The Majesty of a Sunset over Moorea.

To a world traveller there are many sights, which when once seen are engraved on the memory never to be forgotten. The Taj Mahal by moonlight. The after glow on the snowy peaks of the Himalayan mountains. The shaft of sunlight on Napoleon's tomb. A perfect double rainbow in the sky. The green flash at sea. The trees that have no shadows at midday in the tropics. The female beauty of a Tahitian Full Moon. Dawn on the desert. A mirage with a train of camels walking upside down. The nightly procession at Lourdes. The Grand canyon of Colorado. The Aurora Borealis. And last, but by no means least, a sunset over Moorea at the end of a day in the rainy season.

Seated on the waterfront at Papeete, I was absorbed in watching, and meditating on, the seemingly impossible beauty of the sunset. Standing near me were a marist priest and a Tahitian.

The priest was one of those saintly men, who watch over the spiritual wellbeing of the outlying districts. They have indeed the right to be called saints. Their example in life is exemplary. Paid the smallest of salaries, they are the fathers of their flocks. Religion to them is not a matter of cant. They live what they preach, and it is indeed an inspiration to study their mode of life and try to emulate it.

The Tahitian, and there were many like him, had lived his whole life on a distant part of the island, and had never been to Papeete.

The Tahitian:— "Oh mon Dieu, la terre est en feu. Mon Père, the
sea is on fire. The flames are spreading to engulf Moorea. The boats fishing for bonito will be destroyed. Oh mon Père, the great Spirits of the past are angry. How terrible. How terrible. Look mon Père, the sun is sinking into the flames. It will be burnt up. Look, the flames are all over the sun. Oh mon Père, I am frightened. I want to go home."

The Marist Priest:— "Mon fils, tu est idiot. Pourquoi as tu peur? Non, la terre n'est pas en feu. Moorea will not burn. The fishermen are quite safe. See, the sun is sinking into the sea quite unharmed. Écoute moi bien, mon fils. How many times have I told you that God is Love. How could God burn our beautiful Moorea? The great Spirits of the past are in Heaven. They could not harm us. This evening, you have seen a proof that God exists, for it is God who made the sunset. How? Why? It is not for us to ask such questions. God made the sun, God made the rain, and the sun and the rain made the sunset. Voilà, le soleil s'est couché until tomorrow morning, when the fishermen will be selling their bonito au marché as usual. Allons boire un petit verre."

How many times have I heard efforts to describe this miracle of nature. It defies accurate description in words. All possible superlatives are completely impotent. Several well-known European painters have described it as unpaintable. Camera pictures in colour remain beautiful but dead, whereas this kaleidoscope is vividly alive. Indistructible. It cannot cease to exist but by a gradual folding up within itself. The great arcs of a hundred rainbows seem to have been brushed by an invisible hand. The colours, still definable in the correct order of the solar spectrum, never cease to marry in perfect harmony.
Unlike gazing into an open caal fire, where make believe objects may be seen in imagination, the sunset portrays nothing but Infinity. Nothing mundane or materialistic fits this picture. It is as if the Great Architect of the Universe were carrying out his promise to the full. "See, my children of Tahiti, I love you as you have loved me."

With the mysticism of heaven as it exists to the human brain, perhaps an inspiring thought would be, "When I have 'shuffled off this mortal coil', I shall pass beyond the sunset where no harm can befall."