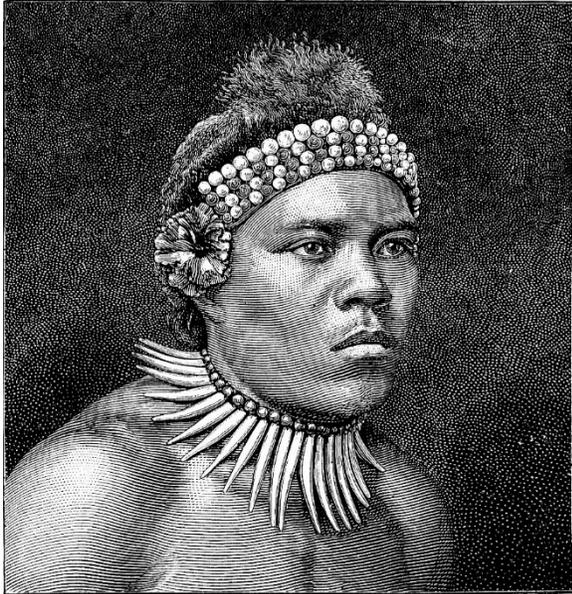


The Past and the Present of Samoa

IV. - Samoa in Touch With the Great Outside World

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Samoa Native

The missionary preserve, as a newspaper paragraph recently described a similar group, has been unceremoniously entered. Samoa has been forced into prominence, and is now an object of interest to the civilized nations of the earth. The eyes of the statesman and of the merchant, as well as those of the friend of missions, have been anxiously turned to these lovely islands. For the present, at any rate, they have fallen upon evil days, especially Upolu, which is the centre of cloud and storm. There are three or four principal factors which must be taken into account in any attempt to understand the present crisis, or to estimate future probabilities.

First, there is the character of the Samoans themselves—their social and national weaknesses, not to use the sterner word vices.

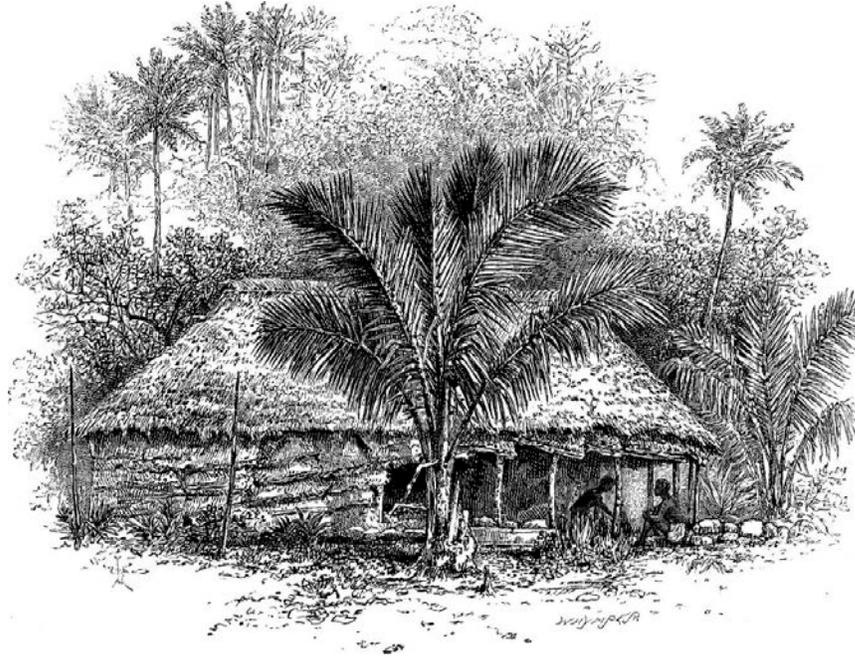
Christian teaching has done much for them, but much remains undone. Notwithstanding their honest acceptance of Christ's Gospel, and the sincere desire of a large number to walk circumspectly and humbly with their God, defects are painfully manifest. Not that that is unusual or peculiar to Samoa. Is not the Christianity of an Englishman, of a Scotchman, of a Welshman, of an Irishman, sadly marred by the infirmities of the English, Scotch, Welsh, and Irish national character? Is not the same the case with all so-called Christian nations? Is there not a constant conflict between what in these scientific clays we call the law of heredity, and "the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus?"

Undoubtedly the Samoan has his own characteristic frailties and imperfections, and one fears his international relations. He is naturally quarrelsome. The rivalries and jealousies of different chiefs, different districts, different villages, foster a contentious, factious spirit, and constitute one of the greatest obstacles to steady progress. Long before German intervention and the deposition of King Malictoa in favour of Tamasese, these rival chiefs, and others who

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preceded them, and many more of subordinate rank, indulged in struggles for supremacy. Petty wars have broken out from time to time, and missionaries have often found their efforts to arbitrate and pacify futile. Instability and fickleness also mark the people. They seem almost incapable of well-sustained, prolonged effort. spurts, rushes, over-powering ardour and intensity for a brief period they are adepts at; but in staying power, in "patient continuance in well-doing" they are sadly lacking. They need constant stimulus, external pressure, and whipping up, or remain inert. To a large extent this is attributable to their inbred sluggishness. The ease with

which a Samoan can procure abundance of food nurtures indolence. The work of two days suffices to meet the requirements of seven, and he deems it folly to exert himself. He says (a resident informs us): "White man fool, he work after he eat dinner" Laziness is a terrible hindrance to healthy growth, and the ordinary native of Samoa is lazy in the extreme. Apparently



A Samoan House

he has no ambition, no desire to get on. Indeed social customs make it next to impossible for him to do so, for no sooner is it known that a man has become possessed of a little property than his friends come and stay with him until it is exhausted. That is the custom, and *volens volens* he must submit to it. Add to these faults the grave moral defects summed up in the words untruthfulness and impurity, and it becomes evident that

for a native of Samoa to be chaste in thought, speech, and life, to be thoroughly trustworthy and reliable in character and conduct is not such a simple thing as it sounds. Under the Christian garb a whole world of iniquity may, and alas! often does prevail. It is, however, a great satisfaction to know that in a multitude of instances corrupt heathen nature has been renewed and cleansed by the power of Christ, that many a Samoan has lived a consistent Christian life, and died a happy Christian death. The report of the deputation that recently visited the islands, already quoted, is clear and convincing on this point. It frankly confesses that the people are not paragons of virtue, that they are not superior to the grosser forms of vice, but maintains that a great change has been effected in their moral life, a change quite as thorough and deep as in the time could reasonably be expected.

Having been specially appointed to investigate such questions, and having had exceptional opportunities for ascertaining the opinions of the foreign residents generally, as well as of the missionaries, the framers of this report may be regarded as delivering a judicial as well as a judicious utterance.

A second factor in the problem of Samoa's future progress, is the effect of missionary methods. Speaking broadly, the outcome of the evangelistic, pastoral, and educational work carried on for fifty years cannot but receive our cordial approval, and inspire us with confidence as we look forward. In one or two directions, however, through misapprehension or misuse of the teaching given, results otherwise gratifying are open to objection, and need serious attention to prevent abuse.

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For example, to have succeeded in raising an educated native ministry (comparatively speaking, that is), a ministry capable of meeting the needs of so many and such large congregations, is no small achievement. But the very success has created a new difficulty. At times even the missionaries have to exercise considerable patience, discretion, and tact to avoid collisions with their native colleagues, who are wonderfully sensitive as to any seeming infringement of their prerogative, and ambitious of becoming in all respects the equals of their teachers. In dealing with their less educated countrymen, the Samoan pastors are sometimes arbitrary and overbearing. Church discipline for trivial offences is anything but rare, and the decision of the pastor in such cases is absolute.



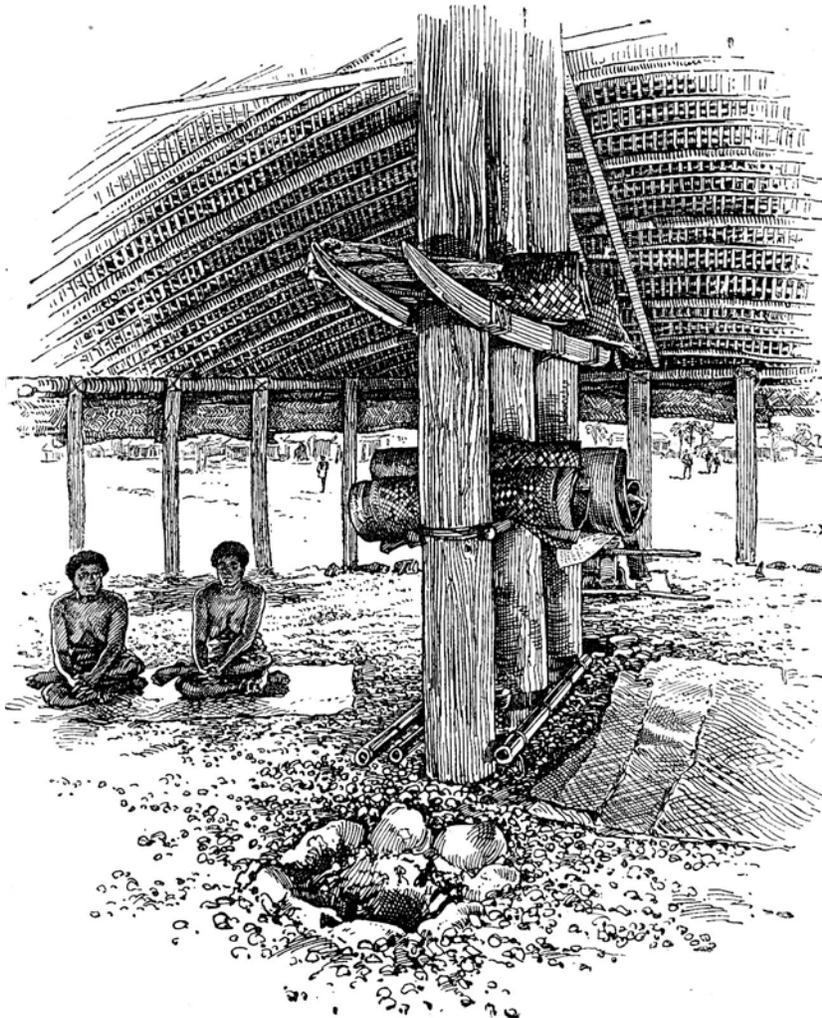
A Native Crew

Again, to have induced a community rescued from heathen superstitions to value and reverently observe the Lord's Day, by making it a day of rest and worship, is to have accomplished much for its present and future welfare. Missionaries have done this for Samoa. The islanders keep the Sabbath most scrupulously. Mr. Churchward, formerly H.B.M.'s Consul at Apia, lets us see how this strikes the ordinary Englishman. "Sunday is a great day with all Samoans," he writes. "With the exception of the intervals of sleep, so necessary to their existence, hymn-singing goes on very nearly from the first thing in the morning till the last thing at night. Really the Sunday in and about the schools begins on Saturday evening, when as a rule they carry on practice to a late hour." Then at some length he proceeds to describe in serio-comic style the observances of the day—the early morning prayer-meeting at which the congregation appears in a sort of superior undress; the striking and grotesque exhibition of finery at the morning service proper, when all varieties of semi-foreign attire, antique and modern, are doffed for a short time, only to be laid aside on the return from chapel; the afternoon spent in sleeping, bathing, or visiting; the

resumption of Sunday garments for the evening service; the careful depositing of these in family boxes at the close of this last service of the day. The description is exaggerated and somewhat of a caricature, but those who know the Samoans best are well aware that many of them are disposed to make Sabbath observance the distinguishing feature, if not the alpha and omega, of their Christian practice. There is far too much mere Sabbatarianism as distinguished from an intelligent apprehension of the true meaning of the day, or a real appreciation of its spiritual joys and blessings. A story is told in missionary circles of a teacher, sent to commence work in an outlying island, who reported that his new charge were fast becoming Christians. On being questioned as to the directions in which progress was being made, it became evident that he was easily satisfied. He knew of no true converts, of none that had even got the length of decently clothing themselves, but they "kept the Sabbath," he said, and that was all he had to tell.

In another respect the results of missionary tuition leave something to be desired, namely,

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Interior of a Samoan Chief's House

in the matter of female education. The mixed day-schools taught by the pastors, supplemented by occasional classes conducted by a missionary's wife, are the only direct provision made for the education of the majority of the girls, and for the cultivation of refined womanliness; though the pastors' wives, many of them, go with their husbands to Malua. In this respect it certainly seems that those under Romanist care have the advantage of their Protestant sisters. This defect in a system which in so many ways has proved highly beneficial, one rejoices to think is easily remediable, nor is it likely to continue.

The third and in some respects the most important factor in the question of Samoa's ultimate place among the

nations, is the influence of non-missionary foreigners

who now predominate, and number some four or five hundred. They are mostly German,

George Cousins, "The Past and Present in Samoa. IV – Samoa in Touch With the Great Outside World," *Sunday at Home* No. 1835 (June 29t 1889): 407-411.

American, and British merchants and those they employ. The firms have their head-quarters in Apia, but their agents are scattered all over the group. These men collect copra, that is the dried kernel of the cocoa-nut, which they despatch in small craft to Apia. A few foreigners take their wives with them to Samoa, others are legally married to Samoan women; but the larger number live with native women without incurring the responsibilities of marriage. Of far too many it must be said they have proved a gambling, drunken, dissolute set of abandoned beachcombers, the scum of the Pacific, a disgrace to civilisation, a terror and a stumbling block to the natives. A great improvement is stated to have taken place in Apia during the last ten years. Prior to 1879 law and order were unknown; every man did what was right in his own eyes; and demonised by that vile and poisonous trash called Hamburg gin (which can be purchased at eightpence per bottle, and all over the Pacific as on the west coast of Africa is working incalculable ruin), reckless men indulged in all kinds of violence and devilry. Half-caste Samoans joined them in their debaucheries, and many pure blooded natives became completely demoralised. But in 1879 Sir Arthur Gordon, who visited Samoa in the capacity of British Commissioner, executed a convention by which the municipality of Apia was established, with power to levy taxes, issue licenses, appoint and control police, and carry on works of public usefulness. This convention has borne good fruit. Still, even now the example set by a large proportion of the foreign residents is a sad hindrance to temperance, purity, and righteousness, and tends seriously to neutralise the teaching and influence of Christian men and women. Efforts are made by the missionaries to touch this foreign population, especially in Apia, where they have a small foreign church, erected forty years ago and still in use. Sailors from the ships in harbour and other visitors are seen within its walls, and a few of the residents regularly attend the Sunday services, to some of whom the Gospel has proved God's power unto salvation.

The weakness of the Samoan character is severely tried by the flagrant and unblushing vices of the white man. It is also liable to manifest itself even in relation to his amusements. The visit of a circus sent many of the people almost mad for a time. Cricket was introduced

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by some English lovers of the game. At first no Samoan cared a straw for it; but all at once they began to take interest in the game, to play it themselves, and that with ridiculous extravagance. Cricket became the one absorbing interest. Every village took to it. Not eleven a side, but thirty and forty, and in one instance two hundred played. Matches lasted for weeks, and all work was for the time neglected in its favour. Need it be said that sensible people found it necessary to set their face against cricket, and did their best to put a stop to it.

Then the energy and activity of the foreigner are both a puzzle and a menace to the Samoan. Their innate dislike to continuous work makes it necessary to import labour. As plantations are multiplied, and the demand for steady toil in cultivating them increases, the difficulty will become more urgent. Already Tongans and others have been introduced, and unless the Samoans learn wisdom in time, these strangers to their soil will thrive at their expense.

Finally, Samoa is face to face with the three greatest nations of the modern world. Germany, the leading military, and Great Britain the chief naval power, together with America, the most enterprising and go-ahead nation on earth, are those directly and immediately interested in her affairs. Matters recently reached an acutely critical stage. The trade of the islands has developed, the exports and imports both being about £100,000 per annum. As regards the commercial stake

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in Samoa, Germany stands first, America comes next, Great Britain last; but as regards the moral stake, Great Britain heads the list. Her influence is the greatest. This is testified to by the position and work of the missionaries, by the use of the English language as the recognised medium of communication between foreigners and their half-caste or imported labourers, and by the definite request and petition to undertake the protectorate of the group sent by the late king to Her Majesty Queen Victoria in 1884. The British Government did not see its way to accede to this request, partly out of deference to German sensitiveness and large investments, partly from an unwillingness to accept the burden of additional imperial responsibility when this could, with good grace, be avoided. Subsequently the whole course of events was changed by the intervention of the German Government, who by deposing Malietoa, the rightful king, and setting up Tamasese, a chief whom the people were determined not to recognise, hastened the crisis. Mataafa, who came to the front after Malietoa was carried off into temporary exile, is a Romanist, but has the support of two-thirds or more of his countrymen, whereas Tamasese can command but a small following, and but for German support would soon be overthrown. Still the political question after all is not so much that of settling the claims of rival chieftains as the international jealousies of the three powers. It is devoutly to be hoped that the conference now sitting in Berlin will arrange all differences, and definitely adopt a scheme for the wise and just administration of the group. The chiefs are awaiting such a settlement, and an announcement that it had been determined on, would be hailed with delight. The present state of affairs is simply disastrous.

Our brief survey is finished. We have looked at the story of the little people's regeneration and enlightenment from a broad, and we trust both just and generous, point of view. The net results of Christian work, when all deductions have been made, are very large. The money, the service expended on the elevation of Samoa has secured a moral and spiritual return that is most encouraging, and one cannot but hope that He who has brought the Samoans thus far on the upward and onward pathway, will still manifest His presence and blessing, and lead them forward to yet greater, higher, and nobler things.

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