I present this manuscript of Ernest Edmonds to Marion Kelly for the purpose of offering to the Archives of the University of Hawaii.

[Signature]
True Stories of Old Tahiti.
Moral and Otherwise by Cambridge M. A.
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Preface.

In this permissive age, these true stories of prewar Tahiti are not meant to shock but only to amuse.

The reader will observe that names, localities and dates are omitted. The reason for this, apart from preserving anonymity, is that these yarns were written from memory.

My prewar diary contained much of a personal and very confidential nature. Before going on leave therefore, I considered it wise to bury it in a spot only known to myself, carefully sealed in a container.

Upon recovery after many years absence, through force of circumstances, I discovered, to my sorrow, that my secret possession was in a state of complete disintegration. My sadness was not lessened when I found that a considerable amount of Tahitian money had also gone the way of all flesh.

The Author.

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I dedicate this book to my friend and colaborateur (your pen-name), without whose help it would never have been written.
The Faaapeee when was.

The old schooner Captain and I had yarried away about the
Islands on many occasions during our journey to Tahiti. Oh, the stories
he had to tell. He was returning from a holiday in Australia to make
charge of his inter-island schooner after a refit, and I to visit
"Le paradis du pacifique" for the first time.

The sea was as calm as the proverbial mill pond. A full
moon in all its glory was shining from a cloudless sky. We were having our
last beer together, as we were due to land at Fapeate at eight the
next morning. A lull came over the conversation and he then spoke, what
he considered to be, words of wisdom.

"Now look here my boy, I am old enough to be your father.
A little advice from me will not give any offence I am sure.
Tahiti is known for its beautiful women. Before you have been there very
long, you may want to talk to one of them. If you do, put on a couple of
them there things and bind up your what you may call em with adhesive
tape." With those few remarks, he bade me a very good night. Next morning,
he went off with the pilot and I did not see him again for many moons.
His words were indeed to the point in so far as "Les femmes de Fapeate"
were concerned, but they and their kind may be found on or near the water
fronts of every port in the world. "Les dames de Tahiti" come under a
very different category.

Having cleared the customs, I made my way to an outwardly
respectable and well appointed hotel. Good food and spotlessly clean.
Spent the day making a general survey of this picturesque town with its
long line of schooners and yachts anchored at right angles to the wharf.
The lovely flame trees in full blossom. The curious Chinese shops and
the main European stores.

In the evening, having dined and wine, a final stroll
along the waterfront to see the internationally known "Quinns" and fairly
early to bed. No sleep possible after 10 pm. First through one wall
and then the other.

"Chéri, je n'en peux plus. Et toi? Encore dix minutes et
il faut que je rentre."

"Saligaud que tu es. Je ne le veux pas par derrière.
Tu me fais mal."

"Oh, cheri que c'est bon. Que tu est fort. Comme tu sais
bien faire l'amour."

"Oh cheri, je vais venir. Péché tout."

Periodic bangs on the doors. "Allons, allons, la chambre n'est louée pour
une demie heure. Il y a d'autres qui attendent."

Polite enquiries next morning supplied the information
that half the rooms were let by the hour until I am. "Very sorry monsieur;
could not sleep. He will get used to it. C'est la vie."
In Papeete, nobody seemed to be surprised at anything. After a day or two, the sight of bottoms moving gently up and down in the moonlight on the seaward side of the flame trees ceased to attract special attention.

There was no brothel in Papeete. Many years ago, one had been tried but soon failed. The price for favours was a jolly evening, dancing, drinking beer or wine, and the gift of a cotton frock of the lady’s choice. The end to all the fun was what naturally followed. No idea of for so many francs.

The existence of V.D. was obvious to all. Every Thursday after breakfast, a mob of perhaps a dozen women were to be seen, shepherded along by a “mutoi” on a bicycle. He and his flock called at various houses until all the known sick had been rounded up and taken to the hospital for treatment.

Many would be authors came to Tahiti to write a novel on the island and its native life. Hence the sensational smut contained in the vast majority of their works offered to the reading public. What is done in Papeete was done in the open and without shame. There was nothing of the dark streets and shuttered windows life to be found, if looked for, in every city of the world.

The Yacht Club was an amusing place. Very select and supposedly refined. Gin fizz the most popular drink as from 11am to 2pm, when members staggered to their cars and went home to sleep it off.

No necessity to own a yacht, for none of the officers from the Commodore downwards had ever sailed in one. The only requirement for efficient membership was to belong to the élite and be able to hold one’s liquor in no uncertain fashion. Ribald drunkenness was not tolerated.

The major-domo of the club had been resident for many years. A little incoherent, even when sober, as he suffered from a slight impediment of speech due to the ravages of V.D. long since cured.

When approached about an introduction to a suitable girl friend during a stay on the island, he would quickly oblige. “Certamelement monsieur. Pourquoi pas. Attendez, je vous en prie.”

Looking down on the pedestrians below, he would point out first this one and then that one. “Ah celle là. Oh Marie. Haere Mai.”
Voilà un papa qui veut être ton ami. Il est très gentil. Veux tu le soigner?" Mutual agreement on both sides and the contract was soon sealed by the pretty words,"Voilà mes enfants, vous êtes mariées. Allez vous en et soyez heureux.". A 100 franc note deftly planted in the palm of his hand produced an anaemic smile.
Tahiti Isle of Dreams.

A story of disaster and death for challenging a \textit{Curse}.

By Ernest Edmonds.

Scattered about on the islands of French Oceania there are holy stone images of ancient Gods, the origins of which are lost in the timeless ages of antiquity. Handed down from generation to generation is the sure and certain tradition that these relics must remain inviolate. Woe betide anyone who dares even to touch them. Disaster, or at least misfortune, will most surely overtake such an individual, who challenges the "Curse of the Gods".

Some wealthy Americans, who had illegally landed on an island which was not a Port of Entry, coveted one of these images weighing possibly half a ton. On their arrival in Tahiti they arranged with an experienced schooner-captain to pay handsomely for its delivery on board their yacht in Papeete harbour.

Under cover of darkness the image was duly removed and placed on board the schooner, which then set sail for Tahiti. An unusual variation of wind and tide current however, during the night, resulted in the schooner being wrecked on a coral reef.

In about a week the timber necessary for the temporary repair of the under-water damage duly arrived, and the Captain went over the side to start operations. Although a giant Hercules of a man in perfect health, he was at once paralyzed from the waist downwards.
The schooner eventually reached Papeete and the image was placed in the grounds of the Museum.

The American yacht in the meantime, in order to escape trouble, had left Papeete, but caught fire and was burnt to the water's edge in the harbour of a neighbouring island.

The schooner—captain, after many months of convalescence, regained the use of his limbs but retired from the sea. His favourite sport, at which he was an adept, was fishing with a casting net. Shortly after being pronounced well, he was thus engaged when he suffered a severe sunstroke and died in agony after three days.

Thus was the anger of the Gods appeased, but this is not the end of the story.

Some sailors from a visiting warship, searching for a momento of their visit, decided that the head of the image would suit their purpose. With one mighty blow of a sledge hammer this was duly removed, carried aboard, and hidden in their sleeping quarters.

The matter came to the ears of the "Powers That Be" who hastily summoned an official of the British Consul. He in his turn hastened aboard the warship to interview the Captain. The latter, duly impressed by the Consul's warning, summoned the ship's company to the quarter-deck. There he demanded in no uncertain terms that the Officer of the Watch be in a position to assure him within the hour that the ship and her company were no longer in imminent danger.
Not long afterwards a tap came on the door of the Captain's cabin and the Officer of the Watch reported as follows:

"Sir, the object in question is now at the bottom of the harbour."

In due course the general received a wireless message.

"Arrived safely. Thank you."
A Millionair's Toilet.

It is not usual to enthuse about any sort of toilet.

It is the kind of little room into which you sneak hoping not to be seen, and having done what you came to do, you pull the chain or lever, possibly wash your hands, and sneak out again. Not so with the toilet provided by a Tahitian Chief for his guests.

Joined to the mainland by a little pier on piles, there was a miniature thatched cottage standing in about six feet of water over a lagoon fringed by white coral sand and coconut palms.

Here is the toilet, neatly constructed and containing the necessary seat hole, properly covered, and all accessories. The lid was taken off to prepare for action and what a fairy land of beauty met the gaze. There beneath the water was a large circle of beautiful coral with its multitudinous shapes of coloured antlers, fans and spikes.

"What a shame to contaminate such beauty."

Having done what I came to do and completed the process, I could not help sitting for a moment or two contemplating the beauty of a tropical island. Having risen to adjust my attire, a last look below came naturally.

"Where is it? I did, didn't I? Of course I did. But I couldn't have done." There was nothing to be seen.

I told my friend the Chief, but he only laughed heartily.

"Tomorrow, you will look quickly for what you have done as soon as you have done it."
Tomorrow came and I followed his advice. I gazed with amazement at perhaps 50 large crabs tearing and pulling everything to pieces and dashing off with a chunk of loot to devour it under the coral. In not more than a minute, peace had again returned to the lovely aquatic garden.

As the days passed, I became quite fond of those crabs. They seemed to know what was coming, and I would pretend to start and then jump up suddenly to spot one or two beating the pistol. "Naughty. Naughty. Wait for it." Then when dinner was served, I cheered them on with shouts of "Atta Boy." As the last one disappeared with all that was left, I would say with a throb in my voice, "Sorry boys, I have no more to give you today."
The Camembert Cheese.

That machination of the Devil called Income Tax was unknown. Public Revenues were gathered, almost entirely, from heavy duties on all imported goods. Europeans therefore had to cut their luxury eating according to available financial cloth.

A highly decorated officer, who had had an honourable career both before and during World War I, was happily retired beside the sea in a most delectable spot. I fancy that he had had a love affair during his youth, which had alienated him from women as such.

He had two men servants. His cook, houseboy and general factotum was a Fijian, imported from Suva. This man had the tallest and thickest head of fuzzy hair that ever was. Looked like a guardsman wearing his bear skin.

The other servant was a very handsome Tahitian boy, always impeccably dressed in white shirt and blue loin cloth. He acted as assistant to the cook.

The Officer had supplied his chef with several cookery books and insisted that, as often as possible, a new dish be placed before him for his approbation or otherwise. If approved, the concoction was duly added to the list of delectable foodstuffs to be offered to his future guests. He was a gourmet in both food and wine. To dine with him constituted a never to be forgotten dream.

"I have asked a few friends to come and enjoy a Camembert Cheese, which I am importing from Paris under every known care, so as to be guaranteed to be in perfect condition on its arrival by the next boat. There will be the dear old village Chief, the Marist padre and you and me. We dine at eight, but come at six. Dress as informally as possible so as to hide your nakedness. I shall wear only a loin cloth.

The great evening duly arrived and we assembled in his luxurious drawing room. Cut glass goblets of a delectable aperitif were served by our host and replenished as soon as empty. In an atmosphere of gentle merriment, conducted in French, English and Tahitian, as occasion demanded, in order to unravel the meaning of some topic under discussion, the time passed quickly."
Called upon to offer the first toast of the evening before dinner, which was about to be served, I rose unsteadily to my feet. Clothed as directed, I had chosen a black silk dressing gown with brick red lapels. "Mesieurs, je vous porte le toast, Le Camembert." Loud cheers in which all joined. "Vive le fromage", "Vive la France", "Here's how", "May we live for ever and die happy", "God bless".

"Master, dinner is served"; so we staggered in to partake of a perfect repast. Töhōoa soup. A small glass of tomato juice to prepare the palate for artichokes. Filet Mignon with pommes de terre frites and baby onions in white sauce. Pêche Melba. Red and white wine alternating with the dishes. The Chief gave a loud belch to show his unqualified approval.

"Now my dear friends, the great moment has arrived when I have the honour to offer you my Camembert". A tinkle on the bell little bell on the table, and with measured tread in came the cook bearing on a purple cushion the little round wooden box containing the noble cheese.

"Gentlemen, I must ask you to rise while our padre offers a suitable blessing on this our cheese fromage which we so unrichly deserve."

The padre, becoming mixed in his metaphors, offered the following in broken English. "Hail Jesus, mother of God, we thank thee for this the fruit of thy womb Mary". Loud cheers from all. The padre, mopping his brow, regained his seat with a "Oh là là".

Slowly but surely the ceremony of opening the box continued, with emphasis on the wordings on the wrapper. "Enfin, voilà mes amis". Oh dear. Oh dreadful day of reckoning. Instead of the perfect aroma of ripe camembert, out came a pungent smell of ammonia, which was followed by a great silence.

"My friends we will not see it wasted. We will give it to the fish in the lagoon." A procession was soon formed behind the cook carrying the box as before, and to the chanting of "The Dead March in Saul", the cheese was duly splashed to its watery grave.

Returning to the house, we repaired to the patio over hung with frangipane and settling in soft armchairs sipped a four-finger Napoleon brandy.
Our host placed twelve classical records on his gramaphone and was soon fast asleep. First the Chief excused himself, soon followed by the padre and I was left alone. The last record dropped and then started to repeat itself over and over again. Presently the sleeper awoke and I rose to leave. "Before you go, tell me in how many you can love a woman. I know of thirty-two not counting the ordinary case." He was asleep again, so I, considering that in this retreat was the better part of valour, crept softly away into the night.
A Millionair's Bathing Place.

My country house beside the lagoon was a peaceful retreat from the dust and hubbub of the capital.

The foreshore was of white coral sand, fringed by coconut palms. The rise and fall of the tide was only a foot or two. A stream coming down from the hills disappeared into the sand at about a hundred yards from the house, and made its reappearance coming up from the hard bottom of the lagoon, bringing with it a miriad of bubbles. To bathe here was like being submerged in champagne. The temperature was blood heat devoid of any shock to the system.

Scattered about beneath the surface of the water, were large boulders of nigger-head coral. These were the home of thousands of inch long fish the colour of blue lobelia. They did not disappear immediately when approached, but hovered about quite close to the hand trying to catch them. The movement of "Slowly, slowly, catchee the monkey" was of no avail. Almost but never quite.

Bathing at night was equally entrancing, for everthing was phosphorescent, glowing with different coloured lights. The little blue fish took on a hue of molten gold, and you yourself seemed to float in a fairy land beyond description. To be in any way clothed would amount to desecration.

To lie on your back and gaze at the starry vault of heaven and the moonlight shimmering through the palm trees, shaken by a zephyr wind from the hills, the mundane things of the world sink into oblivion.
Revenge for a lost Law Suite

A few miles from Papeete, beside the lagoon, there was a well run night club, which was much patronized by the élite. Good food and a vintage wine cellar.

One night, a not easily forgotten drama took place. The actors being a prominent lawyer, his client, who had suffered heavy financial loss as the result of a lost law suite, and a well known citizen of Papeete.

The client, hearing the call of nature, was the first to leave the night club and seeing the lawyer's parked Chrysler Imperial, freshly imported from America, left his visiting card on the back seat in the form of a big job, of the one kilo one piece variety.

The next to leave was the prominent citizen, who being slightly out of balance, and feeling tired, was unable to find his car and feeling tired entered his friend the lawyer's car auto and went to sleep on the back seat.

The lawyer, coming out to go home, awakened the sleeper and accused him of causing the smell permeating the inside of his vehicle.

The latter loudly proclaimed his innocence, but a torch light inspection proved the fact that the seat of his white silk pants was badly discoloured. Virtuperation followed in no uncertain terms from both sides.

A small crowd of the élite joined in the argument and insisted that the sleeper lower his pants to show that the discolouration had not come from the inside. Innocence having been proved to the satisfaction of all, the two friends kissed each other on both cheeks and went their respective ways.
Perverts and Others.

When Mussolini cleaned up Lido, the Eden of European Perverts, many of those with private means betook themselves to Tahiti. There, they were almost unmolested by the benign government, unless they broke the rule of indebtedness, in which case they were firmly requested to leave by the next boat.

The usual homos and lesbians were taken for granted, and were willing to mix socially with those who were apparently tolerant of their ways of amusing themselves. One lesbian pièce de résistance was an indiarubber lifelike contraption with an arrangement for squishing out milk at the appropriate moment.

A homo was asked why he enjoyed his way of life so much replied that his experiences at a famous public school in England were too fascinating to be dropped when he became a man.

There was a Tahitian, who made his living by selling tickets to watch him cohabiting with a mare in the moonlight. The spectators were asked to be perfectly quiet while he spoke words of love to his animal wife, fondling her the while in all directions. Slowly, the mare raised her tail, and the man mounted on a soap box, and with the use of coconut oil, accomplished what he had set out to do, took off his hat and requested more contributions.

There was a native, who during the day worked on a plantation, and at night went home to the house he had built for his phantom wife far up in the hills. He was perfectly sane and spoke of her as the most ravishing woman in all the world. Physically he looked to be suffering from too much of a good thing.

There was only one nudist. A man of about 40, who lived up a valley on the peninsula. Quite willing to receive visitors, as long
as they rang the bell hung at the bottom of the track leading to his home-made protection from the weather.

At the sound of the bell, he would put on a pair of patched up trousers, several of the vital buttons of which were missing. He was a complete nature man, living off the land and absolutely alone. Never came near any human habitation. Had long matted hair, which came down to his waist, and stank to high heaven. Refused all donations of money and to be photographed. Nobody ever visited him more than once.

There was also another man of about 40, who suffered from elephantiasis in his said what you may call them. Both as large as seen coconuts, they had to be supported in a small wheelbarrow when the bowlegged owner was in motion. The fee to be allowed to photograph uncovered was 50 francs. Unveiled—100 francs. The médecin en chef had offered to remove them, but "Jamais de la vie", they were still showing signs of life.

A cultured gentleman, that was, had grown so fond of his whiskey as to be known as a 3 bottle a day man. His hobby was to give parties to all and sundry, who would come and do things in the most unusual way possible. However, he overslept the mark, and was asked to leave by the next boat. His misdemeanour:— All male guests were asked to bring hens with them, and as a grand climax to the evening's fun were to do things to them to the tune of "Allons enfants de la république, etc".

The only pervert, considered to break all the rules of indecency and therefore completely beyond the pale, was one who provided himself with a plate glass contraption to cover his face when lying horizontally, so that he had a good view of the birth of a big job delivered by a woman squatting above the glass.
One day, a young woman, immaculately dressed, entered a restaurant with two perfectly trained alsatian dogs, which sat down on either side of her. She ordered dinner for three. Objection from the maître d'hôtel was met by, "Monsieur, je vous présente mes deux maris".
My friend Alexander.

Alexander had been gravedigger and caretaker of the cemetery at Papeete ever since young manhooded. Now in his sixties, he considered himself the father of those who had been buried under his care. "Mes enfants sont heureux parceque je les soigne".

A walk round the cemetery with him was of great intense interest, for he had tales of hims and hers, which would fill a book.

"Ah, this man was a naval officer, so I buried him next to a sea captain. They can now tell each other stories about the sea.

This man was a landscape painter. See what a beautiful view he has to look at.

woman

This poisoned herself because she could not have a married man. But see, I have placed him next to her for all eternity.

No monsieur, please come this way, by that way the dead we would be looking at you."

When somebody died at Papeete without a prearranged plot, he or she was buried at Alexander's discretion as to position. The next of kin was warned that unless payment for the plot were made before two years had elapsed without further notice, the occupant, or all that was left, would be dug up and placed in the Calamity-House.

A peep into this little stone house was not an inspiring experience. In one corner were skulls. In another were ribs and torsos. In another, legs and arms with any remaining ligaments and muscle fibres attached.

When really emotionally excited, Alexander would more or less shoot out his dentures into his waiting hand waiting to receive them and deposit them in his trouser pocket.
One day he arrived on my doorstep and, having rid himself of his teeth, asked my advice on a most important commercial proposition. His old wife had rheumatic pains in her legs and could not work her treadle sewing machine. He would like to buy her an electric one.

He had never saved any money, but would I send "These" to America to buy a sewing machine. "These" consisted of samples which he drew from his coat pocket. A handful of gold fillings picked from the teeth of the occupants of the Carnal House, coupled with some wedding and other rings, all of which were his legitimate perquisites.

After a long and animated discussion, the only practical solution to the difficulty seemed to be to offer the precious metal in turn to the wedding ring maker and the dentist, and accept the highest bid. This was eventually done, the successful bidder being the dentist,
The Silvery Tahitian Moon.

On Tahiti, full moon night was always a time of festival and happiness.

Families and their friends would sit under the trees in the moon light and talk, sing, or dance as the mood took them. Time for love making? Yes, of the holding hands variety, but not for lust. There was an atmosphere of the unearthly, when the great Spirits of the past walked abroad without interfering with those still earthbound.

One of the greatest joys was to be able to accept an invitation from a Chief, with a large war canoe, to go out on the lagoon and enjoy the stillness of the full moon night, enlivened only by the soft tones of guitar and ukulele in another boat sent out at a distance to give only an impression of music.

Hard to put into mere words, but an atmosphere of complete domination of the material world by that of the spiritual. The Moon, in all her silvery beauty, took on the attribute of an all embracing mother influence, stretching out her invisible arms to cover and shield the whole earth from everything that was not spiritual.

On such a night as this, a man and his wife and I were the guests of a Chief. The couple, of early middle age, were very agreeable, cultured people, on a visit to the island.

The husband spent most of his time during the day enjoying the beauties of the coral reef, while his wife, a lover of wild flowers, busied herself with collecting bunches of hýbiscus and wild ginger.
numerous children.

Here, to the lover of young life, was a happy sight. No hand was ever raised to chastise, no voice was ever raised in anger. Should the mother die of a family die, a rush would be made to get the children. They were the human flowers of the village belonging in the first place to the parents, and in the second place to every family in the village. The affection for children was reciprocated, and the Biblical injunction to " Honour thy father and thy mother" was universal.

Unlike in modern western communities, grey heads were honoured and protected, as the shadows of life started to lengthen. I say grey heads, as white hair was a rarity. A Tahitian who lived to be seventy years of age was very very old. The reason for this lay in acid forming diet. Protean in the form of fish, with starch contained in breadfruit and taro were not conducive to the forming of alkali.

Happiness, perpetual happiness, must make itself apparent in good health, and good health makes itself manifest in the physical. Both men and women were in the most part handsome and beautiful. Rippling muscles and beauty of frame reached the height of the ideal.

Where in the world was to be found such cleanliness. Houses, whether inhabited by well to do or the just ordinary, were spotlessly clean. To eat off the floor, if necessary, would be just as appetizing as to be served with food from a white linen tablecloth.

The village folk would no more think of dispensing with a complete wash at the end of the day's work than they would of doing without the evening meal. Men above the bridge and women below the order of every night of the year. If ever the smell of body uncleanness reached the nose of a visitor to Tahiti, it would surely come from a neighbouring whiteman or Popa as he was called.
When the evening meal was over, he who would enter the sanctum sanctorum of a tahitian home must tread warily. Here the males did not congregate in a corner and so often tell dirty stories and the females likewise with tales of "Don't tell anybody I said so, but do you know---".

The visitor does not speak unless spoken to. However, in no time at all he is made to feel how welcome he is, and is engaged in conversation in all that is of mutual interest to the happy circle.

At a lull sometime during the evening, a beautiful lady, with her long wavey hair hanging to her waist and a flower behind her ear, may take her guitar and some music pervades this divine atmosphere. The old folk may start to speak with pride of the historical past before the white man came to adulterate their island home. Stories and then more stories of the ancient gods, historic love stories, ghost stories.

Here was one of the many beauties of a tahitian home. A unit of many lives, where pride of race and dignity of thought and action act as a bulwark against the rush and tare of advancing materialism.

The Divine Creator can but look with pleasure on this part of his creation.
The Ghosts that were Ghosts.

The old folk amongst the Tahitians never tire of telling stories of their ancestors and the glories of the past civilization. They love to speak of ancient gods and their prowess in all forms of human activity on the island of moorea, some twenty miles from Tahiti, there is a rock needle, several hundred feet in height, which had never been climbed, as the sides are completely void of any foothold.

At about 100 feet from the top, there is a large hole. Tradition has it that the god of Tahiti was angry with the god of moorea and hurled his spear at him. The hole is where the spear stuck, and therein lies the body of the god, together with his canoe and his earthly possessions.

One of the favourite topics in evening conversation is that of historic ghosts, in which belief is absolute. Any hint of incredulity, may well bring the question, "Don't you believe in ghosts?" If further relation of these fascinating stories is to continue uninterrupted the best reply should be, "There is no proof that ghosts do not exist, so of course I believe in them."

One day, as the guest of one of the best known chiefs, I had retired to my room overlooking the lagoon and was soon sound asleep. It was a glorious night of full-moon. Suddenly, I was wide awake and had the feeling that further sleep was unnecessary and unwanted.

Dressed in a cotton singlet and shorts, I crept out into the night, as bright as day, and went down to the water's edge where my canoe was moored. As if led by some commanding urge, I was soon afloat and padding lazily along in order to get to one of my favourite bathing places on the further side of an inlet about half a mile wide.

"Splash——Splash——Splash." There in the distance was a canoe in which were two men. They had obviously set their fish-net and were splashing, as was so often done, to frighten the fish in the desired direction.

I changed my course in order to keep well clear of the area being fished, but continued to keep them under observation. Suddenly the splashing ceased and, without any audible sound, the canoe began to move, gathered speed, and after a distance of about 100 yards disappeared behind a headland.

I gazed with amazement at the vacant spot where the boat had been and made straight for it, expecting to find that what I had seen was only a phantom of fancy. Possibly a log in the water or some trick to my vision caused by the moonlight. No, nothing. No other solution.

I had seen ghost fishermen.
Not in the least perturbed, but rather with a feeling of ecstacy, I continued my canoeing for another hour before returning to my bed to sleep soundly until awakened with the usual early morning cup of tea.

After breakfast, I went round to the Chief’s quarters and told him of what I had seen. He listened intently and then said quietly, "My dear friend, you are very fortunate. You have seen two historic ghosts which have not been seen, to my knowledge, for the past fourteen years. These phantoms belong to a class of fun making spirits. They choose a victim who is sympathetic and on a full moon night wake him up and influence him to go out onto the lagoon alone. They do their splashing, and as soon as they are sure that they have been seen, they have enjoyed their fun and disappear."
One day an Australian arrived at Papeete and intimated that he wanted to get to the island of Napa. Some years ago he had read a book about this far away island in the Pacific, and was more than interested to find that the native population consisted of an overwhelming proportion of women.

A barman by trade, he had at once begun to save up the necessary finance to equip himself for a journey to this Garden of Eden. When was the next boat? Not for eight months and a special permit would be required to sail, together with a deposit of Frs 1000 as a guarantee that he would not put foot on shore.

The months passed slowly and eventually he set sail on the schooner which went to Napa annually to fetch what copra was available.

According to the schooner captain's report on his return, the vessel was met by the usual mob of females. The love sick barman cast all warning to the winds, jumped ashore and was carried bodily away into the bush. Missed the boat, lost his deposit, and was never seen again.

The following year a garbled report was returned that he had been very well for a time, but later had become very thin and died.
The man who left his country for his country's good.

A young aristocrat arrived at Papeete and was not allowed ashore because he could not find his passport. This was eventually found under the mattress in another cabin, having been placed there as a practical joke during the preembarcation party.

After a few days revelry in the capital, it was suggested to the new arrival that he betake himself to a hotel out of town.

This he did, but returned after a week or two to report that he had contracted V.D. from the wife of a man who was now suing him for Frs 30000 damages because he too was infected.

A medical officer diagnosed the worst and prescribed a certain medicine, which had to be applied externally. Shortly, the doctor received an urgent message to say that his patient was in terrible pain. A hurried visit resulted in the discovery that the prescription had been taken internally instead of externally.

Not long after, the Hotel Proprietor came to town and laid the complaint that his guests were leaving because of the noise in the man's bungalow until the early hours of the morning.

The Commissioner of Police arranged to go down and investigate, when requested so to do. The call came soon and the Proprietor and Police Officer tiptoed up to the revellers and found a gramophone blaring. A male and female nudist party was in progress, where the scene beggared description.

Requested to leave Tahiti by the boat which was then in the harbour, the "persona non grata" returned to town and gave a farewell party to his friends. In attempting to mount the gangway, he fell off and
splashed into the water between the ship and the wharf. Duly fished out, he was carried aboard and put in his cabin, which was on the seaward side of the ship. His cronies, consisting of men and women, thereupon hired a boat and rowed round to the other side to wish him a final goodbye.

Hearing their shouts, the passenger staggered out of the cabin, and leaning over the railing again fell into the sea or rather the boat below. In the process, he broke one of the women's arms.

A claim for £100 damages was forwarded to the man's home, the result of which I do not know, and what is more I could not care less.
A Tahitian Village.

Here was to be seen a little world unto itself, ruled over with gentle authority political and Spiritual.

The head of the village, whose word was law, was the Chief of the surrounding District. His was generally an hereditary appointment, in many cases dating back through the corridors of time long before the existence of a white man was known.

The Chief was a member of a Consultative Assembly, which periodically made submissions to the Government. There was no doctor and no policeman. The former being unnecessary because it was considered that herbal medicine, for most ailments, was far superior to that provided by a white doctor. The latter being superfluous because of the absence of drunkenness, theft, or obscenity of any kind.

The Spiritual Head of the village was the Marist priest and to a minor degree the "Bone Rattler." Here was tolerance indeed. The priest ordained that all, except Protestants if any, must come to mass on Sunday morning. In the afternoon those who wished to were at liberty to listen to the "Bone Rattler" up in the valley. He would not do them any good neither would he do them any harm. The "Bone Rattler, in his turn, shared the opposite view with emphasis on the visit to him on Sunday afternoon.

The Protestants, if any, met in a private house attended by a Tahitian Lay Preacher. What they were protesting, they had no idea, but they were proud to be carrying on the teaching of the C.M.S. of long ago. There was not the slightest social discrimination between Catholic and Protestant.

All adults in the village had their allotted tasks. The men to do the fishing and copra making. The women to tend to the household chores of cooking and family laundry as well as looking after the always
During the evening meal, the conversation turned on what Full Moon night meant to the Tahitians, and I intimated that I should be going out alone onto the lagoon in my double seated canoe, as was often my wont.

The husband:— "I have to go into town tonight, and I should be most grateful if you would take my wife with you. She would love the experience and I am sure would not be a nuisance."

Much against my will, I agreed and eventually we set off, I paddling in front and she behind.

After a while she stopped paddling, but I took no notice, later on, tired of doing all the work, I asked if she were tired. No, she was not tired, but would I please not turn round. Naturally I turned, and found her sitting without a stitch on. "Oh well, if that is how you feel, you had better come in front so that I can keep an eye on you. There is no knowing what you will do next." We changed, and she stretched herself out at full length at my feet.

The silence was broken by her relating that the previous night she had had a glorious dream of being chased in the moonlight among the coconut trees by a naked man. Would I make the dream come true? Knowing that I was in full control of myself, I agreed.

Putting her ashore at one place, I went on for another hundred yards or so and then disembarked. Taking off my singlet and shorts, I started out to hunt. No sign for quite a time, but at last there she was peeping from behind a tree. When she knew that I seen her, off she went at top speed, and I quite willing to prolong this unique adventure for as long as possible, did not exert myself
to bring it to an end.

At last, completely exhausted, she stopped, and I caught up in my arms. "Well, you naughty girl. What shall you do to you now"? "No, please don't. I want only to remember that I was on Tahiti at the time of the Full Moon."
A Weekend in a Tahitian home.

The office door is closed with a bang. Thank goodness Friday afternoon has come at last. Now for a wonderful rest in the country away from the heat, dust and hubbub of the town. Peace, quiet and happiness undiluted by the noise of telephones and typewriters.

The road round the coast is not tarsealed but is of crushed coral, which makes for a comfortable car ride. High speed is impossible and unwanted as we wind our way for some thirty miles round the lovely bays. The sea never far on one side and bush covered hills on the other.

Only a few more miles to go and we shall reach our destination. Another village or two with their profuse and varied coloured canes along the road-side and we shall be there.

Round the last bend and there are our host and hostess, with their grown up children. They have been waiting for possibly an hour to catch the first glimpse of the car as it turned the last corner.

The warmth of the welcome is overwhelming. Shouts of "Iorana" waitai Oe" to which the reply is "Waitai roa". Kissed and hugged by old and young. What a welcome, sincere, warm and spontaneous.

In the country, time seems to float over you. There is no time for anything but the present. We get up when we have had enough sleep. We eat our main meal when the sun is up there. We go to sleep when we feel sleepy.

There is an old clock hanging on the veranda wall, which has not ceased to go for many a year. It strikes the hour at twenty minutes past, and then the correct time may be calculated as twenty minutes to the hour struck minus seven. Time! Bah! An invention of the devil.

After all the excitement of my arrival, and the exchange of news from town and country, everybody is tired, so after a light meal early to bed.

At daybreak, the sleeper is made aware that another day is about to begin by the lusty crowing of roosters and the laughter of children's voices.

The lady of the house is about to make coffee. Real coffee.

Coffee that smells and tastes like coffee. The best coffee I have tasted anywhere in the world. The beans which were grown on the plantation and thoroughly matured were first fried in butter over a charcoal fire until a golden brown. Then roasted by being kept in continual motion, until a purply colour, in a frying pan kept for the purpose. Then ground to the right consistency in a hand propelled coffee mill. In the meantime one of the children had been busy making coconut cream.

A ripe nut is split open with a machette and the white nut rasped to shreds on the teeth of an iron bar arrangement stuck in the ground. The shredded nut is now put into a muslin cloth and wound tight. Out comes snow white coconut cream.

The welcome cry is heard from the kitchen, "le café" and all take their places at table.
The conversation is on the important subject of "What shall we do during the week-end", the only diversity of opinion being as to the order in which the activities shall be enjoyed.

The possibles and therefore probables are:— 1) Catching shrimps in the stream running through the plantation. These live under stones or floating weed near the banks of the stream and are as large as European prawns. Extreme caution of approach is necessary, for they jump backwards or sideways with flashing rapidity when disturbed.

The tyro thinks himself lucky if he catches two or three after an hour's hard work. In the meantime the experts have caught a basket full either by hand, or in a small net, or with a homemade tiny three pronged spear.

The method of eating these, when fried in butter, is to pull off the head and tail and prise off the the outer shell with a quick action of the thumb. Here is food for the gods.

2) Harpooning fish in a foot or two of water flowing over the reef as the rising tide reaches the inner water of the lagoon. The visitor can but watch the artistry as the boys of all ages hurl their homemade harpoons at the shadows moving some twenty feet away. In all matters of skill, the old adage that practice makes perfect is manifest to the full. The younger ones average a kill once in every ten throws. The older ones would average one in five. The grownups however, after years of patient practice would rarely ever miss. Great disgust from the latter if a fish were hit in the gills or tail. Hit in the body, no comment. Hit in the head, great satisfaction. Hit in the eye, loud applause from all and sundry as that part of the body constitutes the bull's eye of the target.

The individual's harpoon was the treasured possession of the hunter. He alone knows its particular traits. Cut out of the bush, it always has an inclination to wobble, which had to be compensated for in relation to the refraction of the fish in the water. The five inch nail bound to the head had frequently to be straightened and sharpened.

3) Putting on our bathing costumes and going up the stream, splashing through the shallows, and swimming across the pools until there it was, a beautiful waterfall plunging into a fairyland through the virgin bush from a height of about three hundred feet.

4) Out in a large canoe through the pass from the lagoon into the open sea to watch the approach of aething mass of whitebait, where it was, nature's defence against the denizens of the deep. At first sight, at a depth of perhaps ten feet, an enormous fish of which any known species of shark would be scared, and thus immune from attack. We followed in our canoe as the hoard approached and soon passed through the opening reef in the reef. The great fish then disintegrated, each part making for its own individual stream where it was born. Many thousands would reach their destination. Many thousands would not, as the calm surface of the lagoon now boiled with fish of all shapes and sizes, as
they bored in to the attack, seeking to devour the lot.

With laughter and gaiety, in anticipation of the coming banquet of fried whitebait fritters, we made for the lower reaches of our stream. The canoe was pulled out of the water as we awaited the approach of those that had escaped the slaughter, armed with a deep circular net attached to a long handle. At last there they were swimming along the bottom of the estuary. Now and again, for no apparent reason, the seething mass swirled to the surface. In a flash, in would go the net to be quickly withdrawn with enough silvery whitebait to fill a basket. When sufficient had been caught for our own needs, as well as those of the fowls, back to the house to await the evening meal. More food fit for the gods.

At the end of the day all are happily tired. A little soft music on a guitar, subdued conversation on the events of the day and all prepare for a long night’s rest. Our hostess reaches for her Bible, and in almost an undertone reads a passage of her choosing, usually from the Psalms.

A fitting text for this lovely weekend might well be, “The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. He leadeth me beside the still waters.”
A Unique Artist.

The furnished house beside the sea in the plantation next to mine had been vacant for some time.

One morning, my servant brought the news that it had now been leased by an artist and that he was living alone.

Giving him time to settle in, I sent him a message asking whether I might call upon him. The reply came back "Yes if you don't stay too long." Expecting a rather cool reception, I strolled along the beach and up to his house.

It did not take long to recognize the work of an accomplished professional artist painter. So unlike that of the numerous amateurs who specialized in female nudes. The only recognizable likeness to the subject being a black triangle somewhere near the middle.

My new neighbour worked on landscapes and interiors, which were really exquisite. While admiring his haniwork, I was intrigued to know what a peculiar looking cross section of sausage skin was under a coconut tree, or lying on the carpet of an interior, doing painted somewhere in all his pictures. "Oh that. That is my foreskin. A doctor cut it off when I was a boy and as my paintings are a part of me, they would not be complete without this extra."
Dinner with a veteran of the First World War.

There was a famous concrete seat on the water front at Papeete called the "Pirate's Bench". Here were usually to be found odd characters such as beach combers and the like. All well known old-timers, who had interesting yarns to tell of life on the islands.

One day, I noticed a well dressed man seated by himself, whom I had not seen before. Sitting down beside him, I engaged him in a conversation.

I found him to be a cultured gentleman, a retired colonel of the First World War. A note of sympathy soon made itself felt in that we had both been seriously wounded. I sustaining the loss of an eye and he——"Well, if a woman had been wounded where I was wounded, she would not have been wounded at all".

He lived in a quiet and beautiful spot beside the sea in a remote part of the island, and was looked after by a dear old crone housekeeper, who had been with him for years. In spite of his terrible affliction, he was a happy jovial man, who rarely came to town and gloried in his isolation. We had a drink and parted the best of friends.

One day, having business to do in his direction, I telephoned asking whether I might call on him. He was delighted, and would I dine with him and stay the night. I was made to promise not to be shocked at anything I saw. On Tahiti nobody was surprised at anything.

His home was very artistically furnished, his drinks poured in the finest crystal. Everything spotlessly clean and immaculate. Soft music from a radiogram, holding a dozen records, came from the dining room. All was peaceful and lovely.

"Mon colonel, le dîner est servi" from the old lady and in
we went. We were to dine by candle light.

My chair was back to the entrance to the kitchen. A rustle of feet behind me and then with a "Pardon monsieur", a bowl of soup was placed before me by an exquisitely proportioned Tahitienne of about 18. Her only covering being a Tiare Tahiti blossom behind her left ear. My host received separate attention by another beauty likewise attired. And so it went on throughout the meal. No sign of familiarity. Just the perfect decorum of well trained servants.

After dinner, reclining on the veranda, sipping Napoleon Brandy, my host turned to me and said quietly, "To me, disqualified wretch that I am, good food and good wine always taste better if served by a beautiful woman such as God made her."
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. Yes, 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. Indistractable. It cannot cease to exist but by a gradual folding up within itself. The great arcs of a hundred rainbows seem to have been crushed 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."
The night of the Declaration of War.

Memories are like phantom ships sailing on the infinite sea of the brain. Some are of outstanding beauty and importance. Others of lesser value, but nevertheless to be occasionally remembered with personal interest.

The month of August 1939 had been fraught with anxiety and turmoil. The dark clouds of possible war in Europe were sailing across the sky of Tahiti, Isle of Dreams. The monthly boats to leave the island were crowded to capacity with escapers. Some, if necessary, to join the colours, others to find a haven where possible military service might be avoided.

Everything that could be turned into cash had been sold at give away prices. Thus it was that I found myself possessed of three good radios with spare valves to match.

All but the very few visitors had gone and I was alone with my responsibilities to attend to. Surely something would happen to prevent the dogs of war being again unleashed after seemingly such a short space of time since 1914.

Inside information by cable showed that a crisis was developing and that zero hour might be expected at any time. August faded into September, while all the world waited.

Late on the night of September 3rd, I was idly turning the knob of my radio listening to stations in England and America when, out of the blue, the B.B.C. announced a broadcast to the nation by the Rt Hon the Prime Minister. Then the thunderbolt fell.

"We are at war with Germany".
My first reaction was one of incredulity. Perhaps it was a hoax. I continued to twiddle round the American stations. Then the announcement came that all stations were cleared for a nation wide broadcast by the President. No mistake. No possible doubt. Great Britain had declared war on Germany for the second time in my generation.

I felt a sense of pride that, although so far away from my homeland and those I loved, I had a job to do to the best of my ability. I stood up, as straight as a ramrod, and quietly sang my National Anthem. Poured myself out a double whiskey and sat down to think.

It was now in the early hours of the morning. Papeete was asleep, very fast asleep. Few would know that danger now lurked in the dark waters that surrounded us, as it was a foregone conclusion that France would declare war within the hour.

My only comforting thought was that Tahiti was half the world away from the theatre of war. And so to bed, and await the buzz and excitement of the morrow.
In Retrospect.

I would conclude this collection of stories on a different note to that on which they were begun.

As the shadows of life start to lengthen, I remember, the crude with amusement, the disdain held for the monthly tourists, "Les sales touristes bananes", who had flowers of the toilet tree behind their ears, and so many other oddities to be met with on the island. These however do not constitute the Spirit of Tahiti engraved on my heart.

To me the Tahitians and their ladies, living as they did so close to nature, constituted the perfect and most ideal form of human life that the Most High has seen pleased to create.

If I had to return to the world again, I would wish to come as a Tahitian, with his nobility of character and prowess in all his manly undertakings.

God did indeed bless the Tahiti that was.
May God preserve the Tahiti that is to be.