

# A Trip to the South Seas.

BY BERTHA V. GORING.

(ILLUSTRATED BY MARY B. DOBIE.)



HF houses are often built on a bank faced with stones in this way. The inside was very beautifully finished with a great deal of elaborate work in 'sinnet' (plaited cocoa-nut fibre). We were alarmed at seeing sparks flying about its thatched roof one evening till we found they were fire-flies. We went after luncheon to see their majesties Thakombau, or 'The Vunivalu' (the Root of War), and his wife, Andi Litia (Lydia). Here they are with a favourite grandchild, Andi Thakombau, such a pretty, bright-eyed little thing. Her mother was a Tongan. Her Majesty Andi Litia was enormously fat. We were regaled with very delicious cocoa-nuts, a small kind which are thought a special delicacy for drinking. Thakombau expressed great interest in us, and was surprised at the independent way in which we two sisters travelled about together. Next morning we left for Levuka before 8 in the boat belonging to Mr Laughan, the Wesleyan missionary. He and his wife were in Levuka, or we should have gone to them. We had breakfast on board at 9—tea, a loaf of bread, and a tin of preserved meat.



THAKOMBAU.  
(Ex-King of Viti.)

As salt had been forgotten we used sea-water, of which there was certainly no lack. It was very hot in the middle of the day, and we baled sea-water over our heads to cool them. Winds failed and were contrary, so that we didn't reach Waitovu (Mr Chalmers' house) till 5 o'clock, by which time we were fatigued and had eaten half a tin of jam alone, the only edible left in the boat after breakfast was over. The last two hours were pleasant, as the sky was overcast, and we were not very tired, although we had over nine hours in an open boat. I forgot to say that we also called on Thakombau's daughter, Andi Kula, in Mba. She was Mbeni's mother—a fine-looking and very pleasant woman.

We spent a week with Mr Chalmers, who provided all sorts of amusements for our benefit. On October 15th we returned to Nasova, where Sir Arthur Gordon was re-established. Captain Knollys, his A. D. C., and Mr Arthur Gordon, one of his secretaries, came for us in the Nasova gig, a canoe following for our luggage, instead of having, as at Home, a brougham for oneself and a cab for one's portmanteau. Not having yet been in a Fijian sailing canoe, we were ambitious to do so, so sent our luggage by the brougham, getting into the cab ourselves. We had an exciting sail, as the canoe was small, and the breeze a brisk one, and two of the crew had to sit on the thama or outrigger to keep us from upsetting. They talk of a one, two, or three-man breeze, according to the number it is necessary to put on the 'thama.' Lady Gordon had not returned with the Governor, so we were the only women folk at Nasova, though the house was full, as Sir Arthur had brought a number of young men out with him to take different appointments. We had a very pleasant and merry time of it, with plenty of tennis and boating. One day we all went out to the reef in a canoe, and pattered about for ever so long grubbing for strange beasts and shells.



ANDI LITIA.

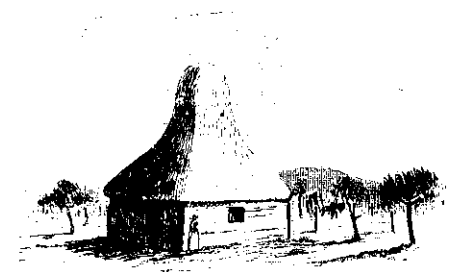


ANDI THAKOMBAU.  
(Favourite grandchild.)

The day after our arrival His Excellency made an address to the Levuka people and a number of planters in the dining-hall. M. and I sat in one of the galleries, hidden by the tapps, but able to see and hear everything. For the big dinner party we managed to smarten our white frocks with scarves, etc. of the lace-like tapps that had been tinted with smoke from the refuse of sugar cane. The natives make it very pretty in this way, shaded from pale gold to deep brown, but it smells decidedly smoky.

On October 20th all assembled at an early breakfast and saw us off from the Nasova wharf for the armed Constabulary camp in Viti Levu. Mr Le Hunte, Mr Marriott, M. and I formed the party. We had a smart little decked cutter of 10 tons, called 'Na Vului' (anglicized 'The Flora').

She belonged to the Roko of Mba, in Viti Levu, and had a crew of eight Fijians, so with Mr Le Hunte's two native servants, Zekonia and Samela, we numbered fourteen on board. At first we thought the latter was a nickname, it sounded so like 'Sam Weller,' but found it was the Fijian way of sounding Samuel. Like the Italians, all their names end with a vowel. We coasted along the other side of the island of Ovalau, which is very beautiful. Some of the scenes were like a fine well-timbered park. We had luncheon on board, and about 4.30 arrived off a small island inhabited by Mr Leefe and his family, who took us in and hospitably treated us. Before dinner we walked to the top of a hill, where we had a fine view of the surrounding islands, coral sands, belts of cocoa-palms, and an exquisite sunset. The Leefe's had a piano in their house, and we had a musical evening. Next morning we were off again at eight o'clock, having a slight breakfast of bread and fruit on the verandah before starting, and a second one on board later. Even in an open boat a Fijian will always give one a cup of hot tea. They carry a box with some earth at the bottom, in which they have their fire and boil the 'billy.' We coasted along Viti Levu with fine views of it and distant islands, finally reaching the Mba River, up which we slowly drifted. We passed another cutter with Mr Chalmers and his son, and a Mr Eastgate on board, so sent them an invitation to dinner, which they accepted, and we had a merry meal on deck by moonlight. We reached the town of Mba by nine o'clock, it being some miles up the river of the same name, and



COURT HOUSE.

went to the Roko's house, where we sat for some time drinking yangona. We were then taken to a fine Mbure, where we were left for the night with a native woman to take care of us. We were up early next day, as usual, and not having had our morning tea or coffee became very impatient for breakfast, and hailed Mr Marriott with joy when he came to take us to have it with the Roko's wife. It was a very good as well as a novel one, being, with the exception of coffee, biscuits, and marmalade, entirely Fijian. First we had fish-soup, which we drank out of cocoa-nut shells, and very good it was; then fish, yams, bread-fruit, crabs, and boiled uripe bananas, finishing with loti, a dish composed of mashed bananas, mani-apples (which grow on the screwpine), and grated cocoanut, mixed with milk squeezed from the latter, all boiled together and served hot. We thought it very delicious.

We spent the day in our big Mbure, which was the Court-house, with Mr Marriott, having several visitors, amongst others some Fijian damsels, who flirted with Samuela and Zekonia when they brought our luncheon. Mr Le Hunte and Mr Eastgate were busy all day over their ministerial duties. Mr Eastgate's district was on Vanua-levu (big land), and he and Mr Le Hunte met here expecting a number of men to be brought for trial from a group of islands called the Yasawas, about forty miles off. We dined at the Roko's house. A whole turtle lying on banana leaves in a huge basket was placed before Mr Marriott. His face of utter dismay thinking he was expected to carve it was perfectly delicious, but mercifully it was only meant to be looked at, and was a gift to the party. A man afterwards cut it up and the crew of the cutter had it. An alderman would have fainted at the way it was hacked.

The Fijians make a rough and picturesque-looking pottery. Some is a *porcelaine au feu*, and they cook food in it. They cook in the underground oven, according to my former description, also in these pots, some being of great size. They use them too for holding water, etc.

As the men from Yasawa didn't turn up, it was decided that we should go to look for them, and at the same time see the lovely group of islands of that name, there being some fine caves in one of them. Accordingly we embarked that evening and dropped down the river so as to be ready to start the first thing in the morning. It was a little embarrassing to meet the very men on our way down, but we could not then disappoint ourselves so much as to turn back, so held on our course, they being told to await our return. We had a meal on deck under an awning, as it rained slightly, after which M. and I were left in possession of the Vului for the night. Mr Eastgate had joined our party and took Mr Le Hunte and Mr Marriott to his own cutter, the Kathleen. We were up at 5.30 next morning, improvising a bath with buckets of water on deck behind a blanket screen. Soon after we were dressed Mr Marriott boarded us with the crew, and we had up the anchors and made a start, coming up with the Kathleen and another cutter

which had come down during the night, and then, alas! we all stuck fast on a mudbank. Mr Eastgate and Mr Le Hunte joined us, and then began an exciting scene. The natives jumped overboard, and after much shoving, pulling, and great exertions on all sides the fleet got fairly under way, and we sailed merrily before a brisk breeze. We had both breakfast and luncheon on board, and at 6 o'clock anchored off a lovely native town on one of the Yasawas. The last part of the way had been amongst many islands, passing exquisite bays, the luxuriant vegetation coming down to the golden coral sands which edged the shores and the waters perfectly clear. A native magistrate had landed on another part of this island, and we found one house ready for us, with fresh mats laid down, and another for our three friends.

This gives a good idea of the places we visited in this group of islands. Each day we anchored off a different one. The two cutters are the Vului and the Kathleen, and this native town rejoiced in the name of Matathawalevu. In one place we found a very primitive kind of lamp, simply pieces of cocoanut set alight upon a large stone. We carried lamps, candles, beds, food, etc., with us just as we did when travelling with Mr Carew. Our own luggage consisted, as usual when travelling, of the two bundles done up in waterproof sheets and the faithful black bag, which you will find is generally a conspicuous object in any sketches of our belongings.



A GOOD SPECIMEN OF A FIJIAN.

This is a morning scene, in which Mr Marriott has been amusing himself, as he often did, by jumping off the cutter and swimming about it.

I have never, I believe, mentioned the Fijian salutation, namely, 'Sa andra, which means 'You are awake,' 'Sa mothe' being used for good-bye, and meaning 'You are asleep.' 'Saka' does for either 'sir' or 'ma'am,' and 'Io Saka,' called from a distance sounded not unlike its English equivalent.

Yes, sir, especially as the Fijians, like the Maoris, have a way of almost dropping the last syllable. In consequence of this, English people will speak of Viti Lev, instead of Viti Levu, which is both unmusical and incorrect. But to return to the Yasawas. This is the finest island of that group, and is called Yasawa-i-lau. We called it 'The Arthur's Seat of the Pacific.' It is uninhabited, except by thousands of flying foxes, and full of marvellous caves, some containing very wonderful and beautiful stalactites and stalagmites. We sailed to it early one morning, and while some of the men prepared breakfast on the shore, went off to a cavern near. We approached it through a dark narrow passage, after which the scene that burst upon our view was the more amazing—a huge lofty cavern, indeed, we could see no top. The light streamed from above, showing us the rocky walls with beautiful arches in places, and bright green water at the bottom, of great depth and quite clear, so that when the men began swimming and diving in it their every movement was visible. The scene was most extraordinary, and the natives made a great yelling and hallooing. They climbed up the rocky walls and took headers (also 'footers,' for some went feet foremost in preference) from high ledges and pinnacles. Our three friends could not resist following them, and knowing they had dry clothes at hand, were soon diving and swimming also. They were able to penetrate into further caverns through passages under water, like that described in Byron's 'The Island,' and we could hear the voices dying away in the distance. We sat on a ledge of rock (*vide* the left-hand



ARTHUR'S SEAT OF THE PACIFIC.

corner of this sketch, which, however, gives little idea of the beauty and marvels of the place), and felt much tantalized, longing to explore further ourselves. We at last tore ourselves away and went to breakfast, and found that Mr Eastgate, with kind forethought, had arranged for some men to come in a canoe with the necessary ingredients and apparatus for brewing a dish of loti, such as we had at Mba, and here they are in their *ad frisco* kitchen. It was cooked in a 'pohohore.' They stirred it with a stalk from the cocoa-palm, helped it with a ladle formed out of a cocoa-nut-shell fixed on a bamboo, and served it in banana leaves on mats of