

## CHAPTER XLIX.

THE rain fell in torrents the day succeeding our arrival, and it was not until Sunday that I had courage to set foot on shore: then I went solus, and jumping on the beach, two minutes' walk found me in the Broom Road, a broad lane running nearly the entire circuit of Tahiti, within a stone's throw of the surf-locked lagoons, shaded like a bower by magnificent trees and undergrowth, that hang their drooping, green arms in grateful coolness, to shield the traveller from the heat of tropical suns. Notwithstanding mud from recent rains, the roads and lateral paths were thronged with natives: I was surprised to find them so much superior in physical mould and beauty to those of other islands we had visited. The men were well proportioned, and some with a noble bearing; the women were very tall, scarcely one less than five feet eight; many of the young girls were exquisitely shaped, with small hands and feet. Moreover, they had borrowed a nicer taste in dress from the French, and their gowns and bonnets were very becomingly worn.

I splashed and trudged about the Broom Road until evening, and then, following the tide of population, entered the well laid out grounds of the gubernatorial mansion. The lawns and alleys were crowded with natives, officers and soldiers, listening to the evening music; this over, I devoted the evening wandering

from café to café, and wondering if I were in France or Tahiti. Lights were gleaming from every little auberge and cabaret of the town—the tables within covered with pipes and bottles of red wine—soldiers were drinking and chanting favorite songs of Beranger; and one inebriated sapper, meeting me in the road, placed both hands on my shoulders, and roared out, with but an indifferent appreciation of music:

“J'ai connu Moreau—Victor—Augerau—  
Et Murat—Et Masséna—a—a—  
Vash a fling a flong—tra a long, a long—!”

The streets were filled with groups of gaily-attired native girls, who, with low, musically laughing voices, were chattering their soft, vovelly dialect, unceasingly, interrupted occasionally by some gallant Frenchman, who would perhaps give a stray damsel a chuck under the chin, or a hasty clasp around the waist, and pass on, regardless of their lively sallies. Then overgrown *gend'armes* would be perceptible in the distance, by their white cotton *aguillettes* and clashing sabres, when the nymphs would disappear like frightened partridges amid the adjacent groves, and all were hushed in an instant, until the dreadful police had passed by, when they would again emerge and occupy their former ground. Then, too, the light yellowish tinge of plastered houses, so often seen in France—the thatched cane huts of the natives—sentinels pacing the ramparts—near by, a brass field-piece gazing up the road—and beneath the spreading bread fruit, or under the stately trunk of a cocoanut, a soldier in red breeches, resting on the shining barrel of his musket. All this, with the profusion of tropical foliage, the grand scenery of the island, and a thousand other novel scenes, so strangely contrasted with *demi-bar-*



*bare* life, that I became quite bewildered, and was glad to make the acquaintance of an agreeable French officer, who, with a bottle of Bourdeaux, soon brought me to my senses.

I passed the night on shore, in the warehouse of an American merchant, and should probably have slept well, in defiance of mosquitoes, had not a choice coterie of *sous-officers*, in an adjoining cabaret, within-arm's length of my window, made vociferous music, by screaming Republican airs until daylight, very much incited, no doubt, by continual cries of *Encore du vin, mon cher*, and the usual ringing accompaniment of bottles and glasses.

Rising betimes, I donned walking dress, and after breakfast, in company with my friend Larry and an officer of the French Marine, who spoke the Tahitian dialect perfectly well, we left Papeete for an excursion up the Broom Road towards Point Venus.

The rain had quenched the dust, and there was a grateful freshness clinging around the lime and orange groves. The sun had not yet drunk the sparkling diamond-drops of dew trembling upon the guava thickets, nor had the breeze shaken a leaf of the towering cocoanuts, nor vibrated a single sphere of bread-fruit that hung like pendulums from amid the glossy leaves. The air, too, was heavy with perfume of orange and jessamine—and we went larking along the quiet road—kicking up our heels and whooping joyously—pausing a moment to catch a gleaming view of the slender peaks above us—the conspicuous Diadem of Faatoar—the green savannahs sloping up the valleys, or the blue sea and reef as yet undazzled by the rising sun.

We dallied frequently with young cocoanuts, and said *aroha*—love to you—to any lithe *vahinees* we encountered in our path. Once we tarried for repose and beer at a French auberge, and

then, without further break to our voyage, we continued on along the curves of the reef-locked shores for some miles, when a lane branched away to the left, and we came to the new country house of Pomaree at Papoa.

It stands on a narrow coralline embankment, within a bound of the smooth, pebbly beach—surrounded by noble trees, and overhanging clusters of the richest tropical foliage. The building is an oblong oval, one hundred feet by thirty. Through the centre runs a range of square, polished columns of light koa wood, eighteen feet high, supporting a cross-sleeper the whole length of the roof: from this beam, drooping down at an angle of about fifty degrees, were a great number of white, glistening poles, radiating with perfect evenness and regularity to within six feet of the ground, where they were notched and tied securely with braids of variegated sennit to ridge-pieces fitted in posts around the circuit of the building. The roof was thatched with the long, dried, tapering leaves of pandannus, folded on slim wands, and plaited in regular lines, down to the eaves, where, just within, fell a few inches of plain fringed matting nicely stitched to the roof. Inside this curtain, again, were the perpendicular sides of the dwelling, constructed of the same white poles of hibiscus as those upholding the roof, and all lashed by braid to cross sections between the posts—leaving narrow spaces between each pole, and but two arches for doorways on the side opposite the sea.

The house was quite new, and indeed hardly completed, but with the breeze blowing through the open trellis-worked walls, and the great lofty roof hanging lightly above, it presented the most airy, fanciful structure conceivable, and was admirably adapted to the climate and habits of the Islanders.

The floor was carpeted with dried grass and rushes, six inches



deep; mats were scattered around, groups of swarthy natives were lounging listlessly on the grass, and bands of girls and women engaged weaving mats, scraping cocoanut shells to transparent thinness, playing cards, or sleeping on the laps of others.

The Queen was absent on a visit to the island of Aimeo. She was described as a brave, temperate, fat old lady of about forty years, who has never yet been able to overcome youthful prejudices against European style of living—and although the French have built and furnished her a pleasant residence in Papeete, she is still happy to kick off etiquette, with her shoes, and fly to native pleasures and kindred. She was blessed with a large family, and six were being educated in Aimeo by the English Mission, who with great liberality would voluntarily defray the expenses of their education, as well as of the children of the high chiefs; but the Governor very properly sets aside portions of their pensions for that purpose, which is undoubtedly the best use the money can be put to. As Pomaree detests the French, and cannot be persuaded to assume, except for a moment, European manners and customs, she neither assumes any of their virtues, but leads a rollicking, sportive life, surrounded by gay troupes of frolicsome attendants—spending the remainder of her five thousand dollar stipend in decking her dark-eyed favorites with pretty dresses and trinkets.

Mr. Ellis has written an interesting poem, filled with virtuous indignation in relation to the poor Queen's wrongs, and there is one couplet which is unfortunately too true—

"Who would believe that England would have left  
That trusting Queen thus suffering and bereft?"

The fact is, the beautiful princess Aimata that was, is now by

her own imprudence low in purse, and having acquired the habit of coquetting too extensively with tradesmen and merchants of Papeete, she finds difficulty in getting trusted before her pension falls due. Still, with all her foibles, she was universally acknowledged to be a woman of strong sense and character, adored by her subjects, and respected by foreigners.

After idling an hour with a few of the young ladies of the court, who were making preparations for their sovereign's reception, we left the Palace, and keeping along the shelly strand, passed through a sacred grove of iron-wood, whose gauze-like branches waved over the tombs of the ancient kings of Tahiti. There was naught to be seen, save heaps of mouldering coral ruins—thence crossing a point of the reef, which closed upon the beach, we reached one of many indentations of the Island, Matavai bay, and shortly afterwards came upon a native school-house. The building was large and dilapidated—the rush-laid floor was occupied with forms for the scholars, who were seated about in rows. Some of the girls had very pretty, attractive faces, and nearly all of both sexes wore around the brow and hair, chaplets of braid entwined with red and white flowers—orange or jessamine—having tasteful tassels of fresh blossoms hanging down behind the ear. They were not the most quiet school in the world, but applied to their tasks with great spirit and quickness. The teacher was an odd fish in his way—of the dwarf species—scarcely five feet in altitude—but from his peculiar build, he looked to me growing larger and larger every instant. The head was immense—hair white and cropped—the face expressed firmness, benevolence and intelligence. His body and arms were those of a giant, while the lower limbs tapered away to nothing, half shrouded in blue tappa, and over all he wore a flowing, yellow shirt.



The roll was called, and I noticed a few urchins, who were tardy in arriving, whimpering, from which I surmised they were at times indulged with the bamboo. A hymn was sung in good time; and although the girls had soft clear voices, there was little musical taste. In conclusion, an extemporaneous prayer was made—all kneeling—by a venerable native, who was afflicted, like many of his race, with *elephantiasis*. At the word "Amen," the little pupils gave a joyous whoop, and leaped pell-mell through the doorways.

Returning by the Broom Road, which is never beyond a few yards from the sea, we paid a visit to another hencoop habitation, owning for its lord, Arupeii, brother to the Queen's last husband, and his wife a cousin to Pomàree herself. They were a fine-looking couple, and the chieftainess, with her pretty baby, struck me as particularly handsome.

Dinner was preparing, and we passed the time pleasantly, lounging on mats, and smoking pipes. The first preparation for the feast was made by a plump girl, in an extremely brief petticoat, who ascended a tree above our heads, and picked an armful of broad round leaves, which afterwards were used for a table-cloth. They were carefully lapped one upon the other in rows on the ground, and mats and low stools placed near them. The girl, whom we christened Jack, from a peculiar roll in her gait, assisted by two more attendants, ranged a close platoon of youthful cocoanuts, with mouths open like lids, along the centre of the board; on either side were laid transparent shell goblets—the dark filled with sea-water and the light with fresh. Thus much for the table-service. Now came in on a huge wooden platter a baked pig, his dear little trotters, tail, and even to the extremity of his snout, crisped and browned most invitingly. In

a trice Jack twisted a brace of leaves around her fingers, seized the tempting grunter, and hey! presto! no articulator of anatomical celebrity, no, not even the professional carver mentioned by Sir Walter, who dissected becaficos into such multitudes of morsels, could have more cunningly divided the dish, giving each of the company an equal share. Now came a stack of roasted bread-fruit. Jack, with gloves of more fresh leaves on her hands, peeled, halved, tore out the seeds, and tossed them from platter to table, with the dexterity of a juggler at his tricks. Then there came piles of taro, and snow-white yams; heaps of oranges, and golden pineapples, with bunches of bananas in the offing.

We were six at table, seated, *à la Turque*, on mats. The servants first handed shells of fresh water; and, by the way, every one knows who invented steam-engines, playing-cards, and pin-making; yet in the absence of positive information, I claim the finger-glass as of Tahitian origin, and wish it to be generally understood. Then falling to, and with a fragment of bread-fruit crushed within the hand, and a delicate bit of crisped pig dipped in salt-water, by way of castors, we munched and sucked our digits alternately, until the heavy edibles were well nigh consumed; when laving again, dessert of fruits were distributed, the goblets once more went round, we rinsed our throats with cocoa-nut milk, and thus ended the feast. We had a *chasse* of pipes and brandy; but this last was purely an innovation on a native dinner.

Our comely hostess was treated with great deference and respect, none of the attendants presuming to sit in her presence; indeed, we were entertained by distinguished nobles of the true Tahitian nobility, and all was *maitai*. Previous to the repast,



we had dispatched a courier on horseback to the Port for wine, and, before dark, he returned, with but the breakage of a single bottle, and somewhat inebriated—so we judged he had broken the vessel after tasting the contents; but the matter was not satisfactorily proven; there was still abundance, and the cups circulated freely.

The pretty chieftainess smiled, the baby took a sip and crowed like a chicken. Arupeii facing me, cross-legged, laughed outright, and related by signs, and a few words I could comprehend, many reminiscences of war and battles—ships of war and their commanders, with unpronounceable names—all of whom, I assured him, were my intimate friends and near relations.

Later in the evening, we walked to a running stream hard by, and, with the full moon above us, and while

"Hesper, the star with amorous eye,  
Shot his fine sparkle from the deep blue sky,"

twinkling over the grotesque heights of Aimeo, the air laden with the odor of orange and jessamine, we waded into the brook, and diverted ourselves by plashing water upon a group of maids of honor who had followed us.

Before we knew it, a heavy black cloud had stolen from the shade of the high mountains, and we had barely time to snatch our garments from the grass and scamper through the grove, before the rain was upon us: it passed as quickly—the wine was exhausted—the chieftainess presented me with a shell goblet, and bidding good night to our noble entertainers we were escorted to the palace of Pomàree, where the chief in waiting had large fine mats laid for couches, curtained by rolls of tappa, and with the moonlight glancing on the foaming reef, visible through the cage-

built house, and the water rippling on the sandy shore, we betook ourselves to rest. Our repose was shortly disturbed by a regiment of juveniles who marched before the palace, chaunting, with great vociferation, the Marseilles hymn, giving the word "battalion" in full chorus; then, much to our astonishment, they struck up "Jim along, Josey," and concluded the opera with "Dan Tucker," set to native words. At this stage of the concert, our host, by request, made a few remarks, and the performers vanished.

Fleas were excessively troublesome, and, during the night, to get rid of the annoyance, we had several dips in the lagoon, which was an easy matter, since the water was nearly at the foot of our couches. Once I was on the point of shifting my bed of mats to the beach, under a clump of cocoanuts, but our host would not hear of it—declaring it was *ita maitai! ita maitai!*—impossible! not good! Indeed I afterwards found the practice was never indulged in by the natives—for should one of these heavy nuts—and they are very large—many containing a full quart of milk, to say nothing of the weight of shell and husk—falling from an elevation of nigh an hundred feet, chance to alight on the cocoonut of the sleeper, it is reasonable to suppose it would damage his ideas or slumber: besides, large rats ascend the trees, and sometimes detach the fruit, while knawing into the tender nut: crabs, too, the sagacious creatures, crawl up the trunks whose branches incline over the rocky shores, cut the stem with their claws, and the concussion attending the fall splits them wide open, or cracks them ready for eating. I never saw them at these pranks, but have the information from reliable authority. As the daylight guns from the Port of Papeete came booming and echoing among the mountains, we sprang to our feet, swal-



lowed a cooling draught of cocoanut milk, enjoyed another bathe in the stream, and then trudged gaily back to town.

A few days later, we were visited by our hospitable friend, Arupeii! He was shown every attention, and, at the usual hour, placed his heels under the gun-room mahogany. He dispensed with forks, and ate indiscriminately of viands, vegetables, and other dainties; occasionally storing away bits of bread and ham in the flowing bosom of his shirt, for, no doubt, a more convenient season. He never let a bottle pass him, either of port, sherry, or malt, appreciating brandy most, and having a fancy for drinking all from tumblers. With these little solecisms, he got on famously, and, at the termination of the dinner, patted his portly person and shouted *maitai*.

I do not know whether it be considered with the Tahitian aristocracy complimentary to covet a neighbor's goods, but certainly my stout chieftain was the most shameless beggar I ever remembered to have any dealings with. He volunteered to accept hatbands, plugs of tobacco, sealing wax, pistols, newspapers, anything and everything he saw, until, at the end of the third glass of strong waters after dinner, he requested, as a particular favor, the mess candlesticks, when, losing all patience, I told him his boat was waiting, so he hitched up his trousers, offered to rub noses, and with a present for his handsome wife stowed in the capacious shirt, we shook hands, and away he paddled on shore. This was the last we saw of Arupeii.

The frigate was always, Sundays excepted, surrounded by canoes filled with the natives, and they must have made a golden harvest, to judge from the immense quantities of fruits constantly coming over the gangways—so great was the demand for cocoanuts, that they were rafted off from the shore in strings, like

water-casks. The canoes were awkwardly hewn out of rough logs, with ill-arranged, misshapen outriggers; quite unlike the buoyant, swift little water vehicles of the Sandwich Islanders.

One day, attended by a tidy little reefer, we hired a clumsy, crazy equipage, with a copper and indigo-colored monster in the stern to paddle us about the reef and harbor. It was low water, and as our canoe drew but an inch or two of water outside—she was half-full inside—we were able to skim over the shallowest parts; and, by the by, there is a strange anomaly in the tides of Papeete, which are not in the least influenced by the moon—there are many ways of accounting for it—I only speak of the fact—we ever found a full sea at twelve, and low water at six.

In many places, a few feet below the surface, we glided over what seemed the most exquisite submarine flower-gardens, corals of all colors, and of every imaginable shape—plant, sprig, and branching antlers—of purple, blue, white, and yellow—variegated star and shell fish, and narrow clear blue chasms and fissures of unfathomable depths between; but what was equally beautiful to behold, schools of superbly-colored fishes swimming and darting about in the high blue rollers as raising their snowy crests just before breaking upon the outer wall of the reef, the finny tribes were held in a transparent medium, like that seen through a crystal vase.

A heavy shower interrupted our aquatic researches, and we sought shelter on Pomaree's diminutive island of Motuuata. It hardly covers an acre, but is a most charming retreat beneath the drooping foliage, and I did not wonder at the jolly queen's taste. She never goes there now: the *Franees* were busy with pick and barrow on parapet and bastion; blacksmiths and artizans were hammering away at the forges, and, beneath the trees and sheds,



soldiers and sailors were munching long rolls of bread and drinking red wine. Who can wonder that the poor Queen has forsaken her former haunts, when her cane-built villas are polluted by foreign tread, and the weeping groves that sheltered her troops of languishing revellers, the "cushions of whose palms" had clasped the smooth trunks of all—where merriment, games, feast, and wassail went on unceasingly, in all the native abandonment of island life and pleasure; now to have those scenes so changed by red-breeched *Franceses*—the shelly shores tossed with stone and mortar into embankments for dreaded cannon, and the grove resounding with stunning sound of hammer and anvil. Alas! poor Pomàree! recall the bright days of your girlhood, and curse the hour when you invited the stranger to your kingdom.

## CHAPTER L.

Early one morning the Governor and myself left the ship at gunfire, for a pic-nic among the mountains. We met with no more serious adventure in our transit from the frigate to the beach, than the capsizing a barrel of bread, by our stupid Italian valet, belonging to the baker's bumboat, in which we had been kindly offered a passage to the shore. The loaves went floating all about the harbor, and we were some minutes rescuing the manna from Neptune's pocket. Without further mishap we went straight to the domicile of an English gentleman, who had politely planned the party. All was prepared, and we set off as the troops of the garrison were filing into the parade ground for weekly review, and a very creditable and soldierly appearance they presented.

We made quite a respectable battalion ourselves, so far as numerical force went. In advance trotted a vigorous *taata*, with a couple of large, native baskets slung by a pole over his shoulders, loaded with bottles and provender; at his heels, our own unfortunate esquire, Giacomo. The Governor, our English friend and myself, constituted the main body, and the rear guard was composed of three laughter-loving damsels—straight and tall—with an easy grace of motion, like willows. One was housekeeper to our friend, and the most beautiful woman in face and form we



had seen in all the islands. Her figure was lithe and clear as an antelope—hands and feet small, with arms that would have made Canova start in his dreams. The face was full of sweetness and expression—eyes soft, full and dark—the mouth and chin large and rounded—with even, white teeth, and long, glossy-black tresses. Her name was Teina, and it had as pretty a sound as the euphonious *ita ita*, the Tahitians pronounce so melodiously. The other maidens were Teina's companions, who, having no engagements on hand, accompanied us as volunteers, or light troops. We tramped blithely along the Broom Road, whilst the delicious strains from the brass band went sailing up hill and grove.

Between the radiating mountain-ridges of Tahiti, which diverge from the longitudinal core of the summit, there are many frightful precipices—awful splits in the bosom of the earth—narrow, gloomy and deep, that hang frowningly over the sombre, turbulent torrents of waters that spring from the misty faces of the upper heights. Our route led up one of them. Turning up a broad valley, we followed the course of a rapid stream, crossing and re-crossing where rocks of the adjacent heights became too precipitous to admit a pathway; and to save time and unnecessary trouble, we were either ferried over on the shoulders of our *taata* convoy, breasting the foaming surge, or once or twice I was mounted on one of the native damsels—Miss Toanni—who kindly offered her services. I blush for my want of gallantry, but trust it was in a measure redeemed by holding her drapery from the water during the several wadings. She wore for head-dress a broad straw hat with fluttering ribbons—a figured gingham sac, plaited and buttoned to the throat, fell loosely over a white undertunic—and demi-pantaletts reached below the knees, where the costume terminated by open-worked, indigo stockings, that would

bear washing—while her fingers were covered with indelible blue rings, of the same material as the hose.

There is very little tattooing among the Tahitians—a few leggings—blue devices about the neck—rings on fingers or toes, but never a mark on the face. As civilization advances, they acquire a distaste for these heathenish skin-paintings. However, I must not lose sight of Toanni. She had a firm, well-knit frame—wide mouth, fine, brilliant teeth, intended for service—such as cracking flinty ship-biscuits, or wrenching husks from cocoanuts—large, mirthsome, dark eyes, with but one flaw to their beauty, which she enjoyed alike with all the Pacific Islanders—the whites of the eyes were yellow! Such was Toanni.

Occasionally, when resting within the close shade of the valley, if the bright eyes of the girls detected the sunny bulbs of *papao* gleaming through the surrounding foliage, off they sprang for the fruit, or climbed the *vai* for apples, or pretty flowers clustering about the lower branches, which were soon turned into wreaths or necklaces.

Advancing inland, the lateral valleys converged into one deep gorge, closing perpendicularly on either hand; and further on, the stream itself was cut off by a bold, transverse acclivity between the two sides, like a wall of masonry, more than half way up the lofty shafts that framed the gorge. From this shelf, more than a thousand feet above us, there came leaping a thin thread of water—but long before reaching the base of the grassy barrier, it was diffused in showers of spray, and poured its sparkling tribute into the deep chasms of the valley.

Leaving the lower bed of the stream, we began mounting upward by a zig-zag pathway, cut lately by the French on the flat, sheer face of the mountain. It was at this point,



where at an immense height above, the Tahitians had poised vast masses of rocks, with levers ready pointed, to hurl death and destruction on the adventurous soldiers who should dare to attack their stronghold. The natives were posted at the head of the pass, upon an acclivity, with no other approach from below than a crumbling goat-path, where the road now leads. They were well provided with arms and ammunition, cartridges charged at both ends, to prevent mistakes, and kindly furnished, it is said, by foreign ships of war in port at the time. Indeed, the French during the last year of the war, were harrassed night and day. Alarm-fires were blazing on every hill, feints were made upon the town, and the neighboring posts, until the troops became worn out, and more than half ill in hospital. Nor were the French so successful in their different engagements as the superior arms and discipline of trained soldiers would imply; for in one affair at Ta-a-a-a, they had fifty slain.

Thus the Tahitians, believing themselves invincible, after a thirteen month's seige, were at last dislodged through the connivance of a traitor, who guided their enemies up a narrow ravine, when, after surmounting almost inaccessible precipices, by the aid of scaling-ladders and ropes, they succeeded in attaining a foothold on a sharp spur of the peaks above the pass, and then rushing down completely surprised and captured the native camp. To the humanity of the French be it said, every soul was spared. This was the last struggle: tired of subsisting on roots and berries, enveloped in mists and rain, the natives sighing once more for their smiling homes by the sea-side, surrendered in December, 1846.

In the great losses sustained by the French in this warfare, it struck us very forcibly that there must have been great igno-

rance and inexperience in the knowledge of what we call bush-fighting. The Tahitians do not compare with the North American Indian in either courage, hardihood, or sagacity; and without any disparagement to French valor or gallantry, in our innocence we sincerely believed that two hundred of our back-woodsmen would have hunted every copper-colored warrior into the ocean.

After a toilsome struggle we gained the lateral ridge that joined the two acclivities, and entered an artificial aperture, cut through the rocks, which was the portal to the native fortress.

The well-defined diadem of Fatoar rose in clear relief against the blue sky above our heads, and looking around we were in the midst of a multitude of gullies and ravines, with the bed of the same rivulet we had left below rolling rapidly at our feet towards its fearful plunge in a gap of the precipice. A number of wicker-basket osier-built huts for soldiers were perched about the elevations; the vegetation was rich and beautiful, wherever a foot of soil gave nourishment; and there were little gardens, too, with many kinds of vegetables, irrigated by narrow aque ducts, formed by gutters of canes or bamboos, and fed from adjacent springs.

The scenery was quite Swiss, could we change tropical suns, running streams, and unceasing verdure into frosts, glaciers, and avalanches. But yet it was a romantic solitude, despite the remark of the French officer in command, who assured me, with a most expressive gesture, that it was *terriblement mauvais*.

We continued our walk some distance beyond the fort, and coming to a shaded, smooth tier of rocks, where the stream was bubbling noisily along, with little sleeping pools half hidden amid the crags, and opposite a pointed slender peak like a fishing-rod—well nigh punching a hole in the blue expanse of heaven—we



spread our rural banquet on the rocky table, plunged the bottles in the icy water, and then reclined luxuriously around, with full resolve to do justice to the feast, incited by our long tramp and fast.

"Flow of wine, and flight of cork,  
Stroke of knife, and thrust of fork;  
But, where'er the board was spread,  
Grace, I ween, was never said."

Wings of chickens, slices of ham, roasted bananas, huge loaves of bread, preserved fish, and cups of wine disappeared with marvellous rapidity. We did all rational beings could be expected to perform under the circumstances, but at last were obliged to cry *peccavi!* Not so our lady guests—the war of maids and viands had only begun; my friend, Toanni, thought a trifle of taking five or six of these oily little sardines at a mouthful, pushing them down with half a banana, and violent thrust of bread. She devoured ham and fowls with great apparent relish, wagging her lower jaw, to detach any stray masses of unmasticated matter that chanced to have escaped the ivory hopper, and fallen between her capacious cheeks; every few seconds giving her round fingers a sharp suck, like popping a cork. Truly Toanni's head room was enormous. Once or twice, when thinking her rage entirely appeased, she relapsed again, and performed prodigies with rashers of baked pig. I believe it was Voltaire who designated the illustrious Shakspeare as a "sublime barbarian;" could he have seen these island maidens, he certainly would have awarded the palm to Toanni; and I'll wager a flask of bordeaux—a peculiar weakness of mine—that these Tahitian belles can eat more, laugh longer, talk faster, all at once or separately, than any others of their adorable sex the wide world over. I

speak advisedly, and am prepared by documentary evidence to prove it.

Rescuing a small cruse of cogniac from the melée, I reclined upon a rocky bed, with my heels in the water, for a doze, induced by the soothing fumes of a pipe! But, alas! hardly were my eyes closed, before I was startled by the cries of our frolicksome light-hearted companions, who with a lizard-like facility of grasp, were running up the perpendicular surface of the peak, clinging and climbing by fibres and roots, that crept and laced themselves about the crevices of the rocks. Plucking a quantity of bright flowers, the girls bounded into the stream, and then commenced weaving never-ending wreaths and chaplets. This universal fondness for these spontaneous jewels of the earth, with their love for bathing, are the most innocent and beautiful natural tastes possessed by the savages of Polynesia.

We were three hours getting back to Papeete, only pausing for a last cooling swim in the lower stream.

The evening previous to our departure from Tahiti we attended the usual soirée of the French Governor. Important despatches had just been received from France, and the saloons were filled at an early hour with officers of the ships and garrison, consuls, and merchants, with a number of foreign ladies, all in *grand tenu*. It was a pleasant gay little court, with écarté tables and conversation, vivacious punch handed round at intervals, and maybe a little flirting and love-making, with "music to fill up the pauses," from the regimental orchestras stationed near the verandas, while the lawns and grounds were crowded by laughing groups of natives, talking scandal, perhaps, of the *oui-oui's*.

The next morning, before day had dawned, our frigate was



crowded with canvas, and assisted by a flotilla of boats from the French squadron, we were quietly towed outside the coral reef, then taking the trade on the quarter, we went off with a spanking breeze towards Aimeo.

## CHAPTER LI.

With easterly winds we sailed away to the southward. In a fortnight the sky became dull and gloomy—the rain fell, chill and cold—we tumbled from our warm beds with a shock into the cold air, for we had been a long time beneath the clear skies and warm suns of the tropics, and rather magnified our hardships, in a thermometrical sense.

Still we were bound once more to the realms of civilization, which was in itself consoling—we buttoned our jackets—declared it was fine dumb-bell weather, and exercised those implements constantly. Doctor Faustus, too, lighted his jovial lamp when the night closed around us, and we blew the steam from a tumbler of *italia* punch with much thankfulness and gusto; and those of us who had watches, forthwith bent our steps to the upper regions.

One cold November night, in a hard squall, whilst the topmen were furling the lofty sails, two men were hurled from the main-top-gallant yard, and falling through the lubber's hole of the top, were caught at the junction of the futtock shrouds. One escaped with severe injuries, but his unfortunate companion died in thirty minutes. He was a handsome, active, young fellow, who made my acquaintance during the blockade of Mazatlan, in old Jack's oyster-boat.