

IN TAHITI



Native Tahitian Man and Woman.

(Prepared by the National Geographic Society, Washington, D. C.)

EVEN a short visit to Papeete, capital of the island of Tahiti, while the steamer pauses, is interesting; but to really understand something of life in this gem of the South Seas one must journey inland. The usual method of travel is by carriage but more enjoyable to many is a leisurely walk with a guide, pausing at native villages.

Any guide one chooses is likely to carry among his meager belongings some sort of musical instrument, for all Tahitians love music. They delight in singing, and from ancient days have drawn sounds from crude bamboo and wooden instruments. The favorite instruments now are the accordion, harmonica, and jew's-harp. One sees the first in all parts of the island. In Papeete groups of young persons of both sexes will be seen squatting on lawn or street, wreathed with flowers and accompanying an accordion with voice or limb.

The way out of Papeete lies between coconut groves and banana fields; beside coral-littered beach; in the shade of the flowering purau (wild hibiscus), and past the lowly sensitive plant.

In alarm at one's tread, hundreds of land crabs run in ungainly fashion to their holes, some raising militant claws, others bending all their energies toward flight. Under foot tiny ants forage; in the shallows of the sea the blue otu fishes for its breakfast; farther out brown fishermen polse pronged spears from reef or boat; to the right and to the left the leisurely inmates of thatched homes prepare their breakfasts or saunter about with an air of luxurious ease. Both young and old among them salute passers-by with the national "forana" and the curious stare with questioning eyes.

Sights Along the Way.

As one walks there is much to see. One moment it is the curling surf thundering on the reef, or an inspiring view of the toothed island of Moorea; again it is flower and tree—the pandanus, the medicinal miro, or the dye-producing eufa. On every hand the breadfruit shadua yard and roadside with the prolific mango; over wave-washed shore and high on breezy hill lean the out-borne palm; and afar, an mountain slope, branch the glossy fel (a type of plantain).

After sundown one may experience one of the greatest pleasures of the tropics—travel by moonlight. When the elements of the air are in a placid mood, an evening stroll is a delight. Waving palms and gently sighing wind, roar of surf on distant reef, and ceaseless wash of tide, combined with plectrums of contentment and hospitable greetings of young and old from roadside and dooryard, produce sensations foreign to the most radiant day.

Travelers must put up for the night in native homes. If the house of a reasonably well-to-do family is chosen it will probably be a one-story, unpainted wooden structure. The floor and walls will be bare, and the roof will be of galvanized iron sheeting, the common covering for wooden buildings in the South Pacific.

All Tahitian villages have only one street, and along the seashore that is part of the island's main highway. On each side of this is an irregular row of houses, the best one belonging to the district chief.

Chinese Are Storekeepers.

In towns in Tahiti it is difficult to know when one has crossed what might properly be called the line between village and plantation. But practically every village center is marked by a group of two or three smoky-looking Chinese stores. Wherever they stand, there is the village square, where the gossipers gather; and, in the harvesting season, the perfume of vanilla beans drying on can-

vas spread before the open doors, makes the place fragrant.

There the native exchanges his coconuts and scented pods for bread and brown sugar and American canned salmon or New Zealand canned butter and beef, and there the traveler is refreshed by coffee or tea, figure-eight doughnuts, and twisted roll.

In Polynesian hospitality exhibits itself in many novel ways. In Tahiti, for example, the host sometimes spreads a new tablecloth at every meal. When a housewife wants to grace the family board, she goes into the yard and gathers for that purpose a banana branch or a few hibiscus leaves.

For breakfast one may have orange tea and coconut milk. The first is brewed from the leaves of the wild orange tree, and makes a pleasant drink. Like coffee, it is prepared in a palm-thatched kitchen without walls and is served in a bowl.

Most Tahitians are very fond of coffee and always have it for breakfast. With it they eat unadorned bread.

The islanders were taught to eat bread by the Chinese, and so wherever it is possible for a baker's cart to go, coffee and rolls form the morning's refreshment. At other meals fel, yams, and taro replace the loaf.

When the long-absent prodigal or favorite son reaches his home again, the fattest pig is slain for him as a mark of esteem. To this island the porker is what potatoes are to Ireland and the osten cake to Scotland. Without it Tahiti would be disconsolate and would quickly become a discontented land which only spare-ribs and bacon could restore to bliss. Almost everywhere along its coasts can be heard the squeal of this indispensable animal, as, tethered by a leg to a banana plant or coconut tree, it fretfully seeks to break its fetters. In the wild, unpeopled hills it enjoyed a loving freedom, but even there was pursued by vengeful foes, armed with formidable spears, who cut it into small pieces and carried these to their homes in bamboo rods.

Hogs are usually served with yam, fel, coconut sauce, and milk. The natives eat with their fingers, but white guests are supplied with a knife and fork.

Prefer Fingers to Forks.

Tahitians still have an aversion for artificial aids in eating, for they believe that nothing surpasses their own digits as food conveyors. When Wallis visited the island a native who had been facetiously named Jonathan thought otherwise after he had put on European clothes, and he resolved to elevate himself in society by feeding with a fork. He made a heroic attempt, but every time he strove to establish a connection between the instrument and his mouth his hand encountered his lips, leaving the foot poised at his ear.

From the villages the natives go in to the mountains on hunts for fel. The fel is a species of plantain, and it is the island's most valuable article of food. It grows in the mountains and is available at all times of the year. It closely resembles the banana, but its leaves are darker. The fruit is from an inch and a half to two inches in diameter and is borne up, right on the stalk in bunches that frequently have from 100 to 150 plantains. When ripe, these are a light red or yellow. There are many varieties.

The fruit is boiled or baked for eating, and after it is cooked it is customary to beat it with a stick to loosen its skin and improve its quality. The fel grows far up mountain slopes, where it can be seen miles away. To get this staple, the woods man must worm his way up almost impassable steep, and then down narrow, slippery paths he must descend weighed with swaying burdens of from 100 to 150 pounds.

FLASH THE LEAD DOG

By GEORGE MARSH

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SYNOPSIS

Up the wild waters of the unknown Yellow-Leg, on a winter hunt, journey Brock McCain and Gaspard LeCroix, his French-Cree comrade, with Flash, Brock's puppy and their dog team Brock's father had warned him of the danger of his trip. After several battles with the stormy waters they arrive at a fork in the Yellow-Leg. Brock is severely injured in making a portage and Flash leads Gaspard to the unconscious youth. The trappers race desperately to reach their destination before winter sets in. Flash engages in a desperate fight with a wolf and kills him.

CHAPTER IV—Continued

Before dawn, Brock left the disappointed Flash at the camp, fastened to a tree by a leg, for his wounded neck would bear no collar, while he started to look for caribou. As the eastern sky grayed then turned to a blither blue, Brock, with his hood over his face, shivered in a clump of scrub spruce on the edge of a muskeg that reached away into the shadow. Here, at dawn, the caribou, if there were any in the vicinity, would come to dig the snow with their round-toed hoofs from the white reindeer moss which grew on the barrens of the north.

Starting slowly from the forest at his right, Brock's eyes swept the barrens. In the dim light he could see but a few hundred yards into the snowy plain, but caribou have poor eyes and if they were there, he knew he could boldly stalk them upwind, while later, after sunrise, it would be more difficult.

Brock waited until the sun lifted to turn the expanse of snow before him into a shimmering plain of fire. It was no use; there were no deer within sight. After breakfast he would make a wide circle and follow the freshest tracks he could find, for he had resolved not to leave Flash and go back to the main camp for grub.

When he had heated and skinned out the fur which he had brought to the night before, he talked to his dog in a useless attempt to soothe him in his disappointment at being tied up in camp when Brock took the trail.

He spent another day on the trail of the caribou, but, although he saw a band crossing the barrens at a great distance and followed numerous fresh trails, he never came up with them. He was approaching his camp and wondering if Flash had broken loose by gnawing his wire leash, when he was surprised by a chorus of yelps.

"Hello, there! Got worried, did you?" he called to his partner.

The dogs of the team, wired to separate trees, joined Flash in a vociferous welcome.

"Hello, Kona, Yellow-Eye, Silt-Kear, old socks! How're the pups?" Then not seeing a fire in the hole in the snow and receiving no answer from Gaspard, he knew that his partner had arrived early and was off on a hunt of his own. Brock built up the fire and started a good supper with the beans and caribou steak which he found on Gaspard's sled. As the early dusk filled the spruce with purple shadows, the sleeping dogs waked to the creek of snow-shoes on the dry November snow.

"Well, you old villain!" cried Brock, as Gaspard appeared, doubled under the tenderloin and hunched of a yearling caribou. "I hunted for two days and didn't get a shot, and you go out and get one in an hour!"

Gaspard thumped his heavy load into the snow—later to be strung up out of the reach of the dogs. "Well," he said with a grin, "what you do to poor Flash?"

Brock described the fight with the wolf.

"So dat pup kill de old wolf, eh? Eet tak' good dog to do dat. W'en you not come home one sleep back, I tink you hurt, mebbe."

"I knew you would show up looking for me," replied Brock, his eyes lighting with affection for his partner, "but Flash was too sore to travel, and I was afraid of wolves finding him here or I would have come back for grub."

Eating a hearty supper, the boys sat by the hot fire of birch while Gaspard smoked a pipe of company nigger-head. After a silence, the half-breed blew a cloud of smoke from his mouth and said: "I see ver strange thing one sleep back. I cross trail of two wolf."

"What was strange in that?" queried Brock.

"One wolf had onlee tree toe on left hind foot."

"Caught in trap, sometime, but where trap?" Brock was interested.

"Dat wolf was a dog," announced the other, quietly.

"A dog? What makes you think so, Gaspard?"

"Because my fader had a dog who look a track lak dat—wid her left hind foot."

"Your father"—Brock gazed intent into the somber features of his friend. "You say your father had a dog shy a toe? Gee! that's strange! But how could she be travelling with a wolf? The wolves would kill her, of course," he murmured.

"No, I have hear of such thing."

"You mean she might have mated with a wolf?"

"Ah-hah."

"And you're sure it was her track?"

"I would know eet anywere."

Brock thrilled at the possibilities of the situation. A dog of the lost Pierre LeCroix—alive in the headwater country! "Then your father must have been right here—last winter?" he said, excitedly.

Slowly the half-breed rose, and dropping his mitten on the thong which held it to the neck of his caribou-skin capote, drew his skinning knife from his sash. Dramatically thrusting the hand gripping the knife above his head, he spoke, as if taking an oath, while the younger youth sat wide-eyed:

"Eef dese men are een dis councree, before de snow fade een April, I weel mak dem tell me how he died."

The fixed purpose, the bitter hatred, in the face of his friend, as the firelight touched his knotted features, filled the youth who watched with awe. Brock knew that Gaspard LeCroix would never start on the trail home without easing his mind as to the fate of his father. It certainly looked like an exciting winter if these people were north of the big lake. It might be that Gaspard and Brock McCain, also, would leave their homes in the Yellow-Leg country. Involuntarily, Brock shivered at the gloomy thought.

"But how are you going to make them tell?" demanded Brock.

For a long space Gaspard's half-shut eyes stared into the fire. Then he said: "Eef I find one alone, on hees trap-line, dere are way to mak heem talk." And he again drew his skinning knife, and suggestively ran a calloused thumb along its edge.

A few days later, Gaspard and Brock, leaving their dogs wired to trees at camp to avoid their yelping, started on a two days' scout through the country to the north of the big lake. Obsessed by the discovery of the dog tracks in the snow, the memory of his father gave Gaspard no rest. And, moreover, for their own safety it was necessary to learn if the men who had made the tracks on the lake shores were still in the country.

Circling the upper end of the lake ten miles to the west, for they had no intention of leaving a trail across the white level which could be detected from the ridges to the north, Gaspard and Brock traveled through the back country. But that night as they dug a fire hole in the heart of a spruce swamp and roasted their caribou steak, they were in frank disagreement.

"I don't think there's a soul within a hundred miles to the north of us, argued the skeptical Brock. "We must have made forty miles today and haven't seen a shoe track."

"They are on de lower lak' or the riviere," grunted the stubborn Gaspard. "We fin dem tomorrow."

Brock looked hard at his friend. "You really believe they are in the country?"

Gaspard nodded.

"Why?"

"From dat high ridge back dere, to-day, I see smoke."

"Oh, you mean that haze?" Brock McCain's heart beat faster. What he had laughed away that afternoon as the imagination of his friend, now, as they sat waited in by the gloom of the spruce, seemed more worthy of belief as something other than haze. "Of course, it could have been smoke, but it looked like haze to me," he compromised.

The small eyes of LeCroix glittered.

"Eet was smoke."

As he wound his plaited rabbit-skin robes around him under the brush roof they had built across the sleep hole to hold the heat of the fire, Brock wondered what the next day would bring forth. If Gaspard proved to be right and they met some of these hunters, what would happen? Would they attack them on sight or attempt to drive them from the country by threats? Or would they appear friendly, only to track them later to their camp and deal with them as they must have dealt with the missing Pierre LeCroix?

For the first time since leaving Hungry House, Brock felt a touch of homesickness—a desire to see his father and mother and the children in the little fur post at the mouth of the Starving, two hundred lonely white miles to the south. And if anything should happen to him and Gaspard, at the post they would never know until June, when the canoe they waited for failed to return.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Leave-Taking Customs Among Various Races

People who live in different countries and speak different languages have different ways of saying "Good-by." In the Philippines, for instance, a man rubs his friend's face with his hand when he bids him farewell.

When you leave a Hindu he falls in the dust at your feet, while the Burmese bend low and say, "Hlo, hlo." South Sea Islanders rattle each other's whalebone necklaces.

The Ojibwa of the islander will twist the end of the departing guest's rope and then solemnly shake his own hand three times. The Japanese will take his slipper off as you depart, and say with a smile, "You are going to leave my despicable house in your honorable journeyings—I regard thee."

The Sioux and the Blackfoot will dig their spears in the earth as a sign of confidence, while Fiji islanders cross two red feathers.

Giant Among Bells

The great tenor bell in St. Paul's cathedral, London, weighs 62 hundred weight.

Not All Groundhogs Hibernate in Winter

Although the tradition still clings, the belief that the groundhog emerges from his hole promptly on February 2 each year has been long disproved. And now comes J. M. Nelson, who has made a study of the little rodent, to tell us that many of the species do not hibernate at all. Here is his account of their habits as published in the Farm Journal:

"There are some which burrow into the soft earth along streams and store their food for the winter months. These are never seen throughout the winter. They are the real hibernators. But there also are groundhogs which make their homes in caves and sink-holes in which they store quantities of food. They may be seen most any time during the winter, when the weather is fair.

"The groundhogs along rivers often make winter homes in places which later are covered with water for days at a time. Sealed tunnels and air-chambers give protection and, while the water may be running overhead, the groundhog will be enjoying his cache of food which he was wise enough to store before he was shut off from the world."

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