



## THE BIRTH OF THE COCOANUT.

A SAMOAN LEGEND.

(BY J. H. GIBBONS, U.S.N.)



On the shores of the mountain-shielded bay of Pago Pago, there lived, long before the Papalagi (which is the Samoan for people-that-burst-through-the-clouds) had set foot on the South Sea Islands, the noble chief Asi. His family consisted of several sons—tall, lithe, and bronze-skinned: lazy in time of peace, but brave in time of war—and one daughter, Fanua,

the *taipu* of the village.

Now, to be a *taipu* carried with it all the honours of barbaric royalty. Fanua moved about with a train of attendant maidens, whose duty it was to anticipate her every wish. No Cleopatra could have been more despotic. Yet the honour had been won by real merit; for among all the maidens scattered through the numerous villages of the tribe living on the narrow shores of Pago Pago, not one could be found that handled a canoe with such fearless skill as Fanua. Indeed, it was a favourite story among the old warriors that on the occasion of a certain memorable storm she had been carried in her canoe far out to sea, where for three days she had battled against wind and wave, and, when the gale abated, had brought her canoe safely into the bay, much to surprise and joy of her despairing family. The adventure is still preserved in the songs of the *siua*. And in this same *siua* or native dance, there was no one that could equal Fanua in ease of movement and grace of gesture. When the tribe made a pilgrimage to Apia, where the great Malietoa often called them to a *fono* or general council, Fanua always led the march from the beach to the royal hut, and no leader of the Amazons could have had a more martial tread or wielded a spear with more dexterity. In short, the daughters of Samoa were judged no less by the rough standard of courage and endurance than by the more gentle gifts of grace and beauty. In all of these Fanua was without a rival.

In time of peace and plenty the *taipu's* lot was that of a perpetual queen of the *May*; and had it not been for a feud that broke out between the islands of Anuu and Tutuila, Fanua's reign might have gone on like that of the fairy Titania. This feud soon ripened into a war. Spears were sharpened and clubs were brandished in all the villages of Pago Pago. The great war-canoes were lashed together; bands of shouting men sailed away, singing their battle songs and swearing vengeance. The old chief Asi watched his departing comrades with tears in his eyes; he could not go with them for he was feeble and ailing. Fanua remained with her father, and from day to day brought him the news of the neighbouring camps. Villages were burned; fields were plundered; women were carried off; hundreds of men were killed. For nearly a year the savage warfare reigned; then both parties began to think of peace. The men from Anuu returned to their island, and the men of Tutuila proclaimed the war ended. Joy reigned in Pago Pago.

The cloud was lifted only for a time, however. Upon the heels of war came gaunt-eyed famine. The bread-fruit trees had been stripped; the plantains shrivelled away into dry husks; not even a patch of yams or taro was left. Three of his sons had been killed in the wars; the two that had been spared claimed that their recent hardships entitled them to a long rest. So it fell to Fanua's lot to keep the family in food, for her brothers did nothing but sit around and talk about their battles. Every day she would tramp through the bush, looking for roots and berries, or paddle off in her canoe to spear fish. Then, when night came, she would steal behind the *tapa* that screened off her sleeping-place, always tired out and sometimes very hungry. Poor Fanua! the world was so full of toil and trouble now, and the old glad days seemed so far, far away.

One afternoon Fanua had returned early from her labours. Finding her father asleep she launched her canoe and set out for Fagatoga, a point of land that separated Pago Pago from the sea. This was a favourite haunt of Fanua's when she felt weary and depressed. There was a narrow strip of white sandy beach, walled in by high rocks, and the tiniest thread of a stream that came trickling down the mountain side. The sea had washed out a long, narrow ledge at the root of the cliff, and here Fanua, after hauling up her canoe, sat down to dangle her feet in the cool waters of the brook. Round the point came the sound of the breakers; the air was filled with the smell of seaweed; brilliant winged insects floated in the sunlight, and the waters of the bay danced and sparkled as the trade-wind swept lightly over them.

Fanua, her head thrown back and her eyes closed, was just falling into a delightful reverie, when she was startled by hearing a low deep voice call her name. She sprang to her feet. Who could have followed her?

The voice was unfamiliar; she must be dreaming. Thus would she have dismissed her fears with a laugh; but the smile that trembled on her lips turned into an exclamation of fright, when, almost within reach of her hand, and slowly wriggling toward her, she saw a hideous sea-monster. Its head seemed to tower above the boulders on the shore; its tawny mane, tangled with weeds and kelp, fell over a pair of large green eyes that rolled and glittered; its flaming red nostrils distended with each breath, and its open mouth showed immense fangs that could easily have snapped a war-canoe in twain. Slowly waving its head the dreadful thing drew nearer and nearer.

There was a narrow path leading along the course of the brook, and up this Fanua clambered, never looking

back. Fanua did what she could to comfort him, but only in a half-hearted way, for her recent adventure was preying on her mind. Perhaps, after all—thus her thoughts ran on—she might be mistaken about the voice, but the sea-monster was a reality, and there was her canoe to be rescued. If she were to tell her brothers of her experience, they would probably laugh at her. So Fanua kept her own counsel; but at the same time she was more and more determined to rescue her canoe before her brothers should find out her loss.

Surprise next day found her creeping along the edge of the bank that overhung the spot where she had been so rudely disturbed. To her joy she found that her canoe was still safe. She was going over in her mind the best and safest way to reach it, when there was a great commotion in the water below her. A pair of green eyes surmounted by a tawny mane rose slowly out of the sea. Again a voice called 'Fanua!' There was no mistaking it this time; the voice came from the sea-monster. She was not at all frightened now, for she was in a position of safety; but she was sorely puzzled. At last she plucked up courage enough to cry out, 'Who is it calling?'

'Koiokol calls,' replied the voice. 'Koiokol, the guardian of the sea-caves. Look, he brings you food.' And surely enough the sea-monster wriggled up on the beach with a large fish between his paws.

Fanua had been taught by her father that the spirit of Afi, the great progenitor of all Samoans, often showed itself in the islands; that the fury of the hurricane was his quickening breath; that the roar of the breakers his sullen muttering. She knew, too, that some of the older women could turn the cooing of the *taipu* or wood-pigeon into a love-song and that young girls often held conch-shells to their ears in order to hear the whispers of absent sweethearts. In these simple stories fishes were always mute, and sea-monsters unknown. The voice that was calling to her now was not harsh and terrifying but deep and clear like that of the *tutafale* or talking-man at the *fono* when he leaned upon his staff and pleaded for his people. Fanua felt that if spirit this was, it was surely a good spirit, despite its hideous form. 'I thank you for the fish,' she said demurely, and then



THE MOUNTAIN SHIELDED BAY.

behind her until she had reached the bank above. Here she paused for breath. A low, deep, appealing voice was calling, 'Stay Fanua; stay!' More frightened than ever at this mysterious summons—for there was no human being in sight—she sped away through the

thicket, believing herself to be pursued by a demon, and never stopped running until she had reached the outskirts of her own village.

added quickly, 'but I should like very much to get my canoe. Fanua need not fear Koiokol,' replied the voice. 'Your people are hungry; Koiokol brings them food. When the waters have crept to their highest mark on



IN THE NATIVE DANCE THERE WAS NO ONE COULD EQUAL FANUA.

Asi lay on his mat groaning and complaining, when Fanua, who had married outside long enough to regain her wits, came into the hut. Her two brothers were sitting around a *kava* bowl, in company with some friends, still talking of their battles, and from time to time bidding the old man drink. Asi shook his head, and with a gesture of despair cried, 'Give me food, not

the beach, meet him here each day, and he will bring you such humble gifts as his poor haunts afford. Come, take your canoe. What, you still fear Koiokol? Good-bye, then, until to-morrow. Remember to-morrow when the waters have risen.'

The monster slid back into the sea and sank out of sight. The voice was gone, and Fanua, although she could not tell why, had complete confidence in its promise. She ran down to the beach, hastily launched her canoe, and after picking up the fish, paddled toward