

*Translation of*

**Dumont d’Urville**

**VOYAGE AU POLE SUD ET DANS L’OCEANIE sur les corvettes l’Astrolabe et la Zélée...**

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by Mrs Deborah Pope,

CREDO, Marseilles, July 2008

*[S.T.: These pages, narrating the visit to Samoa, had never been previously translated. Copyright DHS; the inconsistency of italics printing follows the original text]*

1838, September

.....

... I set a course of W.½ S. in order to make the Navigator Islands as quickly as possible.

The trade wind carried us rapidly along towards our destination and on the 23<sup>rd</sup> the look-out, whom I had recommended to keep a careful watch, soon signalled a small islet straight ahead. It was Rose Island, the advanced sentinel of the *Samoa* (or Navigator) Archipelago. This little island was discovered by Captain Freycinet, who bestowed on it the name of his wife who had accompanied him on his voyage.

From seven to eight in the morning, we follow the reef, which forms a girdle of about six or seven miles around the islet, at a distance of less than a mile. In fact, Rose Island is merely a heap of sand, about 200 metres in diameter, covered with a clump of very cool and attractive-looking greenery.

As we sail past about 600 metres north of the reef, we see an opening in it about 100 metres wide which gives access to the lagoon where the water appears quite deep and would seem to offer the possibility of anchorage for ships as small as ours.

It had been scarcely a few hours since we had lost sight of Rose Island when the land of *Opoun* appears straight ahead of us in the form of a cone, already high but with a fairly narrow base. At six in the evening, we were only about six or seven miles off the island's easternmost point and I decide to spend the night nearby short tacking in order to start exploring this large group the next day.

As soon as day breaks, I stand in for the coast of Opoun and sail along it a short distance off. It is a high land, well-timbered almost to the top of its mountains. A belt of quite low land covered with rich vegetation marks its limits with the sea. However we see no huts, just a few natives gathered on the westernmost point. At eight o'clock we had

already entered the channel which separates Opoun Island from *Leone* when we are suddenly becalmed and a stop is put to the rapid progress we have been making up until then. We have to wait an hour and a half before the breeze enables us to sail along the northern belt of *Leone* and *Anfoue* Islands. These latter islands appear to us quite well furnished with coconut palms, but we see no inhabitants there. Only two little canoes painted red and each carrying three natives, paddle up very close to the *Zélée* without however trying to come alongside her while, becalmed, we are motionless on the waters.

At nine o'clock, Mr. Dumoulin had finished his work in these islands, and I steer for *Maouna* Island which is already visible through a fairly thick mist. In the afternoon, we sail along the southern coast of this island at a distance of six or seven miles. The mist covering the land partially hides its details from us. However, towards the middle we can clearly see the entrance to a bay which must be deep and could afford good anchorage. Except that leaving it would be difficult because of the southern winds and sea which must almost always prevail.

At one moment, lacking any reliable information, I even suspect that the bay before us is Apia harbour, which I was told about in *Taïti* and where I wish to go and anchor. But Mr. Desgraz helps me out of this predicament by giving me a little leaflet, printed by the missionaries of the London Society, in which it is stated that the port of Apia is on *Opoulou* Island. And I knew this was the name given by Edwards to the island Lapeyrouse refers to by the name of *Oyo-Lava*.

From then on I continue my course and towards evening I hug the coast quite closely on the south-west tip of *Maouna*, where we can make out huts and sometimes even inhabitants walking on the beach. I merely reduce my headway for the night in order to be in view of *Opoulou* Island the next morning.

Indeed, at five o'clock, land appears before us. A three-masted ship suddenly changes course so as to come closer to us.

Towards nine o'clock, being only a short distance from the coast of *Opoulou*, I begin to follow it as closely as the reef allows; examining all the bays carefully in search of that of Apia. I would doubtless have succeeded, but perhaps after lengthy efforts and, above all, I could have lost a lot of time if the wind had happened to change. But, fortunately, I soon see a whale-boat leave the ship I mentioned and head towards us. I immediately heave to so as to await it. It brings aboard the *Lady-Rohena's* shipmaster himself. Taking us for a whaler, he had come for news and at the same time to offer his services. He tells me the islanders of *Samoa* (the real name of this group) are very tractable and that we can obtain provisions on their island, hogs in particular being plentiful and cheap. He also tells me that the little harbour of Apia is very safe but that it is still at least twenty-five miles to the west of us.

In addition, he offers me an Englishman named Frazier, who has been living in these islands for six years and is in his boat, to take me there. The latter had acted as pilot to his ship and I willingly accept his offer.

Scarcely has the captain of the *Lady-Rohena* left us when a native canoe leaves the shore bringing us another Englishman, who also lives in these islands. I send him on board the *Zélée*, requesting Captain Jacquinot to make use of him as a pilot.

Now we both have someone familiar with the land on board, we follow the coast very closely, hugging the reefs which often protect these islands. I never weary of admiring the enchanting sight afforded by these beautiful lands. We agree with Lapeyrouse and, without hesitation, declare these islands far superior to Taïti itself, in beauty as in apparent fertility. The coast is covered with fine, admirably green trees; lovely sandy beaches, pretty coves and populous, well-shaded villages are everywhere to be seen. The land rises inland from the shore along a slope gentle enough to be inhabited and even cultivated, if the natives were capable of working. It is above all in this respect that Opoulou Island is superior to Taïti where only the low-lying beaches are inhabitable, the interior being steep and so rocky that cultivating it would always be very difficult, if not impossible.

The villages, generally situated on the headlands, are surrounded by magnificent groves of coconut palms and often have pretty streams running through them which sometimes cascade down from the neighbouring mountains. We notice from time to time big whitewashed buildings with windows. Frazier tells us these are the churches recently built by the natives, under the direction of the English missionaries. While admiring the beauty of Opoulou and the large number of hamlets, we have to say that we have seen none of the villages reported by Lapeyrouse as towns stretching from the shore to the mountain tops. The illustrious navigator must have been given to exaggeration, in this case, or otherwise these villages have disappeared, if they ever existed. Besides, I seem to remember that according to his account, he sailed past too far from land to discover these details.

The strong winds from the eastern sector blow us swiftly along the coast of Opoulou. A two o'clock we are at the entrance to Apia harbour and soon afterwards we sail into the narrow passage between two reefs which form its entrance. A few minutes later, the *Astrolabe* and the *Zélée* are anchored in seven fathom water in a pretty, perfectly sheltered little basin.

## CHAPTER XXIX

## Stay in Apia.

25<sup>th</sup> September 1838. As soon as we have anchored, Captain Jacquinot comes aboard the *Astrolabe* and, after having discussed the organisation of this port call with him, I instruct Mr. La Farge to make a survey of the bay. I then inform the officers that the call will last six days, so that everyone can plan their work according to the time he will have to devote to it. Never throughout the whole campaign have I failed to take this precaution, and unless there was an impediment, just as serious as unexpected, I have never failed to sail at the appointed time either. The commander of an expedition must never lose sight of the fact that it is of the utmost importance to accustom his officers and crews to counting on his word once it has been given. By acting like this, it is true that a captain may have a few hardships to fear but he also avoids many disappointments.

On both ships I keep the two Englishmen who have piloted us; they will act as interpreters in my transactions with the natives. They tell me an English whaler had anchored in this harbour for a mere two or three days and in this short time, seventeen sailors and an officer had deserted and scattered over the island. Sperm-whale fishing attracts whalers to this archipelago and, as it is easy to obtain supplies here, they anchor at Apia. But desertions are a greatly to be feared. This is how these beautiful islands come to be polluted with idlers and ne'er-do-wells who are often the first to incite the savages to commit blameworthy acts.

To begin with, very few natives appear and they seem much more reserved than at Nouka-Hiva or Taïti. It is only gradually that they venture to bring us objects to barter. The population of the Samoa Islands is a variety of the Polynesian race, very similar to that of Tonga.

A tall (5ft. 9in.), well-built individual presents himself to me with an air of superiority which seems to indicate a man of some importance. Frazier tells me his name is *Pea-Pongui* and that he is the chief of the *Apia* district. Consequently I receive him amicably and give him a few presents.

Encouraged by my reception, *Pea* ventures to unfold a notice written in English while pronouncing the word *dollars*. At first I do not really understand what this means; but having glanced at the English text, I realise that these are official port regulations countersigned by Mr. Drinck-Water of Bethune, commander of the 28 cannon sloop *Conway* which had anchored in this harbour some time before us. The word *dollars* was the only thing *Pea's* head had managed to take in. In fact, the regulations demanded *dollars* for anchorage, *dollars* for fresh water, *dollars* for wood, *dollars* for deserters, in short *dollars* in all cases, nothing had been forgotten.

From then on, I very quickly see what it is about. It is the worthy missionaries who have invented this means of bringing grist to the mission's mill and these poor natives are the props of these fine provisions; but what I cannot conceive of is that the captain of an English vessel should have seriously set his hand to such a deed, unless he had received secret instructions from his government, authorising him to risk this kind of dubious prelude to taking possession, reserving the right to confirm it later by more forceful acts.

Until this should happen, I myself pay little attention to this piece of paper from the London missionaries countersigned by Mr. Drinck-Water. Shrugging my shoulders, after having read it, and smiling sympathetically, I motion to *Pea* that he should expect no piastres from us. This declaration does not satisfy him but as he is beginning to become importunate, I look vexed and instruct *Frazier* to explain to him on my behalf that if I cut down wood which may belong to him or others, I will compensate him with cloth but as for water, this belongs to whoever needs it and I will not give him the slightest shilling for it. Then, showing him the corvette's battery, I add that if he pressed for payment, our cannons would have the task of paying the price he demanded.

On hearing this, poor *Pea* is terrified and hastens to apologise as best he can and, telling me that he withdraws his claims completely, he begs me not to get angry with him. In fact, I am not the least bit cross with the man; for he has little to do with this bad joke, at the very most he is the missionaries' tool. So true is it that money is always the first motive for the latters' actions and that they misuse religion and philanthropy by making a pretext of them.

After dinner, Captain *Jacquinet* joins me and, accompanied by our friend *Pea*, we go down to the end of the bay. We find the huts of the little village of *Apia* scattered haphazardly under large clusters of coconut trees. First we visit the *Fare-tete* or meeting house. This is a large edifice built with truly admirable elegance and grace. Although made entirely of wood and covered with a simple straw roof, its construction is a real masterpiece of native work, and the whole interior is remarkably neat. The ground is covered with small stones which appear so well-matched and cleaned that one would think they had been hand-picked.

From there, we make our way to the home of Mr *Mills*, the missionary, who lives in a fairly modest, little hut though inside it is quite comfortably laid out. The natives, whom he is directing in this work (having been a carpenter himself), are labouring with incredible zeal to build him a dwelling that will be a little palace for these islands, as the main building will have two parts to it and there will be no less than twelve windows and several doors.

Mr *Mills* is a thin, rather puny-looking man; he receives us politely and volunteers to answer all our questions. As he knows not a word of French, we might have had some difficulty understanding each other, if Mrs *Mills*, a fairly young woman with an intelligent,

pleasant face, despite her state of health which does not seem very reassuring, had not hastened to reply to all the questions we put to her husband. It seemed to me that this lady was held in more consideration by the natives than was her husband.

In the course of conversation with Mrs Mills, I remark to her that Pea had presented me with a paper and demanded dollars and that I had taken no notice of it, but I do not conceal the fact that this manner of proceeding had appeared to me extremely improper with respect to a foreign warship and that in the future it could well happen that a captain less patient than me would greet it with less composure. Mr Mills, at first embarrassed, afterwards tries to excuse himself by saying that this measure had only been taken for merchantmen and that, up to now, these had regarded it as legal.

On leaving Mr Mills, and still accompanied by Pea, we go for a walk in the neighbouring forest. A path running through it affords a delightful walk of about a mile. Never have I seen such fine trees, not even in New Zealand or New Guinea, despite the beauty of their forests. Here they are easy to ramble through, as the immense height of the large species prevents the sun penetrating and reaching the ground and consequently creepers and bushes cannot develop sufficiently to trouble the walker; beautiful pigeons, big flying foxes, parakeets and other attractive species of various birds fly about these large woods lending movement and life to them. Organic nature already appears much richer than in Tahiti and I soon notice a host of plants that the latter archipelago had not yet afforded me.

We spend a delightful hour in the evening walking in the shade of this majestic foliage. Pea takes us to a waterfall formed by the crystal-clear waters of a stream tumbling down over large basaltic rocks from a height of some 5 or 6 metres, in a tremendous din. The water seems so lovely to me that I decide to bathe, but its chilliness puts me off and we slowly make our way back along the path to the beach. All my companions, and above all Captain Jacquinot, seem delighted to be in these still so little-known islands. This port of call promises us thousands of benefits, both for our crew's health and for our worthy naturalists' accumulation of wealth. Today the surface of the globe has been so widely explored that we must congratulate ourselves on having found a spot which has escaped travellers' investigations. This is the case for the Samoa Islands, unless Captain Drink-Water's companions collected information in this respect, for they were the only ones to have come to this land before us.

Our French compatriots, used to the easy beauties of Nouka-hiva and Taïti, again tried their gallantry here, but to their great surprise they were disappointed. The women, who at first had seemed prepared to accept our sailors' incitements, have constantly refused serious propositions and appear to sincerely submit to the prohibitions of their new religion. But they willingly show our men the way to a neighbouring tribe where the people

still retain their former beliefs and are perfectly prepared to barter their women's favours and, since then, the corvettes' inhabitants have been taking this path several times a day.

Frazier, who seems to know the country and the Samoan archipelago quite well, also gives me the real names of the islands which compose it. The name Hamoa, instead of Samoa which I had already bestowed on this group, had been given to me by the inhabitants of Tonga who never pronounce the letter S for which they normally substitute the letter H.

Opoun is called *Olo-singa*; Leone, *To-hou*; Fanfoue, *Feti-houta*. These three islands are called collectively *Manoua*.

As for the actual Samoan archipelago, Lapeyrouse's Maouna Island is in fact *Tou-tou-ila*; Fishermen's Island, *Ana-moua*; Oio-lava, *Opoulou*; then *Manono*, *Apolina*, and finally *Sevai* which Lapeyrouse mistakenly calls Poua. It is easy to see that the Englishman Edwards was, in this respect, better informed for his names, which figure on Arrowsmith's map, are quite often close to the real native ones.

Frazier estimates the population of this group to be of some 80,000 souls, distributed as follows: probably 25,000 on Sevai and Opoulou, 10,000 on Tou-tou-ila, 7,000 on Manono, 3,000 on Apolina, with the Manoua group being the least inhabited.

Today there are already three missionaries on Opoulou Island, two on Sevai, two on Tou-tou-ila and two on Manono. It is only in the last 3 or 4 years that the English have tried to settle on these islands but they had previously had the way prepared by Tahitians sent out with the title of *Teachers*. By a curious exception, the Samoan islands had no religion so they easily accepted Christianity as soon as it was proposed to them.

They were not known to have any temples, prayers or ceremonies. Circumcision was part of their customs, they had the *tabu* under the name of *Sa*, Kava was known as *Ava*, the use of bows and arrows was unknown to them and their combat weapons were spears, slings and clubs. Everything leads one to believe that they have never been cannibals.

The massacre of Captain Langle and his companions was perpetrated by the foreign crews of two canoes who wanted to obtain the Frenchmen's wares without offering anything in exchange. It appears that three Frenchmen survived this disaster and that they were even well treated by the natives. One of them married and had several children, one of whom is still living. But he only speaks the Samoan language and Frazier, who gave me all these details, seems never to have seen him.

The land of this archipelago is divided into districts, each governed by a single chief (Arii). They are all independent of each other. There was a time when the whole archipelago recognised a paramount chief, but this is no longer the case today.

Before the introduction of Christianity, girls enjoyed total freedom and bestowed their charms according to their whims, but once married they had to remain faithful to their

husbands and the death penalty was applied to adulterous women. Men had as many wives as they could feed and Pea, although he calls himself a Christian, still has two very young ones, only he keeps them in separate huts.

About thirty English and American whalers visit these islands a year and fish for sperm-whales here. They come either to *Apia* or *Pango-Pango* harbour for supplies. The latter bay lies on the southern belt of Tou-tou-ila Island and we saw its entrance yesterday as we sailed past.

Five or six years ago two natives, who had been to Sydney aboard a whaler and seen the English people's religious ceremonies there, took it into their heads to found a new religion in their own country; and they soon had many proselytes. Nothing could have been simpler than their rites; they consisted merely in meeting once a month, at the full moon, in a chapel set aside for this purpose. There they sang some songs to the Supreme Being, then everything ended with a meal eaten together, after which everyone retired. This religion imposed no obligatory act whatsoever; its simplicity, in a word, was even greater than that of the Anglican cult. The missionaries who found these natives worshipping one Supreme Being could not term them idolaters, but they call all the inhabitants who have as yet kept their beliefs *pagans* and *heretics*. In Apia itself, the latter have a remarkably neat chapel less than 300 paces away from the place where the Christians meet.

It is a beautiful day and several officers take advantage of this to go rambling in the woods. Often it is the natives themselves who guide them and without there being any unfortunate incidents. Except for three or four marauders from the *Zélée* who ventured as far as the village of Falé-Ata on pretext of going to get provisions; there they got into a quarrel with the natives. It is impossible to ascertain from where the first wrongs stemmed so I shall simply ask Mr. Jacquinot to take measures to restrict his men's movements to the surrounds of the bay. Indeed, it is difficult to make the sailors understand that the savages are men whose particularities and customs must be respected; they think they can do anything they like as if they were in conquered lands and this behaviour can often have very tiresome consequences.

At about half past two, I go ashore and, accompanied by Frazier, ramble all through the woods shooting pigeons, which inhabit these forests in large numbers. Despite the strength of the sun, this island's magnificent trees give delightful shade. Everywhere natives, for a few trifles, hasten to cut down coconuts whose milk is delicious in this torrid zone.

About a quarter of a league away from Apia, lies a little hamlet independent of Pea. It is inhabited by natives who profess the country's religion. Their chapel, surrounded by a little fence, stands on a small hillock and inside it appears as simple as it does neat. It is utterly entrusted to public honesty as no guards or watchmen are to be seen there. A bit

further on is a large enclosure planted with fruit trees and surrounded by a small dry stone wall. A path crosses it which, I am told, leads to the big village of *Falé-Ata*.

All these places are particularly picturesque and walking around them is delightful if a little tiring.

On my return to the beach, I go to visit the place where our sailors get their water, at the mouth of the river whose waterfall I admired yesterday. There I find groups of natives trying to obtain some trifles, above all tobacco of which they are very fond. I also find my servant there who has picked watercress which grows abundantly on the water's edge. I again see a few cattle which all belong to Mr Mills, the English missionary.

My friend Pea does me the honour of asking to stay to dinner and if I could bear it, he would even happily install himself at my table permanently; but I have noticed that generosity is not this illustrious chief's prevailing quality, he is always asking for something but when I go to see him in his hut he is careful not to offer me a single coconut when he would only need to beckon and a child would hurry to cut one down.

In the evening I return to the waterfall with Captain Jacquinot with the intention of bathing but I find the water too cold and spend the evening walking. Mr. Jacquinot tells me he thought he noticed that yesterday in his sermon, Mr Mills did not at all prepossess the natives in our favour. No doubt, the pathetic preconceptions, based on religious denomination and nationality, characteristic of the English missionaries might have led Mr Mills to stoop so low, but without clear evidence, I prefer to doubt this. Besides, it is of little importance to me, I hope to have no need of this individual's good-will; I only want him to give Mr. Desgraz, whom I have sent to see him for this purpose, some information on the Samoan language.

At 9 o'clock, Pea consents to be my guide and take me to the village of *Falé-Ata* which I am told is only about three or four miles away. I set off accompanied by Frazier, an inhabitant of the Sandwich Islands and a native from Apia. The latter is very useful to me as, without him, I would have difficulty seeing the numerous pigeons which inhabit these forests and, above all, it would me difficult for me to go and get them once I had shot them.

First we go through the hamlet of which I have already spoken, then we enter the majestic forests through which a path well-protected from the sun's rays runs. The walk is extremely pleasant.

We leave the forest for a green esplanade where the village of *Falé-Ata* lies. The chief, Mate-Hia, who rules it, had gone to Apia with most of his men for the purpose of trading with the French. Indeed, on our way here, we had met many groups of people carrying hogs, chickens and baskets of taro, coconuts and bananas to the market on the beach. In general these men look gentle and peaceful but they appear rather uncommunicative, they even seem to remain rather suspicious and perhaps the missionaries have

something to do with this mistrustful attitude, particularly if they have informed these people that we belong to the nation which had an altercation with them in the past at *Tou-tou-ila*.

We find hardly anyone at Falé-Ata. However *Mate-Hia's* wife proposes I should rest and lunch in her house and at my request has some coconuts brought to me. I hasten to acknowledge these courtesies by giving a few objects to our hostess and I notice that she thanks me in the Tongan manner, that is by lifting the object above her head and making a slight bow. I am pleased to find in these islands this custom which, to my mind, already places the Tongans so far above the other Polynesian nations, as it at least shows feelings of gratitude expressed in an external action.

Falé-Ata village is much bigger than that of Apia, its houses are larger, better kept and much more comfortable. The centre of the village is occupied by a large green around which stand the huts at regular intervals forming a delightful picture. I am agreeably surprised to find in most of the huts fine canoes, sometimes up to 15 metres long and carefully protected. Frazier tells me however that the village is over a mile away from the sea and the natives have to take them there by land.

The many tobacco plants growing around the houses bear witness to the taste the natives have developed for this narcotic which they pester our sailors for.

We return by another path, but again through magnificent forests which, were they cleared, would provide excellent land. I think I can say with certainty that sugar and coffee plantations would flourish there. All animals would breed rapidly there and nature would be able to supply them with food without man's sweat being needed to water the earth. When travelling through this country so rich in vegetation, one automatically casts one's mind back to our old Europe where millions of men often squabble over a few metres of land in order to eke out a difficult existence there while here they could bring life to these lonely spots where they would find ample, easily-obtainable food. But I do not doubt that soon the means of transport, which as they are perfected are reducing distances so considerably, will bring our surplus population flocking to these happy islands of Oceania; the white race will swiftly replace the primitive one and, in a few centuries perhaps, these islands will be too small and insufficiently fertile to offer real resources to new-comers.

Two natives from Apia who are with me express the desire to fire a musket. I grant their request; the target was a dove and the accuracy of their marksmanship testifies that these men would in very little time become skilled in the use of firearms. The dove is shot down and with childlike squeals of joy my savages proclaim their triumph. Chief Pea is not interested in making such an attempt. But he looks pleased to see his countrymen's skill. He seems much more eager to be a permanent guest at my table. In this latter instance, the fellow deliberately lets all the canoes leave so that he can be escorted home

in pomp in one of our boats. I have Frazier explain to him that I am quite happy to give him dinner but that at the same time I beg him to make arrangements so that afterwards I do not need to have him taken ashore in the ship's boats. Besides, despite his promises and my gifts, he has still not had the generosity to bring me a coconut. This man is the epitome of the most sordid covetousness and greed. I even discover that to satisfy this dreadful inclination he has stooped so low as to offer his wives to some officers in exchange for muskets or clothes. And all this considerably dampens my feelings towards him. He had introduced his son to me, a tall, quite handsome boy and I had invited him with his father the first time but then, for purely selfish reasons, he sent him off to Captain Jacquinet whenever he ate with me and had thus found a way of having two strings to his bow.

I am pleased to learn that the markets are very busy and well-stocked so we obtain cheaply a large number of hogs which constitute a valuable supply for our crews and my only regret is that our corvettes are too small to be able to take a greater quantity on board. I am afraid my men will not encounter such a godsend again from now on and, during our passage through Melanesia we shall probably be reduced to campaign rations and suffer from the lack of fresh provisions. In the meantime, my sailors eat fresh meat every day and there is not the least trace of scurvy.

It has not stopped raining all day and I stay aboard my ship, all the more so as I am still tired after the previous days' excursions. I had invited Mr Mills to come and lunch on board the *Astrolabe* with his wife; but he came alone. I gave him the few seeds I still had left which seemed to give him great pleasure. He, in turn, offered me some glass beads dating from De Langle's massacre, which had been given to him by a man still alive, who witnessed the catastrophe.

Mr Mills tells me that *Maouna*, the chief of *Nouka-Hiva*, had accompanied him from *Tahou-ata* to *Raro-tonga*. This young man had spent some time in the London missionary house and appeared to have possibilities. He also confirmed what Frazier had told me about the dissidents' cult, but he believes that it was from Tahiti that the founder drew his first ideas and that he later availed himself of the effects of ventriloquy, in which he excelled, to better persuade the natives. Whatever the case may be, he assured me that this cult had spread considerably and that he and his brothers were facing much more resistance from these sectarians than from those who had retained their primitive beliefs, beliefs which moreover had nothing positive about them.

A tall native who introduces himself as the chief of Manono arrives in a fine canoe with ten other strapping fellows no less strong than he. I buy a fine carved paddle from him for the mission. After having had an intermediary sell his goods, he sets off back to his island. This man had some of those fine mats which the inhabitants make from a kind of Phormium and which they weave like our velvety rugs. In Apia, the natives were asking

unduly high prices for them and the chief of Manono proves no less demanding, and this prevents me buying some. Besides I think very few people have been able to obtain any. Pea has some very fine ones but when he is asked for them he demands nothing less than muskets or uniforms in return. Moreover, these mats are just as remarkable for the whiteness and the fineness of their thread as for their weave.

The incessant rain is still keeping me on board when, around midday, I see Mr Lafond, a first-class cadet, arrive wearing only his trousers; he looks totally stunned as if he had experienced a violent shock. He tells me that he has just been victim of an ambush and this is how it happened.

As Mr Lafond wanted to go to *Falé-ata* village, he had been to look for a guide in the centre of the hamlet inhabited by the dissidents and next to the village of Apia, being separated from it only by a fence: a native who had already acted as his guide several times volunteered to accompany him and they soon set off. Before long the native led his companion into a very marshy area, which began to arouse Mr Lafond's suspicions; but this savage made such protestations of friendship, while telling him that this difficult patch was very short and that the path would soon be much easier, that Mr Lafond made no further objection to entering these marshes. He was not long falling into a bog out of which he began to have great difficulty pulling himself. This was the moment the savage chose to raise an enormous club, which he had pretended to use for walking, over his victim's head and to indicate to the cadet that he must divest himself of everything he possessed and deliver it up to him. Our countryman's position was too difficult for him to be able to resist or flee. He was therefore obliged to take off, in turn, his jacket, tie and his two shirts; for as well as the one he was wearing, he was carrying another one to barter. Finally he even had to surrender the little money he had in his pocket. The savage however let him keep his trousers; he even politely helped him out of the quagmire into which he had pushed him, shook his hand by way of reconciliation and showed him the way to go before leaving him. Mr Lafond returned on board furious; he wanted to return armed to *Sava-lelo* hamlet and put it to fire and sword

Had the incident happened further from the bay, I would merely have laughed at Mr Lafond's misadventure, while blaming him for his rashness; but this was hardly five hundred paces from the ships and I felt that severe punishment was necessary in order to prevent the repetition of similar acts in the future. But I asked the cadet to remain calm, and even to stay on board until evening, so as to give several people, who were alone in the vicinity of Apia or in the woods, the time to return. At this moment, the slightest act of vengeance on our part could have given rise to reprisals which would have been fatal to us.

When everyone had safely returned in the evening, although several people had gone as far as two or three leagues inland, I send Frazier to the chief of *Sava-lelo* with the following *notification*:

1. The chief of *Sava-lelo* must surrender the native of his village guilty of this offence to me tomorrow morning and I shall punish him as I see fit.
2. Failing this, he must give me twenty-five hogs in compensation.

Finally, if neither of these two conditions are fulfilled, he must expect to see his village burnt down tomorrow morning and anyone who resists immediately shot by my soldiers.

Then, at six o'clock, I go with Mr Jacquinot to bathe as usual. On landing I find Pea on the beach, extremely agitated; he begs me to settle this affair with Mr Mills.

I decline this offer and coldly reply to him that my mind is made up and that consequently all there remains for him to do is to convince his brothers of *Sava-lelo* to give me cause for satisfaction.

On my way back from bathing, I call in at Mr Mills' house to say hello. He appears very frightened of the consequences the Frenchmen's vengeance could lead to, but he has to agree that this firm action on my behalf had become necessary. At this point Pea comes in. He has come from *Sava-lelo* and tells us that the culprit is a ne'er-do-well who had already been driven out of Apia for his misdeeds and that he has fled to the mountains after his crime so cannot be surrendered up to us but that the effects in his possession will be returned to us tomorrow morning. Consequently, Pea asks for the fine of twenty-five hogs to be reduced to only ten, on account of the inhabitants of *Sava-lelo's* poverty, and I consent to this fairly readily.

Moreover, good old Pea appeared most indignant with the culprit and seemed even prepared to kill him himself were he to set hands on him, asking the missionary whether he were not right. Mr Mills, in his position, could not reasonably agree with such a severe sentence, especially after so summary a trial, therefore he merely replied that the thief, although he deserved punishment, should not however be put to death for this first offence.

In his eagerness Pea even offers to immediately march with his followers against the inhabitants of *Sava-lelo*; but I suggest he wait until the following day and promise to take advantage of his offer if they do not keep their word, desirous that at least they should not run the risk of paying the price for the crime committed by one good-for-nothing.

At half past six in the morning, the sailors, armed, with a drummer at their head, leave for the beach under the command of Mr Demas and Mr Thanaron, joined by different officers. I order these men to head for *Sava-lelo* and if, after waiting half an hour, the stolen belongings have not been surrendered, to set fire to the huts and then to retreat to Apia without further hostilities, unless attacked by the natives. While Mr Demas was burning the village, Mr Thanaron was to stay on the beach with his men drawn up in battle

array in order to assist Mr Demas should unexpected circumstances arise. Finally, on board we were ready to make use of our artillery if necessary; but thanks be to God, we were not reduced to such unhappy extremities and a few hours later I was pleased to hear an account of the events as they had happened and which I take here from Mr Demas' journal.

"On landing, I ordered arms to be loaded, the savages had assembled but were not armed, and they appeared to be in a very peaceable frame of mind. The girls were smiling at our sailors, who were doing their best to look as nasty as possible. I marched through these people at the head of my little army. With my bayonet on the end of my musket, I marched at the double on the king's hut. The fellow was at the door with his wife. I was already preparing to deliver a furious speech to him. I lined my men up in front of his Majesty's house, then I stepped out of the ranks to seize hold of him; but Pea did not give me the time to do so. He came up to me with open arms and pressed me several times to his bosom. I was very astonished at the good man's effusiveness and he proceeded to show me the ten hogs and all that had been stolen from M. Lafond. Following the orders I had received from the captain, I had my men parade and wanted to begin with a march past. When Pea saw the column ready to move, he nipped in between the two men at the head and, placing his long stick in a military fashion on his shoulder, he began to gallantly march with us to the great admiration of his people. After half an hour's mock parading, I had a old handkerchief put in a tree and each man fired at it in turn. This was more than enough to terrify our worthy savages who brought us the customary refreshments, that is to say a hundred coconuts. I then re-embarked the triumphant army corps, taking back on board the ten hogs which were immediately shared out between the two crews."

So ended this incident which could have had fatal consequences for us and would not have occurred without bloodshed if it had happened fifteen years earlier. I then sought to make the natives understand our true intentions and afterwards, this event, far from being detrimental to us, only increased the population of Apia's friendship and consideration for us.

While the officers of the two corvettes are all enjoying a meal together beside the waterfall, Mr Jacquinot and I go to visit two villages lying at the end of the long walk, a mile or two from Apia village. The houses there are built in the same style but they are larger and set around a square, which makes a very charming impression. I notice that there are fine clearings in the neighbourhood which could be cultivated most successfully. Everywhere the inhabitants are polite, but with no eagerness, they are not even very curious; they watch us pass, but without interrupting their everyday occupations. The breadfruit trees, coconut palms and banana trees provide abundant food for these inhabitants.

1<sup>st</sup> October. Frazier and his companions showed me a whale-boat they had been wanting to exchange for my canoe for a long time. As the latter was not of good quality, I was not sorry to accept this deal, I was just afraid that they might regret it later as my boat was not worth theirs. However when my carpenters had examined the whale-boat and as the Englishmen persisted in wanting it, I finally gave my consent, convinced that these men's boat would be of more use to me than my canoe, which now has great difficulty making progress when there is a bit of a swell. The exchange was therefore concluded and the Englishmen seemed delighted with the deal they had made. The reason they gave was that their whale-boat, because of the way it was built, was too difficult to repair when damaged. Perhaps this was not the real reason and they were very glad to have this boat disappear from these islands.

I feel ill all day and only leave the ship in the evening to go to bathe as usual. I have much difficulty avoiding Pea who is on the look-out for me when I land with some requests; he is the most shameless beggar alive and he is even worse than *Pewe-we*, the base chief of Matavai.

Mr Dumoutier had managed to make some casts of chiefs' heads, he had even conceived the hope of obtaining some skulls through one of the European deserters who had promised to help him in his search. But it appears the natives got wind of his project and from then on kept such a close eye on him that Mr Dumoutier found them constantly on his heels whenever he attempted to get hold of these precious objects and he had to give up.

As I am to leave the next day, I go to bid farewell to Mr Mills and to thank him for the documents with which he provided Mr Desgraz at my request. For he had given my secretary several books printed in the local language and the manuscript version of a vocabulary book which was of great interest to me seeing that, despite all my efforts, I had been unable to obtain anything satisfactory on the Samoan language during such a short stay. Mr Mills had also entrusted to Mr Desgraz a letter he was sending to the missionary at Lagueмба, in the Viti archipelago.

I left Apia with the satisfying sense of having totally achieved the aim which I had fixed for myself. The map of the harbour had been completed, we had been able to observe the inhabitants of these still so little-known islands and a fine collection had been made in all branches of natural history. The physical and magnetic observations taken there were considerable and, lastly, I had acquired precise notions of these peoples' language, which was utterly unknown and different from those of the rest of Polynesia. I was particularly pleased that such a short stay had left us with such important results.

Before leaving this interesting people, probably forever, I will sum up in a few words what I observed about these islanders. The men are generally tall and good-looking, they appear strong and bold. In its early state of savagery, this must have been a dangerous

race; however, on these open, confident faces, one sometimes notices expressions of kindness and they remind one of that lofty, serious character particular to the Tongan race.

Neither of the two sexes had tattooed faces; but both men's and women's thighs were covered in tattoos. Their bodies are frequently tattooed with wounds and scars which ill match the reputation of peace-loving people they have been given. Contrary to what is generally to be observed in uncivilised nations, we noticed several cases of deformity among them: hunchbacked, lame and, above all, one-eyed people.

The girls are generally attractive and look remarkably strong. Some of them appeared to us quite pretty but in general they can be criticised for looking too confident and almost masculine. Often there is little difference to be seen between them and the men; the young people of both sexes have almost the same manners, the same gestures, the same expression.

The dark complexion and organic characteristics of several individuals still bear witness to the frequent contacts which existed formerly between the Samoa and the *Viti* islands. It is to the latter archipelago that the Samoan natives go to obtain the shells (*Leda eggs*) with which they decorate their canoes. They also frequent the inhabitants of Tonga for whom they have great esteem, but whose superiority they have never recognised.

Their houses are equally remarkable for their flimsiness as for their elegance of construction and their extremely neat interiors. The way they build their canoes and, particularly, the latters' sea-worthiness are also to be noted.

Hogs are plentiful and cheap here, fowls are rare, but not expensive; shells (*harps*) are very common. The beautiful white mats, remarkable for their fineness, did not find buyers; they were asking an exorbitant price for them.

A fact to be noted regarding natural history is that in Samoa there is a very large species of snake which can be as long as 2 or 3 metres. It is a kind of boa which, besides, is not at all dangerous. The woods are swarming with a fine species of wood-pigeon. They are easy to hunt, for they are quite tame, and their flesh is excellent to eat.

## CHAPTER XXX

### Passage from Apia to Vavao and stay at Vavao.

2<sup>nd</sup> October 1838. Although it looks like rain, true to habit, I make all my preparations for departure in order to get under way today, as I have announced. At 7 o'clock, taking advantage of a few light squalls, the corvettes spread their sails and sail away from the port of Apia along the reefs at a distance of 3 or 4 miles.

The coast of Opoulou which I follow westward becomes low-lying but still looks just as charming and, at intervals, amidst unvarying greenery, pretty dwellings and a few large huts, whose whiteness indicates a European building, become visible; the latter are the churches of the new religion.

The weather, at first unfavourable for charting, gradually clears and enables us to reach the western tip of *Opoulou*.

The next island, *Manono*, is a delightful-looking orchard; this island is covered in trees but it is so small that I find it hard to believe that it can feed 700 inhabitants. Just as difficult to believe is that Apolina, the neighbouring island, has a population of 3,000. This population, if it exists, is thought to be concentrated in a pretty village that can be seen at the end of a little bay on the belt of land in the south of the island.

As for *Sevai*, it is a large land of immense height but whose gentle and admirably wooded slopes appear to hold the promise of food for a large population.

Towards midday, I enter the strait separating *Sevai* from *Apolina*. This channel, though narrow, seems safe and deep, the sounding-line indicates not less than 45 fathoms.

At our arrival, a large number of Apolina's inhabitants had set off and tried to approach us, but only the three men in one small canoe came aboard the *Astrolabe* and offered us a few fine *Bromelia* thread mats. Several connoisseurs offered to buy them but they were put off by the natives' demands. After waiting for a few moments our native tradesmen left us and took their goods aboard the *Zélée* where they met with no more success.

The lack of enthusiasm these islanders show for coming alongside our corvettes is in striking contrast to the hundreds of canoes which surrounded Lapeyrouse's frigates and, more recently still, Kotzebue's ships. The missionaries' lessons must have helped to make them much more reserved towards foreign ships.

The approach of nightfall prevents us seeing more than a very small part of the south-east coast of *Sevai*. It is separated from the sea by cliffs carved like a defensive wall, though not very high; the long south-west swells break over them violently and at times enormous jets of water rise from the sea and fall back onto the land, flowing down in cascades through the cracks in the rocks.

At half past six, taking a definitive farewell of the Samoan Archipelago, I give a course of S.½E. in order to make the island of Vavao which I wish to visit.

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