws and customs is violated, which may happen easily enough to anyone unacquainted with their habits.

I took up my quarters with the only white man in the place, a Mr. M., who managed a cocoa-nut plantation for an Australian company with boys from the

Solomons. My first task was to find servants, as none had dared accompany me from the New Hebrides to the ill-famed Santa Cruz Islands. Through his coprah trade Mr. M. knew the people well, and by his help I soon found two boys who had some vague notion of biche la mar, real savages, who served me well in a childish, playful way. They were always jolly, and although they seemed to look upon what they did for me rather as a kindness than a duty, we got along fairly well. When it became known that my service implied good food and little work, many others applied, but I only chose one young fellow, probably the most perfect specimen of a man I have ever seen. He kept himself scrupulously clean, and in his quiet, even behaviour there was something that distinguished him from all the rest. It is difficult to put the beauty of a human body into words; I can only say that he was of symmetrical build, with a deep chest and well-developed limbs, but without the great muscles that would have given him the coarse aspect of an athlete. His greatest charm was in the grace of his movements and the natural nobility of his attitudes and his walk; for he moved as lightly and daintily as a deer, and it was a constant pleasure, while walking behind him during our marches through the forest, to admire his elastic gait, the play of his muscles and the elegant ease with which he threaded the thicket. I tried to take some photographs of him, but without great success, owing to technical difficulties; besides, the face had to be hidden as much as possible, as to a

European eye the natives' faces often seem to have a brutal expression. The men of Santa Cruz, too, wear disfiguring nose-rings of tortoise-shell hanging down over their mouths, so large that when eating they have to be lifted up out of the way with the left hand. Another ugly habit is the chewing of betel, the nut of the areca palm, which is mixed with pepper leaves and lime. The lime is carried in a gourd, often decorated with drawings and provided with an artistically carved stopper. The leaves and this bottle are kept in beautifully woven baskets, the prettiest products of native art, made of banana fibre interwoven with delicate designs in black. Betel-chewing seems to have a slightly intoxicating effect; my boys, at least, were often strangely exhilarated in the evening, although they had certainly had no liquor. The lime forms a black deposit on the teeth, which sometimes grows to such a size as to hang out of the mouth, an appendage of which some natives seem rather vain.

The dress of the men consists of a narrow belt of bark and a strip of tapa worn between the legs. Around their knees and ankles they wear small, shiny shells, and on their chests a large circular plate of tridacna-shell, to which is attached a dainty bit of carved tortoise-shell representing a combination of fish and turtle. This beautiful ornament is very effective on the dark skin. In the lobes of the ears are hung large tortoise-shell ornaments, and on the arms large shell rings or bracelets braided with shell and cocoa-nut beads are worn.

The men are never seen without bows and arrows of large and heavy dimensions. Like all the belongings of the Santa Cruzians, the arrows show artistic taste, being carefully carved and painted so as to display black carving on a white and red ground. The points of the arrows are made of human bone.

I bought one of the excellent canoes made by these people, and often crossed the lovely, quiet bay to visit different villages. The natives take great care of their canoes, and make it a point of honour to keep them spotlessly white, which they do by rubbing them with a seaweed they gather at the bottom of the ocean.

On approaching a village it requires all the skill of the native not to be dashed by the swell against the reefs. A narrow sandy beach lies behind, and then a stone terrace 6 feet high, on which the gamal is built. Generally there was great excitement when I landed, and the men came rushing from all sides to see me. They were not hostile, only too eager for trade, and I had to interrupt my visits for a week and trade only at the house where I was staying, so as to give them time to quiet down. This helped matters a little, although, until the day I left, I was always the centre of an excited mob that pulled at my sleeves and trousers and shrieked into my ears. I was always cordially invited to enter the gamals; these were square houses, kept very clean, with a fireplace in the centre, and the floor covered with mats. As usual, the roof was

full of implements of all sorts, and over the fire there was a stand and shelves, where coprah was roasted and food preserved.

The natives are expert fishermen, and know how to make the finest as well as the coarsest nets. They frequently spend the mornings fishing, a flotilla of canoes gathering at some shallow spot in the bay.

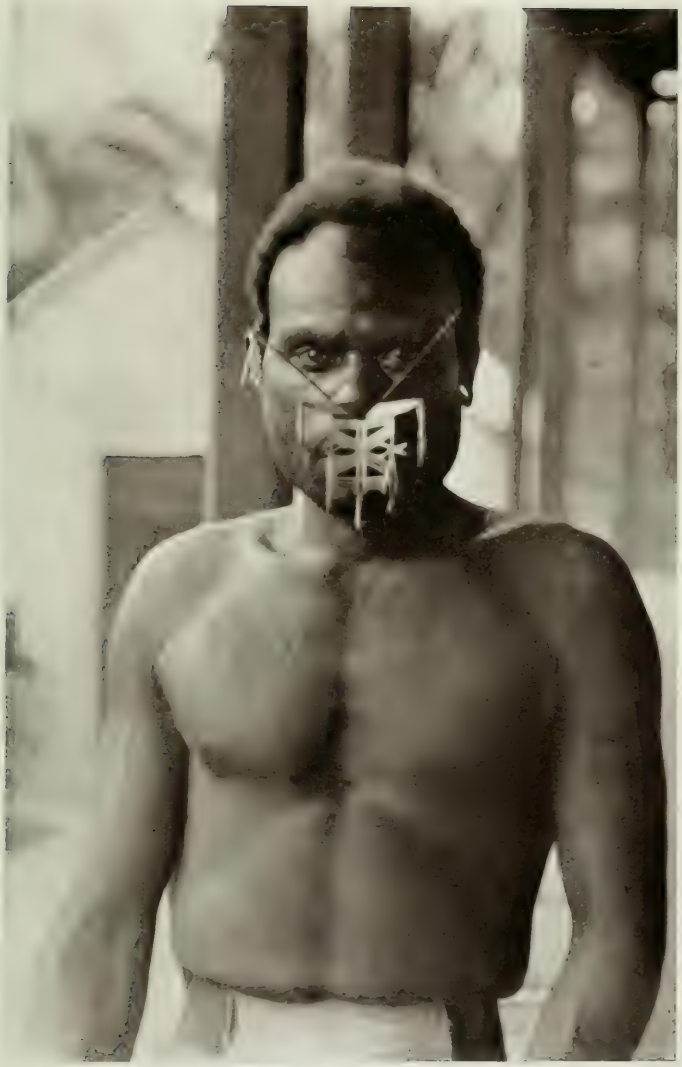
The afternoons are mostly spent in the village in a *dolce far niente*. Each village has its special industry: in one the arm-rings of shell are made, in another the breastplates, in a third canoes, or the fine mats which are woven on a loom of the simplest system, very similar to a type of loom found in North America. Weaving, it will be remembered, is quite unknown in the New Hebrides.

An object peculiar to these islands is feather money. This consists of the fine breast-feathers of a small bird, stuck together to form plates, which are fastened on a strip of sinnet, so that a long ribbon of scarlet feathers is obtained of beautiful colour and brilliancy. These strips are rolled and preserved in the houses, carefully wrapped up and only displayed on great occasions. Considering how few available feathers one little bird yields, and how many are needed for one roll, it is not surprising that this feather money is very valuable, and that a single roll will buy a woman. At great dances the circular dancing-grounds along the shore are decorated with these ribbons.

For a dance the men exchange the nose-ring

of tortoise-shell for a large, finely carved plate of mother-of-pearl. In the perforated sides of the nose they place thin sticks, which stand high up towards the eyes. In the hair they wear sticks and small boards covered with the same feathers as those used for feather money. They have dancing-sticks of a most elaborate description, heavy wooden clubs of the shape of a canoe, painted in delicate designs and with rattles at the lower end. The designs are black and red on a white ground, and are derived from shapes of fish and birds. Similar work is done on carvings showing the different species of fish and birds; the drawing is exquisite, and shows fine feeling for ornamental composition.

The position of women in Santa Cruz is peculiar, although the Suque does not exist, and therefore no separation of fires is enforced. Masculine jealousy seems to have reached its climax here, for no man from another village even dares look at a woman. The women's houses are a little inland, away from the gamal and separated by high walls from the outer world. Most of the houses are square, but there are some circular ones, a type very rare in these regions. To my regret I was never able to examine one of these round houses, so that I have no idea how they are built. To enter the women's quarters, or to approach nearer than 100 mètres to any woman, is a deadly offence, and such breaches of etiquette are the cause of frequent feuds. Only once I was taken by one of my boys through the lanes of his village, and this



MAN FROM NITENDI, WITH PEARL SHELL NOSE ORNAMENT FOR DANCING.

was considered very daring, and the limit of permissible investigation. However, with the help of Mr. M., who was practically a "citizen" of one of the villages, I succeeded in taking some photographs of women; but only the oldest dowagers and some sick girls presented themselves, and among them I saw the most repulsive being I ever met,—an old shrivelled-up hag. At sight of such a creature one cannot wonder that old women were often accused of sorcery.

It is surprising how much inferior physically the women of Nitendi are to the men. The men are among the best made people I ever saw, while the women are the poorest. The dress of the women consists of large pieces of tapa, worn around the hips and over the head, and a third piece is sometimes used as a shawl. Tapa is not made at Graciosa Bay, but inland; it is often painted in simple but effective geometrical designs.

The majority of the population lives near the sea; I was credibly informed that there are hardly any people inland. The Santa Cruzian is a "salt-water man," and there is a string of villages all along the coast. The inhabitants of the different villages keep very much to themselves, and their territories are separated by a strip of forest, and on the shore by high stone walls leading far out into the sea. On the whole, the two thousand people in the bay live very quietly, certainly more so than the same number of whites would without any police. It is not quite clear in what respect our civilization could

improve them, as, like most aborigines, they have a pronounced sense of propriety, justice and politeness. There is very little disputing or quarrelling, and differences of opinion are usually settled by a joke, so that in this respect the savages show a behaviour far superior to that of many a roaring and swearing white.

I found neither drums nor statues here, and of the local religion I could learn nothing. There is a skull-cult, similar to that on Malekula: a man will paint the skull of a favourite wife or child yellow, shut all the openings with wooden stoppers and carry the relic about with him. Towards the end of my stay I obtained possession of some of these interesting skulls. The idea in shutting the holes is doubtless to preserve the spirit of the dead inside the skull.

One evening I crossed the bay to attend a dance. The starless sky shone feebly, spotted with dark, torn clouds. A dull silver light lay on the sea, which was scarcely lighter than the steep shores. In the silence the strokes of our oars sounded sharp and energetic, yet they seemed to come from a distance. In the darkness we felt first the outrigger, then the canoe, lifted by a heavy swell, which glided away out of sight in monotonous rhythm. Then light began to play around us, indistinct at first, then two silver stripes formed at the bow and ran along the boat. They were surrounded by bright, whirling sparks, and at the bow of the outrigger the gayest fireworks of silver light sprang up, sparkling and dying away

MAN FROM TUCOPIA WITH TAPA DRESS.

as if the boat had been a meteor. The oars, too, dripped light, as though they were bringing up fine silver dust from below. The naked boy in front of me shone like a marble statue on a dark background as his beautiful body worked in rhythmic movements, the light playing to and fro on his back. And ever the sparks danced along the boat in hypnotizing confusion, and mighty harmonies seemed to echo through the night air. The feeling of time was lost, until the opposite shore rose to a black wall, then, through the silence, we heard the cold rush of the surf beating moodily on the reef. We slackened speed, the fairy light died and the dream ended. We kept along the shore, looking for the entrance, which the boys found by feeling for a well-known rock with their oars. A wave lifted us, the boys bent to their oars with all their might, we shot across the reef and ran into the soft sand of the beach.

But as the rain fell now in torrents, there was no dance that night.

Mr. M. and I attempted a few excursions, but bad weather interfered with our plans, and a rainy period of three weeks followed. One squall chased the other, rattling on the roof, forming swamps everywhere, and penetrating everything with moisture. I was glad when the *Southern Cross* came back for me, especially as this was to be the beginning of my homeward journey.

This time we touched at a small island called Tucopia, where a primitive Polynesian population still exists, probably the only island where this is the

case. When the steamer approached we saw the people running about on the reef in excitement, and soon countless canoes surrounded us. The appearance of these islanders was quite new to me. Instead of the dark, curly-haired, short Melanesians, I saw tall, light-coloured men with thick manes of long, golden hair. They climbed aboard, wonderful giants, with soft, dark eyes, kind smiles and childlike manners. They went everywhere, touched everything, and flattered and caressed us. We were all eager to go ashore, and at the edge of the reef an excited crowd awaited our arrival impatiently and pulled our boat violently on the rocks in their eagerness. Two tall fellows grabbed me under the arms, and, willy-nilly, I was carried across the reef and carefully deposited under a shady tree on the beach. At first I did not quite trust my companions, but I was powerless to resist, and soon I became more confident, as my new friends constantly hugged and stroked me. Soon a missionary was brought ashore in the same way, and then, to our greatest surprise, a man approached us who spoke biche la mar. He asked if we had no sickness on board, for some time ago the same ship had infected the island with an epidemic that had caused many deaths. We assured him that we had none, and he gave us permission to visit the island, telling us, too, that we were to have the great honour of being presented to one of the four chiefs. This was indeed something to be proud of, for in Polynesian islands the chieftainship, as I have said, is hereditary, and the chiefs are

paid honours almost divine. We took off our hats and were led before the chief, a tall, stout man, who sat in a circle of men on a sort of throne, with his ceremonial spear leaning against a tree beside him. His subjects approached him crouching, but he shook hands with us and smiled kindly at us. A noble gesture of the hand gave us leave to taste a meal prepared to welcome us, which looked most uninviting, but turned out to be beautifully cooked sago and cocoa-nut cream. We could not finish the generous portions, and presently signed that we were satisfied; the chief seemed to regret that we did not do more honour to his hospitality, but he gave us permission to walk about. While all the other natives ran about in great excitement over our visit, the good old man sat on his throne all the time, quite solemnly, although I am convinced that he was fairly bursting with curiosity. We hurried through the village, so as to get a general idea of the houses and implements, and then to the beach, which was a beautiful sight. Whereas on Melanesian islands the dancing-grounds only are kept cleared, and surrounded by thick shrubbery for fear of invasion, here all the underbrush had been rooted out, and the shore was like a park, with a splendid view through dark tree-trunks across the blue sea, while the golden, godlike forms of the natives walked about with proud, regal gait, or stood in animated groups. It was a sight so different in its peaceful simplicity from what I was accustomed to see in Melanesia, it all looked so happy, gay and alluring that it hardly needed the invitations of the

kind people, without weapons or suspicion, and with wreaths of sweet-scented flowers around their heads and bodies, to incline us to stay. Truly, the sailors of old were not to blame if they deserted in numbers on such islands, and preferred the careless native life to hard work on board a whaler. Again and again I seemed to see the living originals of some classical picture, and more and more my soul succumbed to the intoxicating charm of the lovely island.

But we could not stay; the steamer whistled, and we had to leave. A young native was going to Norfolk Island, and he took leave of his family and the chief in a manly way which was touching to witness. He bowed and laid his face on the knees of some old white-haired men with finely chiselled, noble faces. They seemed to bless him, then they raised his head and tenderly pressed their faces against his, so that their noses touched. The boy brushed away a tear and then jumped bravely on board.

When we came on board, the steamer was crowded with natives, and they refused to leave. We had to drive them away energetically, and as their canoes were soon overcrowded, many of them jumped into the water with shouts and laughter, and swam several miles to the shore, floating happily in the blue sea, with their long hair waving after them like liquid gold. Thus I saw the last of the dream-island, bathed in the rays of the setting sun. My regret was shared by the boy, who stood, still ornamented with flowers and wreaths, at the stern of

140°
145°
150°
155°
160°
165°
170°
5°
10°
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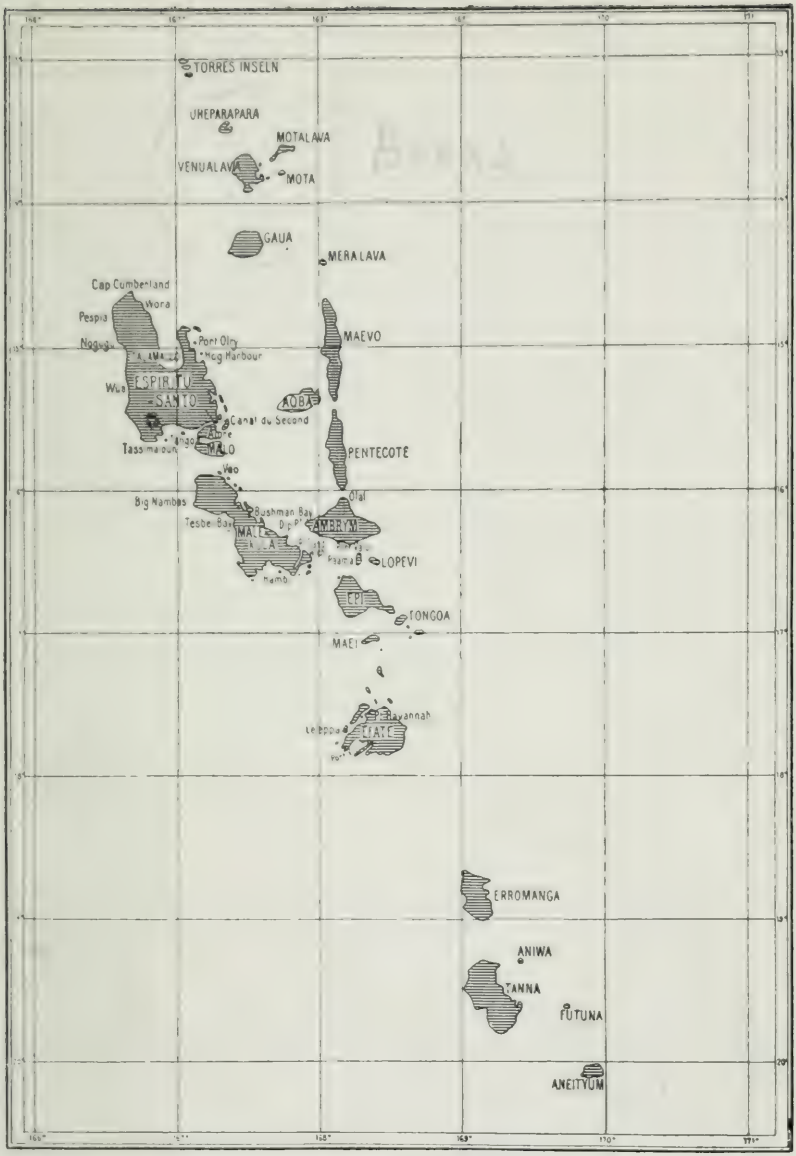
20°
Neu Guinea
Salomonen
Sta Cruz
Tucopia
Banks-Inseln
Neue Hebriden
Australien
Neu Kaledonien


TORRES INSELN
UHEPARAPARA
MOTALAVA
VENUALAVA
MOTA
GAUA
MERALAVA
Cap Cumberland
Wora
Pespia
Port Olry
Hog Harbour
MAEVO
Wua
ESPIRITU
SANTO
AOBA
Canal du Second
Tassimaloun
MALO
PENTECOTE
Veo
Big Nambas
Bushman Bay
Olal
Tesbe Bay
AMBRYM
LOPEVI
EPI
TONGOA
MAEI
Rayannah
ERROMANGA
ANIWA
TANNA
FUTUNA
ANEITYUM

the steamer, looking sadly back at his disappearing paradise.

Our good times, too, were over. We had a dull, rainy night, a heavy, broadside swell, and as the steamer had not enough ballast, she rolled frightfully. In this nasty sea we were afraid she might turn turtle, as another steamer had done some months ago. The storm became such that we had to lie at anchor for five days, sheltered by the coast of Gaua. It was with real relief that I left the *Southern Cross* at Port Vila; sorry as I was to leave my friends on board, I did not envy them the long voyage to New Zealand.

Two days later I took the mail steamer for Sydney. Although tired enough, and glad to return to the comforts of civilization, I felt real regret at leaving the places where I had spent so many delightful hours, and where I had met with so much kindness on all sides.

THE END

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