

**A YACHTING
CRUISE
IN THE SOUTH SEAS**

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A yachting cruise in the South Seas by C. F. Wood

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THE SOUTH SEAS.*

BY C. F. WOOD.



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PREFACE.

DURING the last eight years I have made several voyages amongst the South Sea Islands; and although so much has been written and re-written about them, I have been induced to publish these few imperfect sketches of my last cruise by the belief that any facts relating to the manners and customs of these islanders, should not be allowed to perish.

In this cruise, I was accompanied by Mr. George Smith as photographic artist, who most ably performed his part, often under the most trying circumstances.

The opportunity of taking portraits of these people in their primitive condition will soon be lost,

PREFACE.

so rapid is the advance of so-called civilization. It is a melancholy fact, that wherever an English colony is planted, there the inferior race dies out.

The policy that annexes Fiji, tolls the knell of the Polynesian race. Speculative, money-grasping Europeans will now spread themselves over the other islands of the Pacific, being well assured that land bought from the ignorant native will, in due time, be secured to them by the protection of the British flag.

Before these pioneers of civilization, the present self-satisfied, lotus-eating Polynesian, whose character is as plastic as clay, will no doubt rapidly disappear.

And while yet learned ethnologists are differing amongst themselves as to the origin of this most romantic people, it seems by no means improbable that the whole race, leaving no history and no monuments, will have passed away from the face of their Ocean.



YACHTING CRUISE IN THE SOUTH SEAS.

CHAPTER I.

EARLY in November, 1872, I left Liverpool by the Cunard line, and crossing the American continent by the Great Pacific Railway, sailed from San Francisco for New Zealand, calling at the Sandwich Islands. I reached Auckland on the first day of the new year.

The season for sailing with any degree of comfort in the tropics does not commence till April, so I took my time in looking out for a vessel that suited me. And the month of February saw me the possessor of an Auckland-built topsail schooner of ninety-two tons.

I at once set to work to make her more suitable for my purpose, by making a dark room for photography, and additional cabin accommodation for myself.

To admit carpenters into a house or vessel is simply to illustrate the fable of the snakes and the porcupine. And these men spent a month in sharpening their tools, varied by occasionally driving in a nail, or in planing a board, with the sole apparent object of making more shavings, on which to sit down and eat their dinner. At length the work was finished, and from hold, deck, and cabin

“The parting genius was with sighing sent.”

The captain and crew being engaged, and all our stores on board, we moved off into the stream, and on Saturday, April 18th, sailed out of Auckland Harbour. We were not destined to get far, for when we reached the island of Motu Tapu, and were just opening out the Hauraki Gulf, a gale sprang up in our teeth from the N.E., which necessitated our running back and casting anchor under the shelter of a reef of rocks that runs out from Rangitoto Island. Presently a brig came sailing past, but she too could make nothing of the weather, and had to

put back and anchor near us. Shortly afterwards the American mail steamer came out, hoarsely bellowing us a farewell with her steam whistle; but when daylight broke next morning, we found she too had had to put back, and was anchored not far from us. The gale continued all Sunday, but as it appeared to moderate on Monday, we ventured out; but towards noon it freshened again, and we ran in and anchored in Bon Accord harbour, at the back of Kawau Island, about thirty miles north of Auckland.

Here we found a whole fleet of wind-bound vessels of all sizes. Shortly after anchoring I received a message from Sir George Grey, the owner of the island, inviting me on shore, an invitation I was very glad to avail myself of. I took a long walk with him through his extensive grounds. The island, naturally most picturesque, has been much improved by the judicious planting of all sorts of pines and cypresses from every part of the world, and round the house large gardens have been laid out, well stocked with all the English fruits. In fact a young New Zealander who has never seen England, would here be able to form an idea of what an English country

place is like. There must be something peculiar about this climate, for I saw growing in close proximity to gooseberries, currants, and strawberries, such tropical plants as cinnamon, ginger, coffee, and bananas. The covers round the house are abundantly stocked with pheasants and Californian quails, and occasionally a monster kangaroo would bound away on our approach. On the top of a hill that overlooks the sea, I was shown a colony of New Guinea kangaroo, remarkable from their habit of living in trees. Much of the island yet remains to be brought under cultivation, and retains the sub-tropical appearance of the ordinary New Zealand bush, but I returned on board feeling as if I had had a glimpse of my native land.

The bad weather still continued, causing a most vexatious delay, and the only resource we had was fishing. Fortunately we had excellent sport, catching more snapper and kawai than we could eat, so the crew were employed in salting them, for I knew that though we thought little of them now, they would be looked on as a great luxury in the tropics, where one has a perpetual diet of indifferent pork and worse fowl.