

РОБЕРТ СТИВЕНСОН

A FOOTNOTE TO
HISTORY: EIGHT YEARS
OF TROUBLE IN SAMOA

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Robert Louis Stevenson

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PREFACE

An affair which might be deemed worthy of a note of a few lines in any general history has been here expanded to the size of a volume or large pamphlet. The smallness of the scale, and the singularity of the manners and events and many of the characters, considered, it is hoped that, in spite of its outlandish subject, the sketch may find readers. It has been a task of difficulty. Speed was essential, or it might come too late to be of any service to a distracted country. Truth, in the midst of conflicting rumours and in the dearth of printed material, was often hard to ascertain, and since most of those engaged were of my personal acquaintance, it was often more than delicate to express. I must certainly have erred often and much; it is not for want of trouble taken nor of an impartial temper. And if my plain speaking shall cost me any of the friends that I still count, I shall be sorry, but I need not be ashamed.

In one particular the spelling of Samoan words has been altered; and the characteristic nasal *n* of the language written throughout *ng* instead of *g*. Thus I put Pango-Pango, instead of Pago-Pago; the sound being that of soft *ng* in English, as in *singer*, not as in *finger*.

R. L. S.
VAILIMA,
UPOLU,
SAMOA.

CHAPTER I – THE ELEMENTS OF DISCORD: NATIVE

The story I have to tell is still going on as I write; the characters are alive and active; it is a piece of contemporary history in the most exact sense. And yet, for all its actuality and the part played in it by mails and telegraphs and iron war-ships, the ideas and the manners of the native actors date back before the Roman Empire. They are Christians, church-goers, singers of hymns at family worship, hardy cricketers; their books are printed in London by Spottiswoode, Trübner, or the Tract Society; but in most other points they are the contemporaries of our tattooed ancestors who drove their chariots on the wrong side of the Roman wall. We have passed the feudal system; they are not yet clear of the patriarchal. We are in the thick of the age of finance; they are in a period of communism. And this makes them hard to understand.

To us, with our feudal ideas, Samoa has the first appearance of a land of despotism. An elaborate courtliness marks the race alone among Polynesians; terms of ceremony fly thick as oaths on board a ship; commoners my-lord each other when they meet – and urchins as they play marbles. And for the real noble a whole private dialect is set apart. The common names for an axe, for blood, for bamboo, a bamboo knife, a pig, food, entrails, and an oven are taboo in his presence, as the common names for a bug and for many offices and members of the body are taboo in the drawing-rooms of English ladies. Special words are set apart for his leg, his face, his hair, his belly, his eyelids, his son, his daughter, his wife, his wife's pregnancy, his wife's adultery, adultery with his wife, his dwelling, his spear, his comb, his sleep, his dreams, his anger, the mutual anger of several chiefs, his food, his pleasure in eating, the food and eating of his pigeons, his ulcers, his cough, his sickness, his recovery, his death, his being carried on a bier, the exhumation of his bones, and his skull after death. To address these demigods is quite a branch of knowledge, and he who goes to visit a high chief does well to make sure of the competence of his interpreter. To complete the picture, the same word signifies the watching of a virgin and the warding of a chief; and the same word means to cherish a chief and to fondle a favourite child.

Men like us, full of memories of feudalism, hear of a man so addressed, so flattered, and we leap at once to the conclusion that he is hereditary and absolute. Hereditary he is; born of a great family, he must always be a man of mark; but yet his office is elective and (in a weak sense) is held on good behaviour. Compare the case of a Highland chief: born one of the great ones of his clan, he was sometimes appointed its chief officer and conventional father; was loved, and respected, and served, and fed, and died for implicitly, if he gave loyalty a chance; and yet if he sufficiently outraged clan sentiment, was liable to deposition. As to authority, the parallel is not so close. Doubtless the Samoan chief, if he be popular, wields a great influence; but it is limited. Important matters are debated in a fono, or native parliament, with its feasting and parade, its endless speeches and polite genealogical allusions. Debated, I say – not decided; for even a small minority will often strike a clan or a province impotent. In the midst of these ineffective councils the chief sits usually silent: a kind of a gagged audience for village orators. And the deliverance of the fono seems (for the moment) to be final. The absolute chiefs of Tahiti and Hawaii were addressed as plain John and Thomas; the chiefs of Samoa are surfeited with lip-honour, but the seat and extent of their actual authority is hard to find.

It is so in the members of the state, and worse in the belly. The idea of a sovereign pervades the air; the name we have; the thing we are not so sure of. And the process of election to the chief power is a mystery. Certain provinces have in their gift certain high titles, or *names*, as they are called. These can only be attributed to the descendants of particular lines. Once granted, each name conveys at once the principality (whatever that be worth) of the province which bestows it, and counts as one suffrage towards the general sovereignty of Samoa. To be indubitable king, they say, or some of them say, – I find few in perfect harmony, – a man should resume five of these names in his own person. But the case is purely hypothetical; local jealousy forbids its occurrence. There are rival provinces, far

more concerned in the prosecution of their rivalry than in the choice of a right man for king. If one of these shall have bestowed its name on competitor A, it will be the signal and the sufficient reason for the other to bestow its name on competitor B or C. The majority of Savaii and that of Aana are thus in perennial opposition. Nor is this all. In 1881, Laupepa, the present king, held the three names of Malietoa, Natoaitete, and Tamasoalii; Tamasese held that of Tuiaana; and Mataafa that of Tuiatua. Laupepa had thus a majority of suffrages; he held perhaps as high a proportion as can be hoped in these distracted islands; and he counted among the number the preponderant name of Malietoa. Here, if ever, was an election. Here, if a king were at all possible, was the king. And yet the natives were not satisfied. Laupepa was crowned, March 19th; and next month, the provinces of Aana and Atua met in joint parliament, and elected their own two princes, Tamasese and Mataafa, to an alternate monarchy, Tamasese taking the first trick of two years. War was imminent, when the consuls interfered, and any war were preferable to the terms of the peace which they procured. By the Lackawanna treaty, Laupepa was confirmed king, and Tamasese set by his side in the nondescript office of vice-king. The compromise was not, I am told, without precedent; but it lacked all appearance of success. To the constitution of Samoa, which was already all wheels and no horses, the consuls had added a fifth wheel. In addition to the old conundrum, "Who is the king?" they had supplied a new one, "What is the vice-king?"

Two royal lines; some cloudy idea of alternation between the two; an electorate in which the vote of each province is immediately effectual, as regards itself, so that every candidate who attains one name becomes a perpetual and dangerous competitor for the other four: such are a few of the more trenchant absurdities. Many argue that the whole idea of sovereignty is modern and imported; but it seems impossible that anything so foolish should have been suddenly devised, and the constitution bears on its front the marks of dotage.

But the king, once elected and nominated, what does he become? It may be said he remains precisely as he was. Election to one of the five names is significant; it brings not only dignity but power, and the holder is secure, from that moment, of a certain following in war. But I cannot find that the further step of election to the kingship implies anything worth mention. The successful candidate is now the *Tupu o Samoa*—much good may it do him! He can so sign himself on proclamations, which it does not follow that any one will heed. He can summon parliaments; it does not follow they will assemble. If he be too flagrantly disobeyed, he can go to war. But so he could before, when he was only the chief of certain provinces. His own provinces will support him, the provinces of his rivals will take the field upon the other part; just as before. In so far as he is the holder of any of the five *names*, in short, he is a man to be reckoned with; in so far as he is king of Samoa, I cannot find but what the president of a college debating society is a far more formidable officer. And unfortunately, although the credit side of the account proves thus imaginary, the debit side is actual and heavy. For he is now set up to be the mark of consuls; he will be badgered to raise taxes, to make roads, to punish crime, to quell rebellion: and how he is to do it is not asked.

If I am in the least right in my presentation of this obscure matter, no one need be surprised to hear that the land is full of war and rumours of war. Scarce a year goes by but what some province is in arms, or sits sulky and menacing, holding parliaments, disregarding the king's proclamations and planting food in the bush, the first step of military preparation. The religious sentiment of the people is indeed for peace at any price; no pastor can bear arms; and even the layman who does so is denied the sacraments. In the last war the college of Mālua, where the picked youth are prepared for the ministry, lost but a single student; the rest, in the bosom of a bleeding country, and deaf to the voices of vanity and honour, peacefully pursued their studies. But if the church looks askance on war, the warrior in no extremity of need or passion forgets his consideration for the church. The houses and gardens of her ministers stand safe in the midst of armies; a way is reserved for themselves along the beach, where they may be seen in their white kilts and jackets openly passing the lines, while not a hundred yards behind the skirmishers will be exchanging the useless volleys of barbaric warfare.

Women are also respected; they are not fired upon; and they are suffered to pass between the hostile camps, exchanging gossip, spreading rumour, and divulging to either army the secret councils of the other. This is plainly no savage war; it has all the punctilio of the barbarian, and all his parade; feasts precede battles, fine dresses and songs decorate and enliven the field; and the young soldier comes to camp burning (on the one hand) to distinguish himself by acts of valour, and (on the other) to display his acquaintance with field etiquette. Thus after Mataafa became involved in hostilities against the Germans, and had another code to observe beside his own, he was always asking his white advisers if “things were done correctly.” Let us try to be as wise as Mataafa, and to conceive that etiquette and morals differ in one country and another. We shall be the less surprised to find Samoan war defaced with some unpalatable customs. The childish destruction of fruit-trees in an enemy’s country cripples the resources of Samoa; and the habit of head-hunting not only revolts foreigners, but has begun to exercise the minds of the natives themselves. Soon after the German heads were taken, Mr. Carne, Wesleyan missionary, had occasion to visit Mataafa’s camp, and spoke of the practice with abhorrence. “Misi Kāne,” said one chief, “we have just been puzzling ourselves to guess where that custom came from. But, Misi, is it not so that when David killed Goliath, he cut off his head and carried it before the king?”

With the civil life of the inhabitants we have far less to do; and yet even here a word of preparation is inevitable. They are easy, merry, and pleasure-loving; the gayest, though by far from either the most capable or the most beautiful of Polynesians. Fine dress is a passion, and makes a Samoan festival a thing of beauty. Song is almost ceaseless. The boatman sings at the oar, the family at evening worship, the girls at night in the guest-house, sometimes the workman at his toil. No occasion is too small for the poets and musicians; a death, a visit, the day’s news, the day’s pleasantries, will be set to rhyme and harmony. Even half-grown girls, the occasion arising, fashion words and train choruses of children for its celebration. Song, as with all Pacific islanders, goes hand in hand with the dance, and both shade into the drama. Some of the performances are indecent and ugly, some only dull; others are pretty, funny, and attractive. Games are popular. Cricket-matches, where a hundred played upon a side, endured at times for weeks, and ate up the country like the presence of an army. Fishing, the daily bath, flirtation; courtship, which is gone upon by proxy; conversation, which is largely political; and the delights of public oratory, fill in the long hours.

But the special delight of the Samoan is the *malanga*. When people form a party and go from village to village, junketing and gossiping, they are said to go on a *malanga*. Their songs have announced their approach ere they arrive; the guest-house is prepared for their reception; the virgins of the village attend to prepare the kava bowl and entertain them with the dance; time flies in the enjoyment of every pleasure which an islander conceives; and when the *malanga* sets forth, the same welcome and the same joys expect them beyond the next cape, where the nearest village nestles in its grove of palms. To the visitors it is all golden; for the hosts, it has another side. In one or two words of the language the fact peeps slyly out. The same word (*afemoeina*) expresses “a long call” and “to come as a calamity”; the same word (*lesolosolou*) signifies “to have no intermission of pain” and “to have no cessation, as in the arrival of visitors”; and *soua*, used of epidemics, bears the sense of being overcome as with “fire, flood, or visitors.” But the gem of the dictionary is the verb *alovao*, which illustrates its pages like a humorous woodcut. It is used in the sense of “to avoid visitors,” but it means literally “hide in the wood.” So, by the sure hand of popular speech, we have the picture of the house deserted, the *malanga* disappointed, and the host that should have been quaking in the bush.

We are thus brought to the beginning of a series of traits of manners, highly curious in themselves, and essential to an understanding of the war. In Samoa authority sits on the one hand entranced; on the other, property stands bound in the midst of chartered marauders. What property exists is vested in the family, not in the individual; and of the loose communism in which a family dwells, the dictionary may yet again help us to some idea. I find a string of verbs with the following senses: to deal leniently with, as in helping oneself from a family plantation; to give away without

consulting other members of the family; to go to strangers for help instead of to relatives; to take from relatives without permission; to steal from relatives; to have plantations robbed by relatives. The ideal of conduct in the family, and some of its depravations, appear here very plainly. The man who (in a native word of praise) is *mata-aiinga*, a race-regarder, has his hand always open to his kindred; the man who is not (in a native term of contempt) *noa*, knows always where to turn in any pinch of want or extremity of laziness. Beggary within the family – and by the less self-respecting, without it – has thus grown into a custom and a scourge, and the dictionary teems with evidence of its abuse. Special words signify the begging of food, of uncooked food, of fish, of pigs, of pigs for travellers, of pigs for stock, of taro, of taro-tops, of taro-tops for planting, of tools, of flyhooks, of implements for netting pigeons, and of mats. It is true the beggar was supposed in time to make a return, somewhat as by the Roman contract of *mutuum*. But the obligation was only moral; it could not be, or was not, enforced; as a matter of fact, it was disregarded. The language had recently to borrow from the Tahitians a word for debt; while by a significant coincidence, it possessed a native expression for the failure to pay – “to omit to make a return for property begged.” Conceive now the position of the householder besieged by harpies, and all defence denied him by the laws of honour. The sacramental gesture of refusal, his last and single resource, was supposed to signify “my house is destitute.” Until that point was reached, in other words, the conduct prescribed for a Samoan was to give and to continue giving. But it does not appear he was at all expected to give with a good grace. The dictionary is well stocked with expressions standing ready, like missiles, to be discharged upon the locusts – “troop of shamefaced ones,” “you draw in your head like a tern,” “you make your voice small like a whistle-pipe,” “you beg like one delirious”; and the verb *pongitai*, “to look cross,” is equipped with the pregnant rider, “as at the sight of beggars.”

This insolence of beggars and the weakness of proprietors can only be illustrated by examples. We have a girl in our service to whom we had given some finery, that she might wait at table, and (at her own request) some warm clothing against the cold mornings of the bush. She went on a visit to her family, and returned in an old tablecloth, her whole wardrobe having been divided out among relatives in the course of twenty-four hours. A pastor in the province of Atua, being a handy, busy man, bought a boat for a hundred dollars, fifty of which he paid down. Presently after, relatives came to him upon a visit and took a fancy to his new possession. “We have long been wanting a boat,” said they. “Give us this one.” So, when the visit was done, they departed in the boat. The pastor, meanwhile, travelled into Savaii the best way he could, sold a parcel of land, and begged mats among his other relatives, to pay the remainder of the price of the boat which was no longer his. You might think this was enough; but some months later, the harpies, having broken a thwart, brought back the boat to be repaired and repainted by the original owner.

Such customs, it might be argued, being double-edged, will ultimately right themselves. But it is otherwise in practice. Such folk as the pastor’s harpy relatives will generally have a boat, and will never have paid for it; such men as the pastor may have sometimes paid for a boat, but they will never have one. It is there as it is with us at home: the measure of the abuse of either system is the blackness of the individual heart. The same man, who would drive his poor relatives from his own door in England, would besiege in Samoa the doors of the rich; and the essence of the dishonesty in either case is to pursue one’s own advantage and to be indifferent to the losses of one’s neighbour. But the particular drawback of the Polynesian system is to depress and stagger industry. To work more is there only to be more pillaged; to save is impossible. The family has then made a good day of it when all are filled and nothing remains over for the crew of free-booters; and the injustice of the system begins to be recognised even in Samoa. One native is said to have amassed a certain fortune; two clever lads have individually expressed to us their discontent with a system which taxes industry to pamper idleness; and I hear that in one village of Savaii a law has been passed forbidding gifts under the penalty of a sharp fine.

Under this economic regimen, the unpopularity of taxes, which strike all at the same time, which expose the industrious to a perfect siege of mendicancy, and the lazy to be actually condemned to a day's labour, may be imagined without words. It is more important to note the concurrent relaxation of all sense of property. From applying for help to kinsmen who are scarce permitted to refuse, it is but a step to taking from them (in the dictionary phrase) "without permission"; from that to theft at large is but a hair's-breadth.

CHAPTER II – THE ELEMENTS OF DISCORD: FOREIGN

The huge majority of Samoans, like other God-fearing folk in other countries, are perfectly content with their own manners. And upon one condition, it is plain they might enjoy themselves far beyond the average of man. Seated in islands very rich in food, the idleness of the many idle would scarce matter; and the provinces might continue to bestow their names among rival pretenders, and fall into war and enjoy that a while, and drop into peace and enjoy that, in a manner highly to be envied. But the condition – that they should be let alone – is now no longer possible. More than a hundred years ago, and following closely on the heels of Cook, an irregular invasion of adventurers began to swarm about the isles of the Pacific. The seven sleepers of Polynesia stand, still but half aroused, in the midst of the century of competition. And the island races, comparable to a shopful of crockery launched upon the stream of time, now fall to make their desperate voyage among pots of brass and adamant.

Apia, the port and mart, is the seat of the political sickness of Samoa. At the foot of a peaked, woody mountain, the coast makes a deep indent, roughly semicircular. In front the barrier reef is broken by the fresh water of the streams; if the swell be from the north, it enters almost without diminution; and the war-ships roll dizzily at their moorings, and along the fringing coral which follows the configuration of the beach, the surf breaks with a continuous uproar. In wild weather, as the world knows, the roads are untenable. Along the whole shore, which is everywhere green and level and overlooked by inland mountain-tops, the town lies drawn out in strings and clusters. The western horn is Mulinuu, the eastern, Matautu; and from one to the other of these extremes, I ask the reader to walk. He will find more of the history of Samoa spread before his eyes in that excursion, than has yet been collected in the blue-books or the white-books of the world. Mulinuu (where the walk is to begin) is a flat, wind-swept promontory, planted with palms, backed against a swamp of mangroves, and occupied by a rather miserable village. The reader is informed that this is the proper residence of the Samoan kings; he will be the more surprised to observe a board set up, and to read that this historic village is the property of the German firm. But these boards, which are among the commonest features of the landscape, may be rather taken to imply that the claim has been disputed. A little farther east he skirts the stores, offices, and barracks of the firm itself. Thence he will pass through Matafele, the one really town-like portion of this long string of villages, by German bars and stores and the German consulate; and reach the Catholic mission and cathedral standing by the mouth of a small river. The bridge which crosses here (bridge of Mulivai) is a frontier; behind is Matafele; beyond, Apia proper; behind, Germans are supreme; beyond, with but few exceptions, all is Anglo-Saxon. Here the reader will go forward past the stores of Mr. Moors (American) and Messrs. MacArthur (English); past the English mission, the office of the English newspaper, the English church, and the old American consulate, till he reaches the mouth of a larger river, the Vaisingano. Beyond, in Matautu, his way takes him in the shade of many trees and by scattered dwellings, and presently brings him beside a great range of offices, the place and the monument of a German who fought the German firm during his life. His house (now he is dead) remains pointed like a discharged cannon at the citadel of his old enemies. Fitly enough, it is at present leased and occupied by Englishmen. A little farther, and the reader gains the eastern flanking angle of the bay, where stands the pilot-house and signal-post, and whence he can see, on the line of the main coast of the island, the British and the new American consulates.

The course of his walk will have been enlivened by a considerable to and fro of pleasure and business. He will have encountered many varieties of whites, – sailors, merchants, clerks, priests, Protestant missionaries in their pith helmets, and the nondescript hangers-on of any island beach.

And the sailors are sometimes in considerable force; but not the residents. He will think at times there are more signboards than men to own them. It may chance it is a full day in the harbour; he will then have seen all manner of ships, from men-of-war and deep-sea packets to the labour vessels of the German firm and the cockboat island schooner; and if he be of an arithmetical turn, he may calculate that there are more whites afloat in Apia bay than whites ashore in the whole Archipelago. On the other hand, he will have encountered all ranks of natives, chiefs and pastors in their scrupulous white clothes; perhaps the king himself, attended by guards in uniform; smiling policemen with their pewter stars; girls, women, crowds of cheerful children. And he will have asked himself with some surprise where these reside. Here and there, in the back yards of European establishments, he may have had a glimpse of a native house elbowed in a corner; but since he left Mulinuu, none on the beach where islanders prefer to live, scarce one on the line of street. The handful of whites have everything; the natives walk in a foreign town. A year ago, on a knoll behind a bar-room, he might have observed a native house guarded by sentries and flown over by the standard of Samoa. He would then have been told it was the seat of government, driven (as I have to relate) over the Mulivai and from beyond the German town into the Anglo-Saxon. To-day, he will learn it has been carted back again to its old quarters. And he will think it significant that the king of the islands should be thus shuttled to and fro in his chief city at the nod of aliens. And then he will observe a feature more significant still: a house with some concourse of affairs, policemen and idlers hanging by, a man at a bank-counter overhauling manifests, perhaps a trial proceeding in the front verandah, or perhaps the council breaking up in knots after a stormy sitting. And he will remember that he is in the *Eleele Sa*, the "Forbidden Soil," or Neutral Territory of the treaties; that the magistrate whom he has just seen trying native criminals is no officer of the native king's; and that this, the only port and place of business in the kingdom, collects and administers its own revenue for its own behoof by the hands of white councillors and under the supervision of white consuls. Let him go further afield. He will find the roads almost everywhere to cease or to be made impassable by native pig-fences, bridges to be quite unknown, and houses of the whites to become at once a rare exception. Set aside the German plantations, and the frontier is sharp. At the boundary of the *Eleele Sa*, Europe ends, Samoa begins. Here, then, is a singular state of affairs: all the money, luxury, and business of the kingdom centred in one place; that place excepted from the native government and administered by whites for whites; and the whites themselves holding it not in common but in hostile camps, so that it lies between them like a bone between two dogs, each growling, each clutching his own end.

Should Apia ever choose a coat of arms, I have a motto ready: "Enter Rumour painted full of tongues." The majority of the natives do extremely little; the majority of the whites are merchants with some four mails in the month, shopkeepers with some ten or twenty customers a day, and gossip is the common resource of all. The town hums to the day's news, and the bars are crowded with amateur politicians. Some are office-seekers, and earwig king and consul, and compass the fall of officials, with an eye to salary. Some are humorists, delighted with the pleasure of faction for itself. "I never saw so good a place as this Apia," said one of these; "you can be in a new conspiracy every day!" Many, on the other hand, are sincerely concerned for the future of the country. The quarters are so close and the scale is so small, that perhaps not any one can be trusted always to preserve his temper. Every one tells everything he knows; that is our country sickness. Nearly every one has been betrayed at times, and told a trifle more; the way our sickness takes the predisposed. And the news flies, and the tongues wag, and fists are shaken. Pot boil and caldron bubble!

Within the memory of man, the white people of Apia lay in the worst squalor of degradation. They are now unspeakably improved, both men and women. To-day they must be called a more than fairly respectable population, and a much more than fairly intelligent. The whole would probably not fill the ranks of even an English half-battalion, yet there are a surprising number above the average in sense, knowledge, and manners. The trouble (for Samoa) is that they are all here after a livelihood. Some are sharp practitioners, some are famous (justly or not) for foul play in business. Tales fly.

One merchant warns you against his neighbour; the neighbour on the first occasion is found to return the compliment: each with a good circumstantial story to the proof. There is so much copra in the islands, and no more; a man's share of it is his share of bread; and commerce, like politics, is here narrowed to a focus, shows its ugly side, and becomes as personal as fisticuffs. Close at their elbows, in all this contention, stands the native looking on. Like a child, his true analogue, he observes, apprehends, misapprehends, and is usually silent. As in a child, a considerable intemperance of speech is accompanied by some power of secrecy. News he publishes; his thoughts have often to be dug for. He looks on at the rude career of the dollar-hunt, and wonders. He sees these men rolling in a luxury beyond the ambition of native kings; he hears them accused by each other of the meanest trickery; he knows some of them to be guilty; and what is he to think? He is strongly conscious of his own position as the common milk-cow; and what is he to do? "Surely these white men on the beach are not great chiefs?" is a common question, perhaps asked with some design of flattering the person questioned. And one, stung by the last incident into an unusual flow of English, remarked to me: "I begin to be weary of white men on the beach."

But the true centre of trouble, the head of the boil of which Samoa languishes, is the German firm. From the conditions of business, a great island house must ever be an inheritance of care; and it chanced that the greatest still afoot has its chief seat in Apia bay, and has sunk the main part of its capital in the island of Upolu. When its founder, John Cæsar Godeffroy, went bankrupt over Russian paper and Westphalian iron, his most considerable asset was found to be the South Sea business. This passed (I understand) through the hands of Baring Brothers in London, and is now run by a company rejoicing in the Gargantuan name of the *Deutsche Handels und Plantagen Gesellschaft für Süd-See Inseln zu Hamburg*. This piece of literature is (in practice) shortened to the D. H. and P. G., the Old Firm, the German Firm, the Firm, and (among humorists) the Long Handle Firm. Even from the deck of an approaching ship, the island is seen to bear its signature – zones of cultivation showing in a more vivid tint of green on the dark vest of forest. The total area in use is near ten thousand acres. Hedges of fragrant lime enclose, broad avenues intersect them. You shall walk for hours in parks of palm-tree alleys, regular, like soldiers on parade; in the recesses of the hills you may stumble on a mill-house, toiling and trembling there, fathoms deep in superincumbent forest. On the carpet of clean sward, troops of horses and herds of handsome cattle may be seen to browse; and to one accustomed to the rough luxuriance of the tropics, the appearance is of fairyland. The managers, many of them German sea-captains, are enthusiastic in their new employment. Experiment is continually afoot: coffee and cacao, both of excellent quality, are among the more recent outputs; and from one plantation quantities of pineapples are sent at a particular season to the Sydney markets. A hundred and fifty thousand pounds of English money, perhaps two hundred thousand, lie sunk in these magnificent estates. In estimating the expense of maintenance quite a fleet of ships must be remembered, and a strong staff of captains, supercargoes, overseers, and clerks. These last mess together at a liberal board; the wages are high, and the staff is inspired with a strong and pleasing sentiment of loyalty to their employers.

Seven or eight hundred imported men and women toil for the company on contracts of three or of five years, and at a hypothetical wage of a few dollars in the month. I am now on a burning question: the labour traffic; and I shall ask permission in this place only to touch it with the tongs. Suffice it to say that in Queensland, Fiji, New Caledonia, and Hawaii it has been either suppressed or placed under close public supervision. In Samoa, where it still flourishes, there is no regulation of which the public receives any evidence; and the dirty linen of the firm, if there be any dirty, and if it be ever washed at all, is washed in private. This is unfortunate, if Germans would believe it. But they have no idea of publicity, keep their business to themselves, rather affect to "move in a mysterious way," and are naturally incensed by criticisms, which they consider hypocritical, from men who would import "labour" for themselves, if they could afford it, and would probably maltreat them if they dared. It is said the whip is very busy on some of the plantations; it is said that punitive extra-labour,

by which the thrall's term of service is extended, has grown to be an abuse; and it is complained that, even where that term is out, much irregularity occurs in the repatriation of the discharged. To all this I can say nothing, good or bad. A certain number of the thralls, many of them wild negritos from the west, have taken to the bush, harbour there in a state partly bestial, or creep into the back quarters of the town to do a day's stealthy labour under the nose of their proprietors. Twelve were arrested one morning in my own boys' kitchen. Farther in the bush, huts, small patches of cultivation, and smoking ovens, have been found by hunters. There are still three runaways in the woods of Tutuila, whither they escaped upon a raft. And the Samoans regard these dark-skinned rangers with extreme alarm; the fourth refugee in Tutuila was shot down (as I was told in that island) while carrying off the virgin of a village; and tales of cannibalism run round the country, and the natives shudder about the evening fire. For the Samoans are not cannibals, do not seem to remember when they were, and regard the practice with a disfavour equal to our own.

The firm is Gulliver among the Lilliputs; and it must not be forgotten, that while the small, independent traders are fighting for their own hand, and inflamed with the usual jealousy against corporations, the Germans are inspired with a sense of the greatness of their affairs and interests. The thought of the money sunk, the sight of these costly and beautiful plantations, menaced yearly by the returning forest, and the responsibility of administering with one hand so many conjunct fortunes, might well nerve the manager of such a company for desperate and questionable deeds. Upon this scale, commercial sharpness has an air of patriotism; and I can imagine the man, so far from haggling over the scourge for a few Solomon islanders, prepared to oppress rival firms, overthrow inconvenient monarchs, and let loose the dogs of war. Whatever he may decide, he will not want for backing. Every clerk will be eager to be up and strike a blow; and most Germans in the group, whatever they may babble of the firm over the walnuts and the wine, will rally round the national concern at the approach of difficulty. They are so few – I am ashamed to give their number, it were to challenge contradiction – they are so few, and the amount of national capital buried at their feet is so vast, that we must not wonder if they seem oppressed with greatness and the sense of empire. Other whites take part in our brabbles, while temper holds out, with a certain schoolboy entertainment. In the Germans alone, no trace of humour is to be observed, and their solemnity is accompanied by a touchiness often beyond belief. Patriotism flies in arms about a hen; and if you comment upon the colour of a Dutch umbrella, you have cast a stone against the German Emperor. I give one instance, typical although extreme. One who had returned from Tutuila on the mail cutter complained of the vermin with which she is infested. He was suddenly and sharply brought to a stand. The ship of which he spoke, he was reminded, was a German ship.

John Cæsar Godeffroy himself had never visited the islands; his sons and nephews came, indeed, but scarcely to reap laurels; and the mainspring and headpiece of this great concern, until death took him, was a certain remarkable man of the name of Theodor Weber. He was of an artful and commanding character; in the smallest thing or the greatest, without fear or scruple; equally able to affect, equally ready to adopt, the most engaging politeness or the most imperious airs of domination. It was he who did most damage to rival traders; it was he who most harried the Samoans; and yet I never met any one, white or native, who did not respect his memory. All felt it was a gallant battle, and the man a great fighter; and now when he is dead, and the war seems to have gone against him, many can scarce remember, without a kind of regret, how much devotion and audacity have been spent in vain. His name still lives in the songs of Samoa. One, that I have heard, tells of *Misi Ueba* and a biscuit-box – the suggesting incident being long since forgotten. Another sings plaintively how all things, land and food and property, pass progressively, as by a law of nature, into the hands of *Misi Ueba*, and soon nothing will be left for Samoans. This is an epitaph the man would have enjoyed.

At one period of his career, Weber combined the offices of director of the firm and consul for the City of Hamburg. No question but he then drove very hard. Germans admit that the combination was unfortunate; and it was a German who procured its overthrow. Captain Zembsch superseded him

with an imperial appointment, one still remembered in Samoa as “the gentleman who acted justly.” There was no house to be found, and the new consul must take up his quarters at first under the same roof with Weber. On several questions, in which the firm was vitally interested, Zembsch embraced the contrary opinion. Riding one day with an Englishman in Vailele plantation, he was startled by a burst of screaming, leaped from the saddle, ran round a house, and found an overseer beating one of the thralls. He punished the overseer, and, being a kindly and perhaps not a very diplomatic man, talked high of what he felt and what he might consider it his duty to forbid or to enforce. The firm began to look askance at such a consul; and worse was behind. A number of deeds being brought to the consulate for registration, Zembsch detected certain transfers of land in which the date, the boundaries, the measure, and the consideration were all blank. He refused them with an indignation which he does not seem to have been able to keep to himself; and, whether or not by his fault, some of these unfortunate documents became public. It was plain that the relations between the two flanks of the German invasion, the diplomatic and the commercial, were strained to bursting. But Weber was a man ill to conquer. Zembsch was recalled; and from that time forth, whether through influence at home, or by the solicitations of Weber on the spot, the German consulate has shown itself very apt to play the game of the German firm. That game, we may say, was twofold, – the first part even praiseworthy, the second at least natural. On the one part, they desired an efficient native administration, to open up the country and punish crime; they wished, on the other, to extend their own provinces and to curtail the dealings of their rivals. In the first, they had the jealous and diffident sympathy of all whites; in the second, they had all whites banded together against them for their lives and livelihoods. It was thus a game of *Beggar my Neighbour* between a large merchant and some small ones. Had it so remained, it would still have been a cut-throat quarrel. But when the consulate appeared to be concerned, when the war-ships of the German Empire were thought to fetch and carry for the firm, the rage of the independent traders broke beyond restraint. And, largely from the national touchiness and the intemperate speech of German clerks, this scramble among dollar-hunters assumed the appearance of an inter-racial war.

The firm, with the indomitable Weber at its head and the consulate at its back – there has been the chief enemy at Samoa. No English reader can fail to be reminded of John Company; and if the Germans appear to have been not so successful, we can only wonder that our own blunders and brutalities were less severely punished. Even on the field of Samoa, though German faults and aggressors make up the burthen of my story, they have been nowise alone. Three nations were engaged in this infinitesimal affray, and not one appears with credit. They figure but as the three ruffians of the elder play-wrights. The United States have the cleanest hands, and even theirs are not immaculate. It was an ambiguous business when a private American adventurer was landed with his pieces of artillery from an American war-ship, and became prime minister to the king. It is true (even if he were ever really supported) that he was soon dropped and had soon sold himself for money to the German firm. I will leave it to the reader whether this trait dignifies or not the wretched story. And the end of it spattered the credit alike of England and the States, when this man (the premier of a friendly sovereign) was kidnapped and deported, on the requisition of an American consul, by the captain of an English war-ship. I shall have to tell, as I proceed, of villages shelled on very trifling grounds by Germans; the like has been done of late years, though in a better quarrel, by ourselves of England. I shall have to tell how the Germans landed and shed blood at Fangalii; it was only in 1876 that we British had our own misconceived little massacre at Mulinuu. I shall have to tell how the Germans bludgeoned Malietoa with a sudden call for money; it was something of the suddenest that Sir Arthur Gordon himself, smarting under a sensible public affront, made and enforced a somewhat similar demand.

CHAPTER III – THE SORROWS OF LAUPEPA, 1883 TO 1887

You ride in a German plantation and see no bush, no soul stirring; only acres of empty sward, miles of cocoa-nut alley: a desert of food. In the eyes of the Samoan the place has the attraction of a park for the holiday schoolboy, of a granary for mice. We must add the yet more lively allurements of a haunted house, for over these empty and silent miles there broods the fear of the negrito cannibal. For the Samoan besides, there is something barbaric, unhandsome, and absurd in the idea of thus growing food only to send it from the land and sell it. A man at home who should turn all Yorkshire into one wheatfield, and annually burn his harvest on the altar of Mumbo-Jumbo, might impress ourselves not much otherwise. And the firm which does these things is quite extraneous, a wen that might be excised to-morrow without loss but to itself; few natives drawing from it so much as day's wages; and the rest beholding in it only the occupier of their acres. The nearest villages have suffered most; they see over the hedge the lands of their ancestors waving with useless cocoa-palms; and the sales were often questionable, and must still more often appear so to regretful natives, spinning and improving yarns about the evening lamp. At the worst, then, to help oneself from the plantation will seem to a Samoan very like orchard-breaking to the British schoolboy; at the best, it will be thought a gallant Robin-Hoodish readjustment of a public wrong.

And there is more behind. Not only is theft from the plantations regarded rather as a lark and peccadillo, the idea of theft in itself is not very clearly present to these communists; and as to the punishment of crime in general, a great gulf of opinion divides the natives from ourselves. Indigenous punishments were short and sharp. Death, deportation by the primitive method of setting the criminal to sea in a canoe, fines, and in Samoa itself the penalty of publicly biting a hot, ill-smelling root, comparable to a rough forfeit in a children's game – these are approved. The offender is killed, or punished and forgiven. We, on the other hand, harbour malice for a period of years: continuous shame attaches to the criminal; even when he is doing his best – even when he is submitting to the worst form of torture, regular work – he is to stand aside from life and from his family in dreadful isolation. These ideas most Polynesians have accepted in appearance, as they accept other ideas of the whites; in practice, they reduce it to a farce. I have heard the French resident in the Marquesas in talk with the French gaoler of Tai-o-hae: “*Eh bien, où sont vos prisonnières? — Je crois, mon commandant, qu'elles sont allées quelque part faire une visite.*” And the ladies would be welcome. This is to take the most savage of Polynesians; take some of the most civilised. In Honolulu, convicts labour on the highways in piebald clothing, gruesome and ridiculous; and it is a common sight to see the family of such an one troop out, about the dinner hour, wreathed with flowers and in their holiday best, to picnic with their kinsman on the public wayside. The application of these outlandish penalties, in fact, transfers the sympathy to the offender. Remember, besides, that the clan system, and that imperfect idea of justice which is its worst feature, are still lively in Samoa; that it is held the duty of a judge to favour kinsmen, of a king to protect his vassals; and the difficulty of getting a plantation thief first caught, then convicted, and last of all punished, will appear.

During the early 'eighties, the Germans looked upon this system with growing irritation. They might see their convict thrust in gaol by the front door; they could never tell how soon he was enfranchised by the back; and they need not be the least surprised if they met him, a few days after, enjoying the delights of a *malanga*. It was a banded conspiracy, from the king and the vice-king downward, to evade the law and deprive the Germans of their profits. In 1883, accordingly, the consul, Dr. Stuebel, extorted a convention on the subject, in terms of which Samoans convicted of offences against German subjects were to be confined in a private gaol belonging to the German firm. To Dr. Stuebel it seemed simple enough: the offenders were to be effectually punished, the sufferers partially

indemnified. To the Samoans, the thing appeared no less simple, but quite different: "Malietoa was selling Samoans to Misi Ueba." What else could be expected? Here was a private corporation engaged in making money; to it was delegated, upon a question of profit and loss, one of the functions of the Samoan crown; and those who make anomalies must look for comments. Public feeling ran unanimous and high. Prisoners who escaped from the private gaol were not recaptured or not returned and Malietoa hastened to build a new prison of his own, whither he conveyed, or pretended to convey, the fugitives. In October 1885 a trenchant state paper issued from the German consulate. Twenty prisoners, the consul wrote, had now been at large for eight months from Weber's prison. It was pretended they had since then completed their term of punishment elsewhere. Dr. Stuebel did not seek to conceal his incredulity; but he took ground beyond; he declared the point irrelevant. The law was to be enforced. The men were condemned to a certain period in Weber's prison; they had run away; they must now be brought back and (whatever had become of them in the interval) work out the sentence. Doubtless Dr. Stuebel's demands were substantially just; but doubtless also they bore from the outside a great appearance of harshness; and when the king submitted, the murmurs of the people increased.

But Weber was not yet content. The law had to be enforced; property, or at least the property of the firm, must be respected. And during an absence of the consul's, he seems to have drawn up with his own hand, and certainly first showed to the king, in his own house, a new convention. Weber here and Weber there. As an able man, he was perhaps in the right to prepare and propose conventions. As the head of a trading company, he seems far out of his part to be communicating state papers to a sovereign. The administration of justice was the colour, and I am willing to believe the purpose, of the new paper; but its effect was to depose the existing government. A council of two Germans and two Samoans were to be invested with the right to make laws and impose taxes as might be "desirable for the common interest of the Samoan government and the German residents." The provisions of this council the king and vice-king were to sign blindfold. And by a last hardship, the Germans, who received all the benefit, reserved a right to recede from the agreement on six months' notice; the Samoans, who suffered all the loss, were bound by it in perpetuity. I can never believe that my friend Dr. Stuebel had a hand in drafting these proposals; I am only surprised he should have been a party to enforcing them, perhaps the chief error in these islands of a man who has made few. And they were enforced with a rigour that seems injudicious. The Samoans (according to their own account) were denied a copy of the document; they were certainly rated and threatened; their deliberation was treated as contumacy; two German war-ships lay in port, and it was hinted that these would shortly intervene.

Succeed in frightening a child, and he takes refuge in duplicity. "Malietoa," one of the chiefs had written, "we know well we are in bondage to the great governments." It was now thought one tyrant might be better than three, and any one preferable to Germany. On the 5th November 1885, accordingly, Laupepa, Tamasese, and forty-eight high chiefs met in secret, and the supremacy of Samoa was secretly offered to Great Britain for the second time in history. Laupepa and Tamasese still figured as king and vice-king in the eyes of Dr. Stuebel; in their own, they had secretly abdicated, were become private persons, and might do what they pleased without binding or dishonouring their country. On the morrow, accordingly, they did public humiliation in the dust before the consulate, and five days later signed the convention. The last was done, it is claimed, upon an impulse. The humiliation, which it appeared to the Samoans so great a thing to offer, to the practical mind of Dr. Stuebel seemed a trifle to receive; and the pressure was continued and increased. Laupepa and Tamasese were both heavy, well-meaning, inconclusive men. Laupepa, educated for the ministry, still bears some marks of it in character and appearance; Tamasese was in private of an amorous and sentimental turn, but no one would have guessed it from his solemn and dull countenance. Impossible to conceive two less dashing champions for a threatened race; and there is no doubt they were reduced to the extremity of muddlement and childish fear. It was drawing towards night on the 10th, when

this luckless pair and a chief of the name of Tuiatafu, set out for the German consulate, still minded to temporise. As they went, they discussed their case with agitation. They could see the lights of the German war-ships as they walked – an eloquent reminder. And it was then that Tamasese proposed to sign the convention. “It will give us peace for the day,” said Laupepa, “and afterwards Great Britain must decide.” – “Better fight Germany than that!” cried Tuiatafu, speaking words of wisdom, and departed in anger. But the two others proceeded on their fatal errand; signed the convention, writing themselves king and vice-king, as they now believed themselves to be no longer; and with childish perfidy took part in a scene of “reconciliation” at the German consulate.

Malietoa supposed himself betrayed by Tamasese. Consul Churchward states with precision that the document was sold by a scribe for thirty-six dollars. Twelve days later at least, November 22nd, the text of the address to Great Britain came into the hands of Dr. Stuebel. The Germans may have been wrong before; they were now in the right to be angry. They had been publicly, solemnly, and elaborately fooled; the treaty and the reconciliation were both fraudulent, with the broad, farcical fraudulency of children and barbarians. This history is much from the outside; it is the digested report of eye-witnesses; it can be rarely corrected from state papers; and as to what consuls felt and thought, or what instructions they acted under, I must still be silent or proceed by guess. It is my guess that Stuebel now decided Malietoa Laupepa to be a man impossible to trust and unworthy to be dealt with. And it is certain that the business of his deposition was put in hand at once. The position of Weber, with his knowledge of things native, his prestige, and his enterprising intellect, must have always made him influential with the consul: at this juncture he was indispensable. Here was the deed to be done; here the man of action. “Mr. Weber rested not,” says Laupepa. It was “like the old days of his own consulate,” writes Churchward. His messengers filled the isle; his house was thronged with chiefs and orators; he sat close over his loom, delightedly weaving the future. There was one thing requisite to the intrigue, – a native pretender; and the very man, you would have said, stood waiting: Mataafa, titular of Atua, descended from both the royal lines, late joint king with Tamasese, fobbed off with nothing in the time of the Lackawanna treaty, probably mortified by the circumstance, a chief with a strong following, and in character and capacity high above the native average. Yet when Weber’s spiriting was done, and the curtain rose on the set scene of the coronation, Mataafa was absent, and Tamasese stood in his place. Malietoa was to be deposed for a piece of solemn and offensive trickery, and the man selected to replace him was his sole partner and accomplice in the act. For so strange a choice, good ground must have existed; but it remains conjectural: some supposing Mataafa scratched as too independent; others that Tamasese had indeed betrayed Laupepa, and his new advancement was the price of his treachery.

So these two chiefs began to change places like the scales of a balance, one down, the other up. Tamasese raised his flag (Jan. 28th, 1886) in Leulumoenga, chief place of his own province of Aana, usurped the style of king, and began to collect and arm a force. Weber, by the admission of Stuebel, was in the market supplying him with weapons; so were the Americans; so, but for our salutary British law, would have been the British; for wherever there is a sound of battle, there will the traders be gathered together selling arms. A little longer, and we find Tamasese visited and addressed as king and majesty by a German commodore. Meanwhile, for the unhappy Malietoa, the road led downward. He was refused a bodyguard. He was turned out of Mulinuu, the seat of his royalty, on a land claim of Weber’s, fled across the Mulivai, and “had the coolness” (German expression) to hoist his flag in Apia. He was asked “in the most polite manner,” says the same account – “in the most delicate manner in the world,” a reader of Marryat might be tempted to amend the phrase, – to strike his flag in his own capital; and on his “refusal to accede to this request,” Dr. Stuebel appeared himself with ten men and an officer from the cruiser *Albatross*; a sailor climbed into the tree and brought down the flag of Samoa, which was carefully folded, and sent, “in the most polite manner,” to its owner. The consuls of England and the States were there (the excellent gentlemen!) to protest. Last, and yet

more explicit, the German commodore who visited the be-titled Tamasese, addressed the king – we may surely say the late king – as “the High Chief Malietoa.”

Had he no party, then? At that time, it is probable, he might have called some five-sevenths of Samoa to his standard. And yet he sat there, helpless monarch, like a fowl trussed for roasting. The blame lies with himself, because he was a helpless creature; it lies also with England and the States. Their agents on the spot preached peace (where there was no peace, and no pretence of it) with eloquence and iteration. Secretary Bayard seems to have felt a call to join personally in the solemn farce, and was at the expense of a telegram in which he assured the sinking monarch it was “for the higher interests of Samoa” he should do nothing. There was no man better at doing that; the advice came straight home, and was devoutly followed. And to be just to the great Powers, something was done in Europe; a conference was called, it was agreed to send commissioners to Samoa, and the decks had to be hastily cleared against their visit. Dr. Stuebel had attached the municipality of Apia and hoisted the German war-flag over Mulinuu; the American consul (in a sudden access of good service) had flown the stars and stripes over Samoan colours; on either side these steps were solemnly retracted. The Germans expressly disowned Tamasese; and the islands fell into a period of suspense, of some twelve months’ duration, during which the seat of the history was transferred to other countries and escapes my purview. Here on the spot, I select three incidents: the arrival on the scene of a new actor, the visit of the Hawaiian embassy, and the riot on the Emperor’s birthday. The rest shall be silence; only it must be borne in view that Tamasese all the while continued to strengthen himself in Leulumoenga, and Laupepa sat inactive listening to the song of consuls.

Captain Brandeis. The new actor was Brandeis, a Bavarian captain of artillery, of a romantic and adventurous character. He had served with credit in war; but soon wearied of garrison life, resigned his battery, came to the States, found employment as a civil engineer, visited Cuba, took a sub-contract on the Panama canal, caught the fever, and came (for the sake of the sea voyage) to Australia. He had that natural love for the tropics which lies so often latent in persons of a northern birth; difficulty and danger attracted him; and when he was picked out for secret duty, to be the hand of Germany in Samoa, there is no doubt but he accepted the post with exhilaration. It is doubtful if a better choice could have been made. He had courage, integrity, ideas of his own, and loved the employment, the people, and the place. Yet there was a fly in the ointment. The double error of unnecessary stealth and of the immixture of a trading company in political affairs, has vitiated, and in the end defeated, much German policy. And Brandeis was introduced to the islands as a clerk, and sent down to Leulumoenga (where he was soon drilling the troops and fortifying the position of the rebel king) as an agent of the German firm. What this mystification cost in the end I shall tell in another place; and even in the beginning, it deceived no one. Brandeis is a man of notable personal appearance; he looks the part allotted him; and the military clerk was soon the centre of observation and rumour. Malietoa wrote and complained of his presence to Becker, who had succeeded Dr. Stuebel in the consulate. Becker replied, “I have nothing to do with the gentleman Brandeis. Be it well known that the gentleman Brandeis has no appointment in a military character, but resides peaceably assisting the government of Leulumoenga in their work, for Brandeis is a quiet, sensible gentleman.” And then he promised to send the vice-consul to “get information of the captain’s doings”: surely supererogation of deceit.

The Hawaiian Embassy. The prime minister of the Hawaiian kingdom was, at this period, an adventurer of the name of Gibson. He claimed, on the strength of a romantic story, to be the heir of a great English house. He had played a part in a revolt in Java, had languished in Dutch fetters, and had risen to be a trusted agent of Brigham Young, the Utah president. It was in this character of a Mormon emissary that he first came to the islands of Hawaii, where he collected a large sum of money for the Church of the Latter Day Saints. At a given moment, he dropped his saintship and appeared as a Christian and the owner of a part of the island of Lanai. The steps of the transformation are obscure; they seem, at least, to have been ill-received at Salt Lake; and there is evidence to the effect that he was followed to the islands by Mormon assassins. His first attempt on politics was made

under the auspices of what is called the missionary party, and the canvass conducted largely (it is said with tears) on the platform at prayer-meetings. It resulted in defeat. Without any decency of delay he changed his colours, abjured the errors of reform, and, with the support of the Catholics, rose to the chief power. In a very brief interval he had thus run through the gamut of religions in the South Seas. It does not appear that he was any more particular in politics, but he was careful to consult the character and prejudices of the late king, Kalakaua. That amiable, far from unaccomplished, but too convivial sovereign, had a continued use for money: Gibson was observant to keep him well supplied. Kalakaua (one of the most theoretical of men) was filled with visionary schemes for the protection and development of the Polynesian race: Gibson fell in step with him; it is even thought he may have shared in his illusions. The king and minister at least conceived between them a scheme of island confederation – the most obvious fault of which was that it came too late – and armed and fitted out the cruiser *Kaimiloa*, nest-egg of the future navy of Hawaii. Samoa, the most important group still independent, and one immediately threatened with aggression, was chosen for the scene of action. The Hon. John E. Bush, a half-caste Hawaiian, sailed (December 1887) for Apia as minister-plenipotentiary, accompanied by a secretary of legation, Henry F. Poor; and as soon as she was ready for sea, the war-ship followed in support. The expedition was futile in its course, almost tragic in result. The *Kaimiloa* was from the first a scene of disaster and dilapidation: the stores were sold; the crew revolted; for a great part of a night she was in the hands of mutineers, and the secretary lay bound upon the deck. The mission, installing itself at first with extravagance in Matautu, was helped at last out of the island by the advances of a private citizen. And they returned from dreams of Polynesian independence to find their own city in the hands of a clique of white shopkeepers, and the great Gibson once again in gaol. Yet the farce had not been quite without effect. It had encouraged the natives for the moment, and it seems to have ruffled permanently the temper of the Germans. So might a fly irritate Cæsar.

The arrival of a mission from Hawaii would scarce affect the composure of the courts of Europe. But in the eyes of Polynesians the little kingdom occupies a place apart. It is there alone that men of their race enjoy most of the advantages and all the pomp of independence; news of Hawaii and descriptions of Honolulu are grateful topics in all parts of the South Seas; and there is no better introduction than a photograph in which the bearer shall be represented in company with Kalakaua. Laupepa was, besides, sunk to the point at which an unfortunate begins to clutch at straws, and he received the mission with delight. Letters were exchanged between him and Kalakaua; a deed of confederation was signed, 17th February 1887, and the signature celebrated in the new house of the Hawaiian embassy with some original ceremonies. Malietoa Laupepa came, attended by his ministry, several hundred chiefs, two guards, and six policemen. Always decent, he withdrew at an early hour; by those that remained, all decency appears to have been forgotten; high chiefs were seen to dance; and day found the house carpeted with slumbering grandees, who must be roused, doctored with coffee, and sent home. As a first chapter in the history of Polynesian Confederation, it was hardly cheering, and Laupepa remarked to one of the embassy, with equal dignity and sense: “If you have come here to teach my people to drink, I wish you had stayed away.”

The Germans looked on from the first with natural irritation that a power of the powerlessness of Hawaii should thus profit by its undeniable footing in the family of nations, and send embassies, and make believe to have a navy, and bark and snap at the heels of the great German Empire. But Becker could not prevent the hunted Laupepa from taking refuge in any hole that offered, and he could afford to smile at the fantastic orgie in the embassy. It was another matter when the Hawaiians approached the intractable Mataafa, sitting still in his Atua government like Achilles in his tent, helping neither side, and (as the Germans suspected) keeping the eggs warm for himself. When the *Kaimiloa* steamed out of Apia on this visit, the German war-ship *Adler* followed at her heels; and Mataafa was no sooner set down with the embassy than he was summoned and ordered on board by two German officers. The step is one of those triumphs of temper which can only be admired. Mataafa is entertaining

the plenipotentiary of a sovereign power in treaty with his own king, and the captain of a German corvette orders him to quit his guests.

But there was worse to come. I gather that Tamasese was at the time in the sulks. He had doubtless been promised prompt aid and a prompt success; he had seen himself surreptitiously helped, privately ordered about, and publicly disowned; and he was still the king of nothing more than his own province, and already the second in command of Captain Brandeis. With the adhesion of some part of his native cabinet, and behind the back of his white minister, he found means to communicate with the Hawaiians. A passage on the *Kaimiloa*, a pension, and a home in Honolulu were the bribes proposed; and he seems to have been tempted. A day was set for a secret interview. Poor, the Hawaiian secretary, and J. D. Strong, an American painter attached to the embassy in the surprising quality of "Government Artist," landed with a Samoan boat's-crew in Aana; and while the secretary hid himself, according to agreement, in the outlying home of an English settler, the artist (ostensibly bent on photography) entered the headquarters of the rebel king. It was a great day in Leulumoenga; three hundred recruits had come in, a feast was cooking; and the photographer, in view of the native love of being photographed, was made entirely welcome. But beneath the friendly surface all were on the alert. The secret had leaked out: Weber beheld his plans threatened in the root; Brandeis trembled for the possession of his slave and sovereign; and the German vice-consul, Mr. Sonnenschein, had been sent or summoned to the scene of danger.

It was after dark, prayers had been said and the hymns sung through all the village, and Strong and the German sat together on the mats in the house of Tamasese, when the events began. Strong speaks German freely, a fact which he had not disclosed, and he was scarce more amused than embarrassed to be able to follow all the evening the dissension and the changing counsels of his neighbours. First the king himself was missing, and there was a false alarm that he had escaped and was already closeted with Poor. Next came certain intelligence that some of the ministry had run the blockade, and were on their way to the house of the English settler. Thereupon, in spite of some protests from Tamasese, who tried to defend the independence of his cabinet, Brandeis gathered a posse of warriors, marched out of the village, brought back the fugitives, and clapped them in the corrugated iron shanty which served as gaol. Along with these he seems to have seized Billy Coe, interpreter to the Hawaiians; and Poor, seeing his conspiracy public, burst with his boat's-crew into the town, made his way to the house of the native prime minister, and demanded Coe's release. Brandeis hastened to the spot, with Strong at his heels; and the two principals being both incensed, and Strong seriously alarmed for his friend's safety, there began among them a scene of great intemperance. At one point, when Strong suddenly disclosed his acquaintance with German, it attained a high style of comedy; at another, when a pistol was most foolishly drawn, it bordered on drama; and it may be said to have ended in a mixed genus, when Poor was finally packed into the corrugated iron gaol along with the forfeited ministers. Meanwhile the captain of his boat, Siteoni, of whom I shall have to tell again, had cleverly withdrawn the boat's-crew at an early stage of the quarrel. Among the population beyond Tamasese's marches, he collected a body of armed men, returned before dawn to Leulumoenga, demolished the corrugated iron gaol, and liberated the Hawaiian secretary and the rump of the rebel cabinet. No opposition was shown; and doubtless the rescue was connived at by Brandeis, who had gained his point. Poor had the face to complain the next day to Becker; but to compete with Becker in effrontery was labour lost. "You have been repeatedly warned, Mr. Poor, not to expose yourself among these savages," said he.

Not long after, the presence of the *Kaimiloa* was made *a casus belli* by the Germans; and the rough-and-tumble embassy withdrew, on borrowed money, to find their own government in hot water to the neck.

* * * * *

The Emperor's Birthday. It is possible, and it is alleged, that the Germans entered into the conference with hope. But it is certain they were resolved to remain prepared for either fate. And I take the liberty of believing that Laupepa was not forgiven his duplicity; that, during this interval, he stood marked like a tree for felling; and that his conduct was daily scrutinised for further pretexts of offence. On the evening of the Emperor's birthday, March 22nd, 1887, certain Germans were congregated in a public bar. The season and the place considered, it is scarce cynical to assume they had been drinking; nor, so much being granted, can it be thought exorbitant to suppose them possibly in fault for the squabble that took place. A squabble, I say; but I am willing to call it a riot. And this was the new fault of Laupepa; this it is that was described by a German commodore as "the trampling upon by Malietoa of the German Emperor." I pass the rhetoric by to examine the point of liability. Four natives were brought to trial for this horrid fact: not before a native judge, but before the German magistrate of the tripartite municipality of Apia. One was acquitted, one condemned for theft, and two for assault. On appeal, not to Malietoa, but to the three consuls, the case was by a majority of two to one returned to the magistrate and (as far as I can learn) was then allowed to drop. Consul Becker himself laid the chief blame on one of the policemen of the municipality, a half-white of the name of Scanlon. Him he sought to have discharged, but was again baffled by his brother consuls. Where, in all this, are we to find a corner of responsibility for the king of Samoa? Scanlon, the alleged author of the outrage, was a half-white; as Becker was to learn to his cost, he claimed to be an American subject; and he was not even in the king's employment. Apia, the scene of the outrage, was outside the king's jurisdiction by treaty; by the choice of Germany, he was not so much as allowed to fly his flag there. And the denial of justice (if justice were denied) rested with the consuls of Britain and the States.

But when a dog is to be beaten, any stick will serve. In the meanwhile, on the proposition of Mr. Bayard, the Washington conference on Samoan affairs was adjourned till autumn, so that "the ministers of Germany and Great Britain might submit the protocols to their respective Governments." "You propose that the conference is to adjourn and not to be broken up?" asked Sir Lionel West. "To adjourn for the reasons stated," replied Bayard. This was on July 26th; and, twenty-nine days later, by Wednesday the 24th of August, Germany had practically seized Samoa. For this flagrant breach of faith one excuse is openly alleged; another whispered. It is openly alleged that Bayard had shown himself impracticable; it is whispered that the Hawaiian embassy was an expression of American intrigue, and that the Germans only did as they were done by. The sufficiency of these excuses may be left to the discretion of the reader. But, however excused, the breach of faith was public and express; it must have been deliberately predetermined and it was resented in the States as a deliberate insult.

By the middle of August 1887 there were five sail of German war-ships in Apia bay: the *Bismarck*, of 3000 tons displacement; the *Carola*, the *Sophie*, and the *Olga*, all considerable ships; and the beautiful *Adler*, which lies there to this day, kanted on her beam, dismantled, scarlet with rust, the day showing through her ribs. They waited inactive, as a burglar waits till the patrol goes by. And on the 23rd, when the mail had left for Sydney, when the eyes of the world were withdrawn, and Samoa plunged again for a period of weeks into her original island-obscurity, Becker opened his guns. The policy was too cunning to seem dignified; it gave to conduct which would otherwise have seemed bold and even brutally straightforward, the appearance of a timid ambush; and helped to shake men's reliance on the word of Germany. On the day named, an ultimatum reached Malietoa at Afenga, whither he had retired months before to avoid friction. A fine of one thousand dollars and an *ifo*, or public humiliation, were demanded for the affair of the Emperor's birthday. Twelve thousand dollars were to be "paid quickly" for thefts from German plantations in the course of the last four years. "It is my opinion that there is nothing just or correct in Samoa while you are at the

head of the government,” concluded Becker. “I shall be at Afenga in the morning of to-morrow, Wednesday, at 11 A.M.” The blow fell on Laupepa (in his own expression) “out of the bush”; the dilatory fellow had seen things hang over so long, he had perhaps begun to suppose they might hang over for ever; and here was ruin at the door. He rode at once to Apia, and summoned his chiefs. The council lasted all night long. Many voices were for defiance. But Laupepa had grown inured to a policy of procrastination; and the answer ultimately drawn only begged for delay till Saturday, the 27th. So soon as it was signed, the king took horse and fled in the early morning to Afenga; the council hastily dispersed; and only three chiefs, Selu, Seumanu, and Le Māmea, remained by the government building, tremulously expectant of the result.

By seven the letter was received. By 7.30 Becker arrived in person, inquired for Laupepa, was evasively answered, and declared war on the spot. Before eight, the Germans (seven hundred men and six guns) came ashore and seized and hoisted German colours on the government building. The three chiefs had made good haste to escape; but a considerable booty was made of government papers, fire-arms, and some seventeen thousand cartridges. Then followed a scene which long rankled in the minds of the white inhabitants, when the German marines raided the town in search of Malietoa, burst into private houses, and were accused (I am willing to believe on slender grounds) of violence to private persons.

On the morrow, the 25th, one of the German war-ships, which had been despatched to Leulumoenga over night re-entered the bay, flying the Tamasese colours at the fore. The new king was given a royal salute of twenty-one guns, marched through the town by the commodore and a German guard of honour, and established on Mulinuu with two or three hundred warriors. Becker announced his recognition to the other consuls. These replied by proclaiming Malietoa, and in the usual mealy-mouthed manner advised Samoans to do nothing. On the 27th martial law was declared; and on the 1st September the German squadron dispersed about the group, bearing along with them the proclamations of the new king. Tamasese was now a great man, to have five iron war-ships for his post-runners. But the moment was critical. The revolution had to be explained, the chiefs persuaded to assemble at a fono summoned for the 15th; and the ships carried not only a store of printed documents, but a squad of Tamasese orators upon their round.

Such was the German *coup d'état*. They had declared war with a squadron of five ships upon a single man; that man, late king of the group, was in hiding on the mountains; and their own nominee, backed by German guns and bayonets, sat in his stead in Mulinuu.

One of the first acts of Malietoa, on fleeing to the bush, was to send for Mataafa twice: “I am alone in the bush; if you do not come quickly you will find me bound.” It is to be understood the men were near kinsmen, and had (if they had nothing else) a common jealousy. At the urgent cry, Mataafa set forth from Falefá, and came to Mulinuu to Tamasese. “What is this that you and the German commodore have decided on doing?” he inquired. “I am going to obey the German consul,” replied Tamasese, “whose wish it is that I should be the king and that all Samoa should assemble here.” “Do not pursue in wrath against Malietoa,” said Mataafa “but try to bring about a compromise, and form a united government.” “Very well,” said Tamasese, “leave it to me, and I will try.” From Mulinuu, Mataafa went on board the *Bismarck*, and was graciously received. “Probably,” said the commodore, “we shall bring about a reconciliation of all Samoa through you”; and then asked his visitor if he bore any affection to Malietoa. “Yes,” said Mataafa. “And to Tamasese?” “To him also; and if you desire the weal of Samoa, you will allow either him or me to bring about a reconciliation.” “If it were my will,” said the commodore, “I would do as you say. But I have no will in the matter. I have instructions from the Kaiser, and I cannot go back again from what I have been sent to do.” “I thought you would be commanded,” said Mataafa, “if you brought about the weal of Samoa.” “I will tell you,” said the commodore. “All shall go quietly. But there is one thing that must be done: Malietoa must be deposed. I will do nothing to him beyond; he will only be kept on board for a couple of months and be well treated, just as we Germans did to the French chief [Napoleon III.] some time ago, whom we

kept a while and cared for well.” Becker was no less explicit: war, he told Sewall, should not cease till the Germans had custody of Malietoa and Tamasese should be recognised.

Meantime, in the Malietoa provinces, a profound impression was received. People trooped to their fugitive sovereign in the bush. Many natives in Apia brought their treasures, and stored them in the houses of white friends. The Tamasese orators were sometimes ill received. Over in Savaii, they found the village of Satupaitea deserted, save for a few lads at cricket. These they harangued, and were rewarded with ironical applause; and the proclamation, as soon as they had departed, was torn down. For this offence the village was ultimately burned by German sailors, in a very decent and orderly style, on the 3rd September. This was the dinner-bell of the fono on the 15th. The threat conveyed in the terms of the summons – “If any government district does not quickly obey this direction, I will make war on that government district” – was thus commented on and reinforced. And the meeting was in consequence well attended by chiefs of all parties. They found themselves unarmed among the armed warriors of Tamasese and the marines of the German squadron, and under the guns of five strong ships. Brandeis rose; it was his first open appearance, the German firm signing its revolutionary work. His words were few and uncompromising: “Great are my thanks that the chiefs and heads of families of the whole of Samoa are assembled here this day. It is strictly forbidden that any discussion should take place as to whether it is good or not that Tamasese is king of Samoa, whether at this fono or at any future fono. I place for your signature the following: *‘We inform all the people of Samoa of what follows: (1) The government of Samoa has been assumed by King Tuiaana Tamasese. (2) By order of the king, it was directed that a fono should take place to-day, composed of the chiefs and heads of families, and we have obeyed the summons. We have signed our names under this, 15th September 1887.’* Needs must under all these guns; and the paper was signed, but not without open sullenness. The bearing of Mataafa in particular was long remembered against him by the Germans. “Do you not see the king?” said the commodore reprovingly. “His father was no king,” was the bold answer. A bolder still has been printed, but this is Mataafa’s own recollection of the passage. On the next day, the chiefs were all ordered back to shake hands with Tamasese. Again they obeyed; but again their attitude was menacing, and some, it is said, audibly murmured as they gave their hands.

It is time to follow the poor Sheet of Paper (literal meaning of *Laupepa*), who was now to be blown so broadly over the face of earth. As soon as news reached him of the declaration of war, he fled from Afenga to Tanungamanono, a hamlet in the bush, about a mile and a half behind Apia, where he lurked some days. On the 24th, Selu, his secretary, despatched to the American consul an anxious appeal, his majesty’s “cry and prayer” in behalf of “this weak people.” By August 30th, the Germans had word of his lurking-place, surrounded the hamlet under cloud of night, and in the early morning burst with a force of sailors on the houses. The people fled on all sides, and were fired upon. One boy was shot in the hand, the first blood of the war. But the king was nowhere to be found; he had wandered farther, over the woody mountains, the backbone of the land, towards Siumu and Safata. Here, in a safe place, he built himself a town in the forest, where he received a continual stream of visitors and messengers. Day after day the German blue-jackets were employed in the hopeless enterprise of beating the forests for the fugitive; day after day they were suffered to pass unhurt under the guns of ambushed Samoans; day after day they returned, exhausted and disappointed, to Apia. Seumanu Tafa, high chief of Apia, was known to be in the forest with the king; his wife, Fatuila, was seized, imprisoned in the German hospital, and when it was thought her spirit was sufficiently reduced, brought up for cross-examination. The wise lady confined herself in answer to a single word. “Is your husband near Apia?” “Yes.” “Is he far from Apia?” “Yes.” “Is he with the king?” “Yes.” “Are he and the king in different places?” “Yes.” Whereupon the witness was discharged. About the 10th of September, Laupepa was secretly in Apia at the American consulate with two companions. The German pickets were close set and visited by a strong patrol; and on his return, his party was observed and hailed and fired on by a sentry. They ran away on all fours in the dark, and so doing plumped upon another sentry, whom Laupepa grappled and flung in a ditch; for the Sheet of Paper,

although infirm of character, is, like most Samoans, of an able body. The second sentry (like the first) fired after his assailants at random in the dark; and the two shots awoke the curiosity of Apia. On the afternoon of the 16th, the day of the hand-shakings, Suatele, a high chief, despatched two boys across the island with a letter. They were most of the night upon the road; it was near three in the morning before the sentries in the camp of Malietoa beheld their lantern drawing near out of the wood; but the king was at once awakened. The news was decisive and the letter peremptory; if Malietoa did not give himself up before ten on the morrow, he was told that great sorrows must befall his country. I have not been able to draw Laupepa as a hero; but he is a man of certain virtues, which the Germans had now given him an occasion to display. Without hesitation he sacrificed himself, penned his touching farewell to Samoa, and making more expedition than the messengers, passed early behind Apia to the banks of the Vaisingano. As he passed, he detached a messenger to Mataafa at the Catholic mission. Mataafa followed by the same road, and the pair met at the river-side and went and sat together in a house. All present were in tears. "Do not let us weep," said the talking man, Lauati. "We have no cause for shame. We do not yield to Tamasese, but to the invincible strangers." The departing king bequeathed the care of his country to Mataafa; and when the latter sought to console him with the commodore's promises, he shook his head, and declared his assurance that he was going to a life of exile, and perhaps to death. About two o'clock the meeting broke up; Mataafa returned to the Catholic mission by the back of the town; and Malietoa proceeded by the beach road to the German naval hospital, where he was received (as he owns, with perfect civility) by Brandeis. About three, Becker brought him forth again. As they went to the wharf, the people wept and clung to their departing monarch. A boat carried him on board the *Bismarck*

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