WANDERINGS AMONG
SOUTH SEA SAVAGES
AND IN BORNEO AND THE PHILIPPINES

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WITH FORTY-EIGHT PLATES FROM PHOTOGRAPHS BY
THE AUTHOR AND OTHERS

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CHAPTER I.

LIFE IN THE HOME OF A FIJIAN PRINCE.


Among all my wanderings in Fiji I think I may safely say that my two months’ stay with Ratu (Prince) Lala, on the island of Taviuni, ranks highest both for interest and enjoyment. As I look back on my life with this great Fijian prince and his people, it all somehow seems unreal and an existence far apart from the commonplace life of civilization. When I was in Suva (the capital) the colonial secretary gave me a letter of introduction to Ratu Lala, and so one morning I sailed from Suva on an Australian steamer, taking with me my jungle outfit and a case of whisky, the latter a present for the Prince,—and a more acceptable present one could not have given him.

After a smooth passage we arrived the same evening at Levuka, on the island of Ovalau. After a stay of a day here, I sailed in a small schooner which carried copra from several of the outlying islands to Levuka. Her name was the *Lurline*, and her captain was a Samoan, whilst
his crew was made up of two Samoans and four Fijians. The captain seemed to enjoy yelling at his men in the Fijian language, with a strong flavouring of English "swear words," and spoke about the Fijians in terms of utter contempt, calling them "d—d cannibals." The cabin was a small one with only two bunks, and swarmed with green beetles and cockroaches. Our meals were all taken together on deck, and consisted of yams, ship's biscuit and salt junk.

We had a grand breeze to start with, but toward evening it died down and we lay becalmed. All hands being idle, the Samoans spent the time in singing the catchy songs of Samoa, most of which I was familiar with from my long stay in those islands, and their delight was great when I joined in. About midnight a large whale floated calmly alongside, not forty yards from our little schooner, and we trembled to think what would happen if it was at all inclined to be playful. We whistled all the next day for a breeze, but our efforts were not a success until toward evening, when we were rewarded in a very liberal manner, and arrived after dark at the village of Cawa Lailai,* on the island of Koro. On our landing quite a crowd of wild-looking men and women, all clad only in sulus, met us on the beach. Although it is a large island, there is only one white man on it, and he far away from here, so no doubt I was an interesting

* C is pronounced as Th.: e.g., "Cawa" = "Thawa."
object. I put up at the hut of the "Buli" or village chief, and after eating a dish of smoking yams, I was soon asleep, in spite of the mosquitoes. It dawned a lovely morning and I was soon afoot to view my surroundings. It was a beautiful village, surrounded by pretty woods on all sides, and I saw and heard plenty of noisy crimson and green parrots everywhere. I also learnt that a few days previously there had been a wholesale marriage ceremony, when nearly all the young men and women had been joined in matrimony.

Taking a guide with me, I walked across the island till I came to the village of Nabuna,* on the other coast, the Lurline meanwhile sailing around the island. It was a hard walk, up steep hills and down narrow gorges, and then latterly along the coast beneath the shade of the coconuts. Fijian bridges are bad things to cross, being long trunks of trees smoothed off on the surface and sometimes very narrow, and I generally had to negotiate them by sitting astride and working myself along with my hands. In the village of Nabuna lived the wife and four daughters of the Samoan captain. He told me he had had five wives before, and when I asked if they were all dead, he replied that they were still alive, but he had got rid of them as they were no good.

The daughters were all very pretty girls, especially the youngest, a little girl of nine years

* Nabuna, pron. Nambuna.
old. I always think that the little Samoan girls, with their long wavy black hair, are among the prettiest children in the world.

We had an excellent supper of native oysters, freshwater prawns and eels, fish, chicken, and many other native dishes. That evening a big Fijian dance ("meke-meke"), was given in my honour. Two of the captain's daughters took part in it. The girls sit down all the time in a row, and wave their hands and arms about and sing in a low key and in frightful discord. It does not in any way come up to the very pretty "siva-siva" dancing of the Samoans, and the Fiji dance lacks variety. There is a continual accompaniment of beating with sticks on a piece of wood. All the girls decorate themselves with coloured leaves, and their bodies, arms and legs glisten as in Samoa with coconut-oil, really a very clean custom in these hot countries, though it does not look prepossessing. Our two Samoans in the crew were most amusing; they came in dressed up only in leaves, and took off the Fijians to perfection with the addition of numerous extravagant gestures. I laughed till my sides ached, but the Fijians never even smiled. However, our Samoans gave them a bit of Samoan "siva-siva" and plenty of Samoan songs, and it was amusing to see the interest the Fijians took in them. It was, of course, all new to them. I drank plenty of "angona" that evening. It is
offered you in a different way in Samoa. In Fiji, the man or girl, who hands you the coconut-shell cup on bended knee, crouches at your feet till you have finished. In Fijian villages a sort of crier or herald goes round the houses every night crying the orders for the next day in a loud resonant voice, and at once all talking ceases in the hut outside which he happens to be.

The next two days it blew a regular hurricane, and the captain dared not venture out to sea, our schooner lying safely at anchor inside the coral reef. I have not space to describe my stay here, but it proved most enjoyable, and the captain's pretty Samoan daughters gave several "meke-mekes" (Fijian dances) in my honour, and plenty of "angona" was indulged in, and what with feasts, native games and first-class fishing inside the coral reef, the time passed all too quickly. I called on the "Buli" or village chief, with the captain. He was a boy of fifteen, and seemed a very bashful youth.

We sailed again about five a.m. on the third morning, as the storm seemed to be dying down and the captain was anxious to get on. We had not gone far, however, before the gale increased in fury until it turned into a regular hurricane. First our foresheet was carried away; this was followed by our staysail, and things began to look serious, in fact, most unpleasantly so. The captain almost seemed to lose his head, and cursed