

## His Excellency's Island Cruise.

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cellency and party jumped out, and everybody was carried ashore pick-a-pack, landed on the beach, and scrambled up the rocks on to the high ground. The village is situated in the centre of the island, about two miles from the coast, and the cavalcade set off, accompanied by half a hundred natives. It had been raining, and the volcanic soil of the bush track, which led through groves of coconuts, oranges, bananas, and other tropical vegetation, was just deep enough in mud to quickly coat the spotlessly white lower canvas of the visitors with a liberal layer.

Unlashing the staging from a couple of fine, large, double canoes hauled up under a clump of huge gnarled banyan trees near the landing, the natives soon improvised a palanquin. His Excellency, Colonel Gudgeon, and Captain Shannon seated on this novel conveyance were hoisted on to the shoulders of a score of Maoris and carried over the muddy road right up to the village.

At the village the procession reformed and was conducted to the palace of Queen Vairuarangi ("The Spirit of Heaven"), and received by her Highness. The palace, like all the houses here, is roofed with corrugated iron (to possess such a Cook Islander will imperil his immortal soul), and the effect of this rigid uncompromising stuff staring at one out of the lovely tropic surroundings is disconcerting in the extreme. It takes away all the poetry of the thing, and is neither so cool nor so picturesque as the native thatch. It must be abominably hot inside, but it is permanent and dry, and even these Islanders are quickly becoming converts to the horrible cult of utilitarianism.

Her Majesty received her guests on a settee at one end of the reception room, and in less time than it takes to write it the place was a mass of humanity. A Governor had never previously been seen in the island, and before his Excellency was comfortably seated the palace was like a tramcar coming home from a football match. You couldn't put your foot down for fear of treading on a small brown person; doors and windows were blocked with faces, all eyes and curiosity, and the less fortunate folk pressing round on the outside, kept up a running fire of queries for information from the front rankers as to the proceedings inside, where the temperature was rapidly shooting up beyond summer heat. With a good deal of talk, and plenty of cuffs, the palace police at last effected some very necessary weeding out, and one got a little breathing space.

Everybody was presented to the Queen, and some Royal compliments were passed, per the Royal messenger or crier. There are no white traders in Atiu, and the people are less civilised than any place we visited, so the proceedings were more "islandised" than anything we experienced. You must let a Maori take his time. For the benefit of the ladies I would like to describe the Royal robes, but feel unequal to the task. Her Majesty wore the prevailing night-gown pattern of garment, carried out in pale green something or other, with a liberal sprinkling of lace "fixings" let in, the same colour scheme being carried out in her sailor hat. If this does not sound very regal, lady readers must please fill in the gaps, and put the shortcomings down to one's ignorance of the arcana of female garniture, rather than to the Queen's want of taste. To be quite frank, she seemed rather bored, and did not help out much with the conversation. The only thing that apparently excited the Royal interest was Captain Shannon's chain epaulettes and gold aiglets.

After everybody had taken stock of everybody else, a servitor in the back regions was summoned, and plates of oranges (which in the islands take the place of the inevitable afternoon tea when visitors are around) were handed about. Oranges are most difficult things to eat anywhere except over a balcony, and it was rather disconcerting to know what to do with the pips. Judging from the furtive movements of the hands of some of the young officers behind their chairs, I am afraid the Royal sweeper-out must have discovered some of them on the Royal floor next morning.

## History in Dances.

A move was next made to the verandah, from where his Excellency viewed some really fine dances, depicting events in the annals of Atiu history. The dancers, dressed in old fighting costumes, were the wildest seen on the trip, and they put an amount of spirit into the performance that came as a rude shock to our previous experience of the soft-mannered islanders. In get up they resembled nothing so much as Japanese warriors of a hundred years ago. On their heads they wore domed helmets of coconut rope, made like old-fashioned beehives, their tunics were of sewn fibre with fringed edges, and they carried formidable spears, about 10ft. long.

The first act introduced a fort, and the plot of the story was the refusal of the people on the island of Mitiaro to send over their kura (crown), as a sign of Atiu's sovereignty, a refusal which was met by an appeal to arms by the haughty Atiutes. The fort was constructed of small trees, lashed together—a staging on which Mitiaro's bravest breathed their last. The challenge of the attackers, the defiance of the attacked, and the bloody battle were portrayed with a realism which enabled one to follow the story without a book of the words. Warrior after warrior was dragged from his stronghold at the end of a cruel Atiu spear, till only one man and his faithful better half were left on the rampart—fear personified before the oncoming enemy. They fought gamely, and, in the words of Kipling, it was "a lovely scrap," before the doughty pair received the coup de grace from an intrepid Atiu warrior and came toppling down on their victor.

When the applause had died down we had the story of Akataina (an ancestor of the Queen), who, in the absence of the warriors led the women of the island against the attack of a neighbour-

ing tribe, whose chief wanted to marry her *nolens volens*, and routed the mere men with fearful slaughter. It was a sight to cheer the drooping spirits of the suffragette army, hustled from the portals of the Asquith mansion by the unsympathetic "bobby."

After the pageant, his Excellency received a deputation praying for the appointment of a resident agent. Atiu has a population of nearly 1000, and, properly organised, it should rapidly have a large export trade. Major Large has been recommended for the post, and he should, if appointed, soon bring Atiu up to the place to which its fertility entitles it in the group.

## AT AITUTAKI.

Next morning saw the Challenger at anchor off the island of Aitutaki, which is an atoll, and differs considerably from all other places visited. The reef here describes a triangle about 21 miles round, with deep water inside—called the lagoon—and Aitutaki, four miles long, stands at the apex. Round the reef are scattered about eight small islands, and six low sand cays, upon which the sea breaks heavily. Opposite the reef are two boat channels leading up to a stone pier, back from which the village straggles along the beach—a shelving semi-circle of golden coral strand fringed by the beautiful yellow hibiscus and palm trees. His Excellency was received by Mr. J. C. Cameron, the Resident Agent, and escorted through a double row of dancers and warriors, who crossed their spears overhead as the procession walked up to the Government Buildings.

## Legend of Rangī and Papa.

The dancing took place on the road, bordered by cool green banana trees,

with the people, who number about 1200, crowding round, and making an appreciative audience.

The performers were most enthusiastic, and the dances were very similar to those his Excellency saw at the other islands, with the exception of the last, which told the story of the creation of the world, according to Maori mythology—the story of Rangī (the heavens) and Papa (the earth), a legend which is common to all the Maori peoples.

Forming a circle, the warriors began a deep chant, with all their spears pointing to the centre, and with much realism they acted the lifting of the heavens from the earth—a herculean task, which was accomplished with the aid of the gods. Gradually and with a most convincing simulation of the weight of their burden, they at last succeeded in raising Rangī, their spear points getting higher at the end of each verse, till finally they pointed overhead, and a stentorian hymn of praise went up. The miracle was, in the legend, followed by the emanation of disagreeable odours, and to dispel these the aid was invoked of a band of women, who wafted them away with branches of leaves, to the accompaniment of a song of prayer, the grand finale being a general chorus of thanksgiving in unison.

After lunch the guests wandered along the palm-bordered beach road, flanked by the native houses, and fraternised with the inhabitants, who pressed on them green coconuts to drink, oranges, and other fruit. Wherever one went one met with smiles and the hospitality which seems second nature to these charming brown people. Subsequently there was a large presentation of gifts and fruit to his Excellency in front of the Government Buildings.

The band came ashore later, and 100 men were allowed leave, much to the delight of the people, who seemed to



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